A FAILED AVANT-GARDE?
EXPERIMENTAL ART IN SCOTLAND
1960-c.1970

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the significance of avant-garde art being produced in Scotland between 1960 and 1970. It evaluates its consequences for the characterisation of Scottish art at the end of the twentieth century and provides an overdue history and assessment of events that took place. The artists involved operated not only in the sphere of the visual arts but also in those of literature, theatre and performance. This cross-fertilisation of culture and the problems it posed for classification in the visual arts is presented as one of the reasons that this avant-garde is marginalised in histories of Scottish culture.

The diverse locations in which the avant-garde was found include the Edinburgh Official Festival and Fringe, Jim Haynes' Paperback book shop in Edinburgh, the Traverse Theatre Club and Gallery and the Richard Demarco Gallery. These small scale venues were inaccessible to many people and this inaccessibility is examined in terms of its implications for avant-garde art.

Scotland's art market is examined in order to establish the place of the avant-garde in the context of other work that took place in the visual arts. The reception of art being produced in Scotland during the decade is assessed and the reception that this other work received from both the public and the art establishments is determined. Venues for the exhibition of art are also explored, with a concentration on happenings occurring in Edinburgh under the aegis of the Richard Demarco Gallery. Avant-garde successes outside Scotland are also considered.

The thesis comes to the conclusion that the avant-garde visible in Scotland from 1960-1970 was a small but significant avant-garde. However, it had an inchoate development and deteriorated before it could establish a strong foothold in Scotland.

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For Dad
In loving memory

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an examination of an emerging Scottish avant-garde in the period 1959-c.1970. It provides a unique history of experimental art occurring in Scotland that existed alongside painting, sculpture and the applied arts. This was essentially a radical art operating within a conservative marketplace. The artists that will be discussed have been largely ignored or marginalised in general surveys of Scottish art. The reason for their exclusion perhaps lies in the interdisciplinary nature of their work. It embraced not only the visual arts, but also literature, theatre and the performing arts.

These artists constituted what can be described as an avant-garde, since their work did more than push at the boundaries of artistic practice and accepted traditional categories in the visual arts. Through their work, these artists believed that they could break down these perimeters and redefine them in their own terms. Their work aimed to instigate a fundamental change in the way art was executed and a rudimentary transformation of the way it was perceived by its audience.

An examination of the avant-garde is long overdue. To deny the avant-garde its place in the history of art in Scotland is a fundamental omission. Without this necessary analysis, the nature of art and culture in Scotland at the end of the twentieth century cannot be fully understood. Therefore, a comprehensive exploration of this work is supplied here. This new history re-establishes the place of this avant-garde in Scottish culture and provides the first survey of its artists and their successes and failures. It also highlights the particularity of the situation in Scotland, and poses questions for the accepted characterisation of Scottish art in the last forty years.

However, it also aims to show that this emerging avant-garde did not develop beyond what was essentially an embryonic movement. Consequently, the thesis poses the question of whether the emergent avant-garde in Scotland was a failure, at a time when radical art was beginning to make a mark on the international art scene.

Certain areas are, of course, outside the parameters of the thesis. Whilst every attempt is made to place the avant-garde activities of the artists considered alongside their painterly counterparts, analysis of established figures in painting and sculpture cannot be provided in great depth. However, as the thesis attempts to rewrite the art historical account of the 1960s to include the radical artists little acknowledged in other accounts, this bias becomes acceptable.

Furthermore, the very experimentation in the art of the avant-garde, and its underground nature, imposed limitations. With many events happening without planning, as is the improvised nature of many 'happenings' and other events, many would also have gone unrecorded. This lack of documentation means that the description of certain pieces comes through secondary sources. Illustrations for events such as these are also scarce. Secondary sources provide photographs of places where events happened without giving exact representations of the work carried out there. This again emphasises the problem of categorising this work.

This problem of classification where events fall into the realms not only of the visual arts, but of literature, theatre and performance also poses other questions. Although much of the research and archival material used in the preparation of this thesis has come from diverse sources from many disciplines outside that of art history, the nature of the subject and its diversity renders a complete and exact history of events impossible. Rather, what must be relied on is a piecing together of the experimentation that took place and its significance for Scottish art as a whole.

The thesis is arranged chronologically, beginning in 1962 with events of the Edinburgh Festival and concluding c.1970 with an evaluation of the decadic development of the avant-garde.

Chapter One provides an introduction to the ways in which the work of the avant-garde occurs within the genres of literature, theatre and performance as well as purely visual art. It also provides a contextualisation of the Scottish experimental scene within an international environment and provides comparison between the Scottish avant-garde art and similar international artists. Furthermore, it illustrates the sense of dislocation and tension that the avant-garde engendered among a conservative Scottish public.

Chapter Two develops the ideas prefaced in Chapter One, taking the Scottish avant-garde further into the realms of literature and theatre. Its development is traced from the Edinburgh Festival through an Edinburgh bookshop to the Traverse Theatre Club. The 'destruction' work of Ivor Davies that took place in Edinburgh is also explored. This chapter aims to fully examine the holistic nature of the avant-garde, where boundaries between the arts are broken down and become transient. This transience again provides problems of classification for the work of the avant-garde. In turn these problems of categorisation coupled with the underground nature of this art scene help to highlight the inaccessibility of much avant-garde work to the art going public. Again, the work of the avant-garde is placed in the context of similar British and international work in order to provide comparison and differentiation for the Scottish art scene.

Chapter Three places the work of the avant-garde alongside the visual arts that have dominated the written histories of Scottish art. It examines the dominant hegemony of the painterly tradition and the nature of 'Edinburgh' painting in

reference to its patronage and marketplace for art. This allows for a comparison of the status of 'Edinburgh School' painting and its general acceptance by the public, with Edinburgh's willingness or otherwise to explore the avant-garde art scene. It also asks the question of whether the marketplace opened up for the Scottish avant-garde at a time when experimental art was being more widely accepted throughout the international art world.

Chapter Four examines the Richard Demarco Gallery and its significance for experimental art in Scotland. It provides a previously unwritten history of the gallery beginning with the 1963 Edinburgh Festival. Its development is then traced through the Paperback book shop of Jim Haynes, to the Traverse Theatre Club and Gallery, through to the inception of the Richard Demarco Gallery in 1966. This sense of history and interconnectedness is important to review in order to provide a cohesive picture of the venues for avant-garde art and the links that existed between its promoters. Furthermore, it examines the way in which the Richard Demarco Gallery placed the Scottish experimental scene alongside that of developing international artists, in this way providing an all year-round international stage that was on a par with the Edinburgh Festival. It also examines integral questions that arise in the consideration of the experimental art scene. These include the questions: what is the place of performance art (or art that is not purely optical), what is the new role of the art gallery and how valid is the art object and art market for avant-garde art?

Chapter Five looks at the avant-garde artists who found success outside Scotland and the nature and significance of that success. It aims to examine that success in terms of the Scottish avant-garde movement as a whole; exploring its strengths and weaknesses.

The nature of the thesis is to explore the lack of development and cohesiveness in experimental art events that took place in Scotland; the insufficiency of the marketplace for an avant-garde movement and the underground nature of organised events. It will also examine the inadequacy of support for an avant-garde from the established institutions such as the Royal Scottish Academy and the larger exhibiting societies. This lack of enthusiasm for radical art, placed alongside a conservative art going public, did little to engender any fruition in the development of the avant-garde.

What the thesis argues is that a small but significant avant-garde existed in Scotland. This group was partially sustained within Scotland through organisations like the Paperback bookshop, the Traverse Theatre Club, the Richard Demarco Gallery, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and some radical exhibition spaces. Furthermore, it had repercussions throughout the world in the work of Allan Kaprow, Ivor Davies, the Boyle Family, Bruce McLean and Ian Hamilton Finlay. It describes and evaluates a moment when the avant-garde had a potential foothold on Scottish culture and provides details of events. It also gives reasons as to why this avant-garde disintegrated and why it disappeared. It describes a failed avant-garde that never develops within Scotland past an embryonic stage; it is dislocated, inaccessible and largely disregarded by the Scottish public. It is ignored and denied any significant place in the art history of Scotland and it de-materialises before it becomes a major force.

CHAPTER ONE

LOCATING THE AVANT-GARDE; A CROSS FERTILISATION OF CULTURE

In this chapter, the avant-garde art located in Edinburgh during the 1960s is examined in terms of its location in Scottish culture. An ascertainable move took place in that decade, where experimental artists moved away from the realm of the purely visual arts, and explored other cultural spheres. There was a move in the avant-garde away from the traditional classifications of painting, sculpture and applied arts, towards an all embracing experimentation that employed conventional media as well as literature, theatre and performance. As a result, this chapter begins by exploring events that took place at the Writers' Conference of the Edinburgh Festival in 1962. It was at this event, and its successor in 1963, that the public was introduced to a growing avant-garde art scene operating within Scotland. However, this avant-garde was determined not to be parochial, and it is perhaps fitting that by examining this event, we can determine the strength of this avant-garde; its values and its place in an international art scene.

Setting the Scene: The Writers' Conference at the Edinburgh Festival, 1962

The 1963 Festival audience gathered in Edinburgh University's McEwan Hall for the last day of debate at the Dramatists' conference would no doubt recall the raging debate surrounding it's predecessor; the 1962 Writers' conference. In 1962, John Calder, a Scot regarded as a leading London-based publisher of European and avant-garde writing, had persuaded Lord Harewood, Director of the Edinburgh

Festival, to let him organise a conference for writers at the McEwan Hall in Edinburgh. Calder was the man responsible for bringing the work of writers such as William Burroughs, Samuel Beckett and Marguerite Duras to the British public.[1] The conference that was subsequently organised honoured the seventieth birthday of Hugh MacDiarmid, an event that the official Festival had failed to notice. Calder enlisted the help of Sonia Orwell, and a young American, Jim Haynes, to help with the preparation of the event. Jim Haynes had opened Britain's first paperback book shop in 1959. With this conference, Calder envisioned a gathering that he thought could engender a new British School of writing, one that could make a valid contribution to the international modern movement in literature.

Invited to the conference were British writers including Angus Wilson, Lawrence Durrell, Colin MacInnes, Rebecca West, Stephen Spender, Rosamond Lehmann, L. P. Hartley, Simon Raven, David Caute and Scottish Renaissance writers like Hugh MacDiarmid and Sidney Goodsir-Smith. Around 2,000 Festival goers also attended. Amongst the international writers invited were the Americans William Burroughs, Norman Mailer, Mary McCarthy and the controversial Henry Miller. Other countries represented were India, Ceylon, Greece, Holland, Austria and Yugoslavia. The fact that Calder managed to bring to Edinburgh some of the world's most avant-garde writers cannot be ignored. The event had an enormous impact and influence in literary circles, but it reverberations would be felt throughout Edinburgh's artistic community.

The conference aimed to discuss five topics on five successive days: the future of the novel; contemporary Scottish writing; the issue of censorship and a debate on 'The Writer and Commitment'.[2] Included in the conference programme on Tuesday

21st August 1962, was a session on 'Scottish Writing Today', at which participants were invited to look at the issues surrounding writing in Scotland.

John Calder invited the Scottish born writer Alexander Trocchi to the conference.[3] Virtually unknown in Britain, Trocchi had been part of the international avant-garde writing scene. He had spent some time in America and Paris, where he had become associated with influential figures like the emerging Beat writers (who were just being recognised in Britain) and a circle of writers' in Paris surrounding Samuel Beckett. This circle surrounding Beckett were involved in developing the French new novel (*nouveau roman*), where reality was interpreted by the reader instead of the author. Trocchi's work had been introduced to Calder in 1961 through his American publisher; in the United States, Trocchi's *Cain's Book* had become a moderate best seller. Calder had expressed his general intention to publish *Cain's Book* at that time, but had decided to wait.[4]

Cain's Book was one of the first books to be published about heroin addiction, and Calder's reservation about publishing the novel stemmed from the danger involved in publishing material that included four letter words and sexual descriptions. After all, it was only a year before Calder and Trocchi actually met in London that Penguin were tried for the publication of Lady Chatterley's lover under the Obscene Publications Act. Although Penguin were acquitted and 'difficult books' like Trocchi's were becoming easier to publish, *Cain's Book* was not published by Calder in London until 1963 when it continued to be relatively successful.

There was no doubt that Trocchi was a controversial and notorious writer "very unlike every other Scottish writer."[5] As well as two standard novels and various pieces of journalism for newspapers and his own magazine, he had written seven pornographic novels for Olympia Press, which had been published in Paris between

1954 and 1956.[6] During Calder's 'Scottish Day', Trocchi was invited by David Daiches to answer the question of whether Scottish literature was provincial or parochial. After all, said Daiches, "he (Trocchi) has probably seen more of the world having lived in France and America, than the rest of us."[7] Trocchi's reply provided a succinct answer to the question,

> I don't think I was mistaken in leaving (Scotland). The whole atmosphere seems to me turgid, petty, provincial, the stale-porridge, bible-class nonsense. It makes me ashamed to sit here in front of my collaborators in this conference, those writers who have come from other parts of the world…[8]

In the climate of early 1960s Scotland, these comments and Troccchi's bohemian, sexually uninhibited views and declarations at the conference that he was only interested in "lesbianism and sodomy" incited Hugh MacDiarmid, one of the leaders of the Scottish Renaissance to denounce him as "cosmopolitan scum."[9] Trocchi's retort to MacDiarmid was that he was the one that had written *all* of the good Scottish writing from the twenty preceding years.

Trocchi's outlook was internationalist, classless and bohemian, or so he thought. He wanted to welcome writing from anywhere in the world as long as it was good and new. His argument with Hugh MacDiarmid whom he called, "an old fossil"[10] and the other leaders of the Scottish Renaissance like Sidney Goodsir-Smith and Douglas Young (who also attended the conference) was that they were too introverted in their outlook. He believed that they were too nostalgic about Scotland's past and too caught up in a restrictive and parochial nationalism. Hugh MacDiarmid was the only writer granted a partial reprieve by Trocchi when he said,

> … you are one of the few writers I would exclude from this kind of provinciality, except for the fact that you have a few rather old fashioned quaintnesses that are not of my generation.[11]

The argument took over the Scottish Day at the conference, and appeared nationally in the press the following day, establishing the name of Alexander Trocchi within Britain.

However, as Edwin Morgan argues in his essay, 'Alexander Trocchi: A Survey', the debate extended further than a simple nationalism versus internationalism claim. Trocchi, after all, was presenting his views from a panel of *Scottish* writers which meant that he could not claim to be from a completely stateless or cosmopolitan background. What the argument essentially boiled down to was a debate about,

> ...how, in the early 1960s, a Scottish writer should go about his business, and whether a change of direction was due, whether it was time to take a closer look at what was happening elsewhere, whether openness of spirit rather than hugging of certainties would be good for Scotland. [12]

Furthermore, the argument not only extended to the future of Scottish writing, but also to the future of society in general. In fact, Trocchi's argument encompassed art and culture as a whole. He argued that there was the need to look for a way forward from outdated categorisation, classification and value judgements that he believed were,

> Born of experience, invented to fit experience, to give form to our knowledge, they tend nevertheless to outlive their usefulness, to lose relevance. Such categories - scientific, economic, aesthetic - become armour against experience, a barrier between the mind and new understanding.[13]

Trocchi's personal speech to the 1962 conference was on 'The Future of the Novel'. In it, Trocchi drew interesting parallels between the changes he saw taking place in the structures of both literature and art. He saw the classifying terms "novel" and "painting" as belonging to these stifling categories,

> When I say the novel and the painted canvas are no longer in themselves significant, I am not saying that they won't continue to be written. I am saying that - something profoundly important which during the nineteenth [century] could be expressed within these forms can no longer fitly be expressed in them. The problem is not to play yet another variation of the tune. It is to accept the fact that it is necessary to jettison the tune itself.[14]

He also drew a parallel between both art forms, going on to describe both their development and disintegration as historically linked,

> The novel and the painting on canvas were born of the middle classes which were born of the industrial revolution. Middle class culture demanded a work of art that was transportable...so the novel form and the picture came out of an economic necessity. They flourished up until the end of the nineteenth [century] at which time most vital writers and painters began to feel them as *limits* rather than as inspiration.

What is significant about Trocchi's ideas on the future of the novel and the future of art is the idea that creation need not be contained within specified boundaries and that classification is not always the most productive method of producing art. Furthermore, he argued that social and economic factors necessarily impinge on creation,

> All art can be considered as man's expressive reaction to his state of being in the world. If this is understood it's not difficult to understand why modern art should be as it is. The modern artist - sensitive to the findings of modern science as well as the religious and political orders of his time - reflects and expresses the need for new forms, new categories. Modern art begins with the destruction of the object. All vital creation is at the other side of nihilism: it begins after Nietzsche, after Dada. The appropriate attitude is tentative, intuitive, a creative passion, a spontaneity leading to what André Breton called 'the found object'.
> A 'found object' is at the other end of the scale from the conventional object and thus to pass freely beyond known categories, the twentieth-century artist finally destroyed the object entirely. The future of the novel *per se* is insignificant.[15]

These ideas of moving away from conventional categories of classification in the arts, and the importance of social and economic factors in artistic production become even more pertinent when we consider them in relation to The Dramatists' Conference at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival.

Where Trocchi had given the 1962 Festival the infamous debate with Hugh MacDiarmid, and a taste of his ideas on 'The Future of the Novel', a young American

was to provide its successor with scandal. Kenneth Dewey, a young Californian theatre director gave the 1963 Festival a taste of 'The Theatre of the Future' and what the media were later to describe as 'our notorious nude'.[16]

More importantly, however, the 1963 'Theatre of the Future' and Dewey's 'happening' involving the nude, cemented the arrival of a non-traditional art in Scotland. Furthermore, the events of the Drama Conference, and the debates surrounding it, heralded a breaking down of traditional modes of artistic classification that traditionally involved artistic endeavour being compounded as painting, sculpture or applied arts.[17] What had come into being was a realisation of the possibility that art could cross cultural boundaries of definition, utilise elements such as music, theatre and literature and re-define itself as a holistic, experimental experience.

"Our Notorious Nude": The 1963 Dramatists' Conference at the Official Edinburgh Festival and the 'Theatre of the Future'

Calder's second conference in 1963 was again attended by the most distinguished dramatists and writers, this time including J. B. Priestley, John Mortimer, Arthur Adamov, Joan Littlewood, John Arden, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Max Frisch, and the Polish critic Jan Kott amongst others.[18] The debate on nationalism that had dominated the 1962 Writers Conference continued in 1963, albeit on a less controversial footing, as part of the six-day conference on the future of the theatre.

Furthermore, a debate on 'Nationalism in the Theatre' contained the same arguments that had gripped Trocchi and MacDiarmid. The dramatists' passionate arguments revolved around the question of whether nationalism was harmful to the theatre or whether the finest art was essentially nationalist, as it would be based on the concrete realities of the author's social environment.[19] However, it was the final

session of the Dramatists' Conference concerning 'The Theatre of the Future' on Saturday September 7th 1963, which brought controversy to the 1963 Conference.

The entire conference was organised again by John Calder, publisher and conference sponsor, and Kenneth Tynan. However, it was Kenneth Dewey, Californian director and organiser of the event, Charles Lewsen, an English playwright and Mark Boyle, a Scottish 'assemblagist' who were invited to show the Drama Conference a 'Happenings' demonstration.

Their aim was to introduce the audience to experimental theatre, and their introduction began with the creation of "a most peculiar atmosphere of semi-alarm; an eerie disconcerting feeling that chaos was inexorably setting in."[20] This was done with the help of the McEwan Hall organ which played deep, resonant, slow and tuneless notes as a backdrop to the appearance of an army of men, silhouetted and hung against the high windows of the room, their faces hardly discernible to the audience below. The feeling of disorder and unease felt by the audience was impressed further on the apprehensive crowd when Carol Baker, an American film actress, left her position on the stage and threw off her coat to reveal figure hugging silver trousers and tunic. Then, she clambered towards the back of the hall, over rows and rows of chairs.

During the furore, the audience began to stir; standing, shouting, talking and straining to understand what was happening - were the spectators part of the experiment? Gasps followed the appearance of a nude woman, who had been glimpsed by some spectators, being wheeled across the organ gallery. The incident is described humorously by Robert Garioch in his poem *Embro to the Ploy*,[21]

prank A happening, incident, or splore
affrontit them that saw
a thing they'd never seen afore -
in the McEwan Haa:

a lassie in a wheelie-chair
wi naething on at aa,
jist like my luck! I wasna there,
at all it's no the thing ava,
tut-tut,
Edinburgh to the frolic[22] in Embro to the ploy.

However, the incident provoked a mood of tension and dislocation rather than humour in the audience present at the conference. Over the relentless sound of the organ, a piper was playing and marching in the top tier of the hall. A sheep's skeleton was hung on the platform that Carol Baker had vacated. Then a deafening crash sounded, heralding the unveiling of a gantry of death-masks.

Although the incident was a brief affair, the conference only regained a semblance of calm with the intervention of the chairman, Kenneth Tynan. He was unimpressed with the event, and challenged Kenneth Dewey for a justification of the scene arguing that the shocked audience deserved an explanation as to the purpose of his "controlled experiment."[23] As Charles Marowitz remembered, Dewey was "called up before the conference like a kid who had thrown an inkwell into the electric fan, and asked to explain."[24]

Dewey 's consequent explanation revolved around his dissatisfaction with the boundaries of traditional theatre and it's hierarchical structure of management - director coming first, followed by author and then cast. Dewey said that this arrangement was inadequate for fulfilling his aim of giving the audience the responsibility for theatre - of throwing back to *them* the onus of interpretation. In this way, he said, he was allowing them to perform their own thoughts (as it could be argued they had done during the happening in their reactions) and develop their own aesthetics.[25]

What he wanted to do was collaborate with the people, engender audience participation and make them, on one level, act as cast members of his performance,

acting out the implications in terms of their own response. This kind of theatre was, he said, "like jazz at one level…held together not by law, not by control, but by the rapport between collaborators."[26]

Nevertheless, Dewey's ideas were denounced by Tynan as "infantile" and "essentially totalitarian and apocalyptic," and by another unconvinced audience member, Duncan Macrae the actor, as "baloney."[27] When the response elicited was more sympathetic, as was the case in the response of one Yugoslavian spectator, it was still guarded,

> If you improvise something, you must know what you are aiming at. It is no good just to shock people simply because they are inert. It is better to have 3 intelligent men understand you than that 300 idiots be shocked.[28]

What most of the audience objected to most strongly about the 'happening' (including Kenneth Tynan) was the disruption to the original debate plan, that would have continued to include the more acceptable discussion of the physical shape of theatre and the direction of theatre in other countries.

John Calder, co-director of the conference, was more sympathetic to Dewey's experimentation. He said in the newspaper accounts that followed the event, that it was "all terribly funny" and "in very good taste" as the girl was wheeled across the organ gallery very quickly so that none of the audience could have seen very much of her. His only concession to the public and press furore that surrounded the event was that it did "give a certain sudden shock to the audience".[29]

Unfortunately for Kenneth Tynan there was more experimentation in store for the Drama Conference patrons in the form of an 'exit play' conceived by another American, Allan Kaprow.[30] What Kaprow wanted, was for the audience to leave the McEwan Hall by a small side door which lead into a roped off corridor. Here, they were confronted by an obstruction, the corridor was littered by old car tyres. If this

was not enough to occupy the audience/cast members, they also encountered a man scrabbling over the floor in a failed attempt to scale a series of barriers. At the point where his failure seemed to consume him, a group of men came along, thoughtlessly knocking the barriers down.

At the same time, on the other side of the corridor a procession of men marched along, each carrying a tyre on his shoulder. This bizarre affair provoked almost as much debate as the 'nude incident', both in audience and press reaction. Again Kenneth Tynan was vehemently opposed to what he saw as infantile experimentation far removed from his idea of the theatre of the future,

> I witnessed this pitiful event - a ritual without content - from a balcony, with a group of embarrassed Eastern Europeans beside me. It was like children breaking up their nursery.[31]

Others, like Magnus Magnusson *The Scotsman's* art critic, were more sympathetic about the entire event comparing it to a menacing "medieval morality play with audience participation" in which the lone man strives for achievement, hampered only by uncaring authority groups as represented by the group of men. In his interpretation, he explained the tyres carried by the procession of men as symbols of civilisation that "strew the path of enlightenment". [32]

Other critics were less sympathetic than Magnus Magnusson. Even after the conference was over, the debate certainly was not. Allan Kaprow had organised another event; an outdoor happening the next day on the outskirts of the city centre. Disputation continued in the press. This ensured that the Scottish public had their say, and that the debate over the future of theatre and the future of Scottish culture ensued.

Affrontit Them That Saw: Public Reaction to the Avant-Garde

The reaction of the public and the critics to these events is integral when considering the nature of the avant-garde in Scotland. By examining the press correspondence resulting from the conference we can gain an impression of public reaction to radical artistic experiments. We can also gauge to what extent the public were willing to embrace and support an active avant-garde.

The headlines of the national press concentrated largely on Anna Keseler's thirty-second nude scene during Kenneth Dewey's 'happening'. Lord Harewood, artistic director of the Edinburgh Festival, had supported John Calder the year before in setting up the Writers' Conference and had given approval for the subsequent Dramatists' Conference. He had known that 'improvisations' of some sort had been organised for the conference by Kenneth Dewey, with Calder's consent. However, he regarded the actual 'happening' as silly and pointless, and believed that the whole incident could put the future of the conference in jeopardy due to its vulgar nature and "dreary bad taste".[33] Indeed, the conference that Calder had planned for 1964, a poets' conference, was cancelled by the authorities as a result.

The Lord Provost, Duncan M. Weatherstone, chairman of the Festival, was equally alarmed at the display denouncing those involved in its planning and disregarding the people who were involved as, "sick in mind and heart". [34] Furthermore, apologies were made on behalf of the Festival to Sir Edward Appleton, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Edinburgh University, who had made the McEwan Hall available for the conference. Obviously, the Festival organisers, men who would perhaps be expected to be open to experimentation, did not see the 'happening' as an educational event.

News of the 'scandal' had also reached London and the Conference on Moral Re-Armament held on the Monday following the event, where some speakers who had witnessed the scene in Edinburgh got the chance to proffer their opinion. They argued that the old labelling of Edinburgh as an 'Athens of the North' was being undermined by people who wanted 'Auld Reekie' to reek again. Quoting Lord Harewood's views on Scottish Presbyterianism, and the 'scourge' of John Knox and his present day followers, who, in their cold bigotry saw pleasure (an example of which would be the Drama Conference) as a bad thing, one speaker Mr. Michael Barrett, retorted,

> Personally, as a Scot, I prefer what Mr. John Knox did for Scotland to what Mr. John Calder, Henry Miller, and others have not done and are trying to undo.[35]

This argument surrounding morality, Presbyterianism and art in relation to the Drama Conference was continued by the Scottish public in the letters pages of *The Scotsman*, maintaining interest until October of 1963.

The idea that morality and religion were tied up with every facet of life in Scotland including the visual arts was not uncommon. Artistic standards of right and wrong were hard to detach from moral standards. As a result, the events of the drama conference were heralded by many as a disgrace. This reaction was no doubt provoked by the press, even amongst those who had not witnessed the spectacle. Furthermore, the ideas that Dewey and Kaprow had been trying to examine with their happenings were largely lost on a public unreceptive to anything beyond the 'scandalous' nude.

Two opinions dominated the letters pages concerning the 'happening'. The first was that many Scots would be downright disgusted at the display and would be unable "to tolerate such goings on", goings on that would drag Edinburgh "in the

gutter in the eyes of the world".[36] Hugh MacDiarmid also joined in, writing to the editor of *The Scotsman* in response to a letter which had said that the problem was that Scotland had a 'true enemy' of the arts in the guise of respectability. This was the very respectability that Michael Barrett wanted to promote, but that MacDiarmid regarded as hatred of the creative process. MacDiarmid argued that the only fault he could find with the Drama Conference proceedings was that they played into the hands of these respectable "reactionaries".[37]

One of these respectable reactionaries was C. H. Stuart Duncan who argued that,

> There must be few people, even in 'respectable' Scotland, who are so foolish [as to oppose all creative effort]. But there are many who realise that creative effort can be appropriated to evil ends as well as good ones. It can provide poison gas as well as penicillin, and modern Art in all its branches is making this fact more and more clear to many respectable people.[38]

MacDiarmid, of course, retorted with a vitriolic response that strayed from the subject of the Drama Conference, via the question of respectability, onto the promotion of his more controversial ideas. In response to a letter which argued that the Festival should cater more for the general public who paid their taxes to support it, MacDiarmid replied,"…it is just these people who in Hitler's Germany protested against modern art and complained that it was calculated to debauch the clean-minded Nazi soldiery".[39]

MacDiarmid further ostracised himself from the majority of *Scotsman* readers, and indeed, the Scottish public as a whole, by going on to say, "Mr. Duncan Macrae said some time ago that the audience for the theatre in Scotland were "mostly morons". I think this is true, and not only of the audience for theatre, but of the Scottish public for literature and the other arts as well."[40] If MacDiarmid had been

trying to persuade the respectable masses to reassess their opinion of the events of the Drama Conference, his converts would surely have been few.

'The Points of View' page in *The Scotsman* was not the only place where these arguments over 'respectability' and 'art' in Scotland were evidenced. More serious complaints over the 'happening' resulted in John Calder and Anna Keseler (the nude) being charged over the incident. The charge against Keseler was that she, "did act in a shameless and indecent manner in respect that during the course of a drama conference there she did in full view of those present allow herself to be wheeled across the organ gallery on a trolley while in a state of nudity".[41] Calder was charged in light of his position of organiser of the conference with allowing, "the said incident to take place", and failing to, "exercise the authority as organiser and person responsible for the said conference to prevent the same".[42] Objections to the relevancy of the charge were later made, but dismissed, and the trial was set for December 9th 1963.[43] However, charges were eventually dropped.

The opinion of the public to the happening gave an indication that art of such an experimental nature was not particularly welcome in the 'Athens of the North'. Little was said in press accounts to support the event, or indeed any kind of avant-garde.

One of the few writers to *The Scotsman's* 'Points of View' column who did support the 'Theatre of the Future' events was a Mr. Allan who argued that the events of the Drama Conference were hardly new in artistic circles,

> About thirty years ago there was an exhibition in London which one was forced to enter through a lavatory; a chopper was put into one's hand and one was told to destroy anything one didn't like. A girl with a mask of petals was floating around with a pork chop in her hand. It was called Dada.[44]

Certainly there were precedents for this type of art, and many European artists involved in happenings were well versed in the ideology of Dada. However, among

Edinburgh's Festival goers of 1963 few would have been so *au fait* with artistic movements as Mr. Allan. In addition, the manifestations of artistic groups like the Dadaists had hardly had a devastating impact on art in Scotland. Another problem for a burgeoning avant-garde was that, coupled with the conservative nature of much of the public, the experimental ideas that they promoted were often difficult to understand requiring a more complex artistic vocabulary than many would possess.

Kenneth Dewey's response to the public indignation that his work received within Scotland was relaxed. He said that the event was not the first of its kind that he had been involved with, as he had staged a similar incident in Helsinki. His reaction to the conservatism that he experienced in Scotland was flippant,

> ...I get the feeling that similar notions (to the Edinburgh event) have been around for some time. Who can say how many people sitting in dreary lecture halls have fleetingly dreamed of nudes passing by overhead?[45]

Admittedly, Allan Kaprow, Kenneth Dewey, Charles Lewsen and Mark Boyle would not be part of a *permanent* avant-garde based in Edinburgh. However, the avant-garde that we see emerging in 1960s Edinburgh was transient and partly international. It consisted of many international artists as well as Scottish ones. Therefore, events such as those at the Dramatists' Conference play a significant role in our understanding of the experimental art scene in Scotland.

Edinburgh's Avant-Garde: An International Context

What opened up in 1963 Edinburgh was a gulf in opinion over the validity of avant-garde events, and this type of art, and it could be seen that the American conference delegates were more sympathetic to the aims of Dewey and Kaprow than the Scottish or even European audience members. When Kenneth Tynan asked the

question "why shouldn't a bar room brawl could qualify as theatre?" in the light of the Theatre of the Future 'happenings', the American reply was "Why indeed!"[46] Of course, this idea of a planned event including impromptu elements in which artists combine theatrical performance and the visual arts was not new to the Americans. Allan Kaprow had coined the term 'happenings' four years earlier in 1959, to describe these artistic events. The first Happening, *Eighteen Happenings in Six Parts*, was held in New York in October 1959, and consisted of participants acting out their fantasies and responding to other events that were taking place around them (Fig 1).

In part, Kaprow's ideas were a deliberate rejection of traditional art forms and the idea of the permanent art object that Trocchi had been comparing to the novel in literature. In his 'Notes on the Creation of a Total Art' from 1958 Kaprow says, "It has been inconceivable until recently to think of the arts as anything other than separate disciplines, united at a given moment of history only by vaguely parallel philosophical objectives".[47]

This kind of art form had affinities to a number of artistic movements: assemblage, environmental art, performance art, theatre and even music. It was also profoundly influenced by the work of John Cage. For example, this can be evidenced in his 'event' experiments at the Black Mountain College in the 1950s, which played on notions of chance and randomness. Similarly, the Abstract Expressionists profoundly influenced artists like Allan Kaprow and Jim Dine due to their emphasis on the act of painting.

However, theories of what constituted a happening were, and still are, very diverse. Happenings did not need an environment like the art gallery or theatre, and were sometimes used for politico-social events due to their emphasis on audience participation. Therefore many were, to some extent, unclassifiable in such a way that

Trocchi might have approved. For example, this political aspect can be evidenced in the later performance work of the German artist Joseph Beuys, and many events that were intended to shock traditional social morals.

In many cases Happenings were intended to shock the public and provoke a reaction similar to that intended for the 1963 Festival audience. This idea of using happenings as a vehicle for protest and provocation was therefore emphasised for the dramatists who attended the conference. In fact, the event even inspired John Arden to arrange a Festival of Anarchy in 1963 in Kirbymoorshire, Yorkshire. Furthermore, the spontaneous nature of the events and the fact that they did not need an established art 'space', meant that events could be taken into the realm of real life. This meant that many participants or passers-by were not sure if the thing happening was art or real life, another facet of Kaprow's idea of a 'Total Art'.

The idea of audience participation advocated by Dewey at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival was something that Kaprow also had strong views on, and which he was later to build on more solidly in his 'participation performances' in the 1970s,

> What was unusual for art was that people were to take part, were to be, literally, the ingredients of the performances...But they were not used to the real-time close physicality of the experience. They were accustomed to paintings and sculptures viewed from a distance.[48]

Certainly, it could be argued that this physicality in art was not common in Scotland and would, perhaps, be uncomfortable for the majority of the mainly conservative art going public. As Mariellen Sandford says in her discussion of the differences between British happenings and those from elsewhere, in *Happenings and Other Acts*, "The spectators were activated and prompted to respond, but the degree of involvement in the unfolding of the event was far more restricted than in America."[49]

What was significant about the Theatre of the Future happening of 1963, is that it represented one facet of the way in which traditional boundaries within the

visual arts were being broken down. In many ways, traditional criteria of painting, sculpture and the applied arts were becoming less valid to an increasing number of artists. As Kaprow said,

> Art forms developed over a long period and articulated to a high degree are not amenable to mixture: they are self sufficient so far as their cohesiveness and range of expression are concerned. But if we bypass "art" and take nature itself as a model or point of departure, we may be able to devise a different kind of art by first putting together a molecule out of the sensory stuff of ordinary life: the green of a leaf, the sound of a bird, the rough pebble's under one's feet, the fluttering past of a butterfly…Whether it is art depends on how deeply involved we become with elements of the whole…[50]

By taking Kaprow's comments and applying them to the 'happening' at the Drama conference, it can be seen that his idea of a total art was introduced to Scotland at the 1963 Festival. Admittedly, this was not done in such naturalistic terms as those described above, but in the idea of dissolving barriers between art media, and indeed between types of 'art' - theatre, literature, the visual arts and music.

Whether or not this introduction was welcomed, the audience of the Dramatists' Conference had been challenged to reconsider their ideas on whether the 'happening' was theatre. Could they reassess their attitudes as to what constituted 'art' and could they bypass the term 'art' in order to experience "the whole" to which Kaprow pertained? These changes would have been difficult for a conservative Scottish audience. As Magnus Magnusson in his review of the Conference for *The Scotsman* said, "one of the most interesting aspects…was the violence of response it arose from the audience, ranging from acute interest to furious resentment at having their traditional ideas tampered with".[51] What the Conference did was to provide the impetus for writers like John Arden to explore the 'happenings' genre and the way in which it could cross art 'boundaries'. The events of the Conference also introduced these ideas to the Scottish public; combining literary interests, drama, music and art.

This introduction was not confined to Scotland. The first half of the 1960s saw a rise in the number of groups exploring the 'happenings' genre. Many British experimental touring groups and fringe theatre societies emerged out of the happenings events: Charles Marowitz's 'fringe' theatre in London; Welfare State; The People Show; John Bull's Puncture Repair Kit; Cyclamen Cyclists; New Fol-de-Rols and the Yorkshire Gnomes representing a small sample.[52]

However, it is interesting to note that although there were many artists working within the 'happenings' format in Europe and America; there is little documentation of similar events having occurred within Great Britain. What evidence there is centres around three main events: The Festival of Misfits (23 October-8 November 1962); The Theatre of the Future day at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival Drama Conference (7 September 1963) which has been examined here and the Destruction in Art Symposium in London (31 August-30 September 1966).[53] What the Conference in Edinburgh did was to make this avant-garde international art form visible on a Scottish stage. Previous happenings in Great Britain were staged mainly in England, even although one of the leaders of the genre was the Scottish born Mark Boyle who had contributed to Kenneth Dewey's happening in Edinburgh.

The first British happening is documented by Mariellen Sandford in her book *Happenings and Other Acts*, as having taken place in 1962, at the Merseyside Arts Festival. This Festival was again influenced by Allan Kaprow and the experiments of the American proponents of happenings, whose ideas were slowly filtering into Britain.[54] Work using assemblage, collage and installation, that had been previously explored by the British Pop artists, was taken further by the proponents of happenings. They developed these genres to a stage where they crossed into the realm of 'happenings' and what Sandford calls "the fourth dimension". Notable proponents

of this new development were mixed media artists such as Mark Boyle, John Latham (Fig. 2), Jeff Nutall, Bruce Lacey and Roger Ruskin Spear.

Surprisingly, the key centre for 'happenings' in Britain was not London. Rather, the events were spread throughout England through the regional centres of Leeds, Bradford, Wolverhampton, Newcastle and Nottingham, with Liverpool being the key centre. The reasons for this were threefold. Firstly, Britain had a lack of galleries interested in contemporary and experimental art. Furthermore, the regional branches of the newly formed Arts Council provided a base for young artists eliminating the need for a move to a commercial location such as London. Finally, the close tie between the 'happenings' and music scenes meant that Liverpool, as home of the Beatles and other pop groups, provided the perfect setting. This connection to the popular music scene provided a contrast to other happenings movements, setting the 'happenings' genre in Britain very much apart from that in Europe and America. As Sandford points out, music clubs, poetry clubs and book shops provided the best venues for 'happenings', 'performances' and other radical and experimental art, and some music concerts even featured surprise happenings.[55]

However, the effect of Dewey, Boyle, Kaprow and Leweson's happening at the 1963 Theatre of the Future, brought the genre to centre stage. It spotlighted these happenings within Scotland and the rest of Britain, perhaps due to the difference in setting that the Festival provided. The international Festival was a venue in stark comparison to the small studio theatres, pop concerts and book shops in which happenings usually dwelt. However, as Sandford says,

> As to the many performances "in streets, public squares, boiler rooms, basements, department stores, forests: on buses, building sites, bridges, rooftops" to which Marowitz refers in his attempt at disproving the popular notion that, "for many people a Happening is a nude lady at the Edinburgh drama conference" - I have not been able to find any detailed descriptions.[56]

Nevertheless, this quotation highlights the importance of the event from the perspective of bringing the genre to the attention of a wider group, even if that group was not willing to understand it, or as Sandford says, interpret it as any more than the appearance of a nude lady. Furthermore, the events of the Dramatists' Conference placed Edinburgh at the centre of an international and important avant-garde movement in art.

However, what Sandford and other art historians do not do, is to examine the art scene in Scotland and the experimental activities that had been simmering under the surface of Scottish art since 1959. These activities place events at the Dramatists' conference in the midst of a small but significant experimental art scene in Scotland. With the exception of the mention of the Drama Conference, Sandford's is a largely English account of the happenings scene. It takes into account only the events of the first half of the 1960s, and concentrates only on happenings, largely ignoring other related activities. Her account does not explore the period as a whole, and proper examination is overdue.

As Keith Hartley says in his exhibition catalogue *Scottish Art since 1900*, "things [in Scottish art in the 1960s] were beginning to open up"[57]. As well as the Festival, which provided Scottish artists of all kinds with a window on the international scene (for at least a few weeks each year), other significant occurrences were taking place which would develop into projects able to change the face of art in Scotland.

In 1959, Jim Haynes opened Britain's first paperback book shop, the Paperback, which provided a launch pad for the cultural entrepreneur-ship of Richard Demarco. Haynes provided an exhibition space for Demarco in the book shop, and the seeds of the Richard Demarco Gallery which would later be opened in 1966, were

formed. Haynes also provided impetus for the opening of the Traverse Theatre Club in 1963. By examining the activities surrounding Jim Haynes and Richard Demarco in the early 1960s, it is possible to build up a picture of what can be called 'radical' or 'non-traditional' art in Scotland, in the period 1959-c.1970; the kind of art which perhaps due to it's unclassifiable nature is largely neglected in surveys of Scottish art.

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[1] Calder had also published the work of the French *nouveau roman* authors: Nathalie Sarrute and Alain Robbe-Grillet as well as Marguerite Duras. Others writers published by Calder and not already mentioned include Artaud, Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Fernando Arrabal and Peter Weiss.
[2] For a more detailed account of the topics discussed during the conference see Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve: A Critical Biography*, (London: Murray, 1988), p. 417. Also, Robert Hewison, *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties 1960-75*, (London: Methuen, 1986).
[3] Alexander Trocchi had been born in Glagow to Italian parents.
[4] Interview with John Calder in Alan Campbell and Tim Niel, eds., *A Life in Pieces: Reflections on Alexander Trocchi*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd., 1997), p. 151.
Cain's Book by Alexander Trocchi was published by Grove Press: New York, 1961 and John Calder: London, 1963.
[5] Ibid, p. 151.
[6] Alexander Trocchi's two conventional novels were *Cain's Book*, see above, and *Sappho of Lesbos*, (New York: Castle Books ,1960). His publications for Olympia Press, Paris, included, under the pseudonym 'Frances Lengel': *Helen and Desire* (1954), *The Carnal days of Helen Seferis* (1954), *Young Adam* (1954), *School for Sin* (1955) and *White Thighs* (1955). *Thongs* (1956) was written under the pseudonym 'Carmencita de las Lunas' and *Frank Harris: My Life and Loves*, vol. 5 (1954) was written mostly by Trocchi from a small number of Harris's papers. Olympia press was owned by the pornographer-publisher Maurice Girodias, and had published, at Allen Ginsberg's suggestion, William Burroughs *Naked Lunch* in 1959.
[7] Alexander Trocchi, Transcript of The Edinburgh Writers' Conference, 1962, Tuesday, 21st August: The Scottish Writers' Day. Reproduced in *A Life in Pieces: Reflections on Alexander Trocchi*, p. 154.
[8] Ibid, p. 154.
[9] Ibid, p. 156.
[10] Ibid, p. 154.
[11] Ibid, p. 154.
[12] Edwin Morgan, 'Alexander Trocchi: A Survey', in Allan Campbell and Tim Niel, eds., *A Life in Pieces: Reflections on Alexander Trocchi*, p. 279.
[13] Alexander Trocchi, 'The Future of the Novel', speech to the 1962 Writers' Conference, McEwan Hall, Edinburgh, Edinburgh International Festival, August 1962. Reproduced in Campbell and Niel, *A Life in Pieces: Reflections on Alexander Trocchi,* p. 158.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid, p. 159.
[16] Kenneth Tynan, 'Dramatists' in Perspective: The International Dramatists' Conference organised by John Calder and Kenneth Tynan', *The Observer Weekend Review*, Sunday 15 September, 1963.
[17] Throughout, I have avoided a complete definition of the term 'happening' and I also use the terms event, action and activity without definition. It is not the aim of this dissertation to aim for a clear-cut definition as to what constitutes a happening, and what distinguishes it from other performance events.
[18] See Robert Hewison, *Too Much*, p. 104.
[19] See Magnus Magnusson, 'Conference Justifies it's Intentions', *The Scotsman*, Saturday 7 September, 1963, p. 4.
[20] Magnus Magnusson, 'High Jinks End Drama Conference. Full of Fury and Ideas: Ancients Battle with Moderns', *The Scotsman*, Monday 9 September 1963, p. 4.
[21] Robert Garioch, (Robert Garioch Sutherland), *Embro to the Ploy.* Reproduced in Douglas Dunn, ed., *The Faber Book of Twentieth-Century Poetry*, (London: Faber, 1992), p. 80.
[22] Embro to the Ploy means Edinburgh to the frolic, the frolic being the Edinburgh Festival.
[23] Kenneth Tynan, 'Dramatists' in Perspective'.

[24] Charles Marowitz from Calder, 1957, pp. 57-59, reproduced in Mariellen Sandford, *Happenings and Other Acts*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 375. Marowitz also had some input into the happening, but more in the form of suggestion than participation.
[25] This idea of the audience defining the meaning of the work can be compared to the ideas that Alexander Trocchi was involved with in Paris with the new French novel, and it's onus on the reader to make sense of the work without authorial intrusion.
[26] Magnus Magnusson, 'High Jinks End Drama Conference', p. 4.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Jovan Hristic, Ibid.
[29] John Calder quoted in 'All in Very Good Taste, says Mr. Calder and "Terribly Funny" as Well', *The Scotsman,* Monday September 9, 1963, p. 4., continued from p. 1., 'Nude Shocks the Lord Provost: Earl of Harewood Speaks of Blow to Next Year's Plans.'
[30] 'Exit Play' is the term used by Allan Kaprow to describe the event.
[31] Kenneth Tynan, 'Dramatists' in Perspective: The International Dramatists' Conference organised by John Calder and Kenneth Tynan', *The Observer Weekend Review*, Sunday 15 September, 1963.
[32] Magnus Magnusson, 'High Jinks End Drama Conference. Full of Fury and Ideas: Ancients Battle with Moderns', *The Scotsman*, Monday 9 September 1963, p. 4.
[33] Lord Harewood quoted in, 'Nude Shocks the Lord Provost: Earl of Harewood Speaks of blow to Next Year's Plans', *The Scotsman*, Monday 9 September, 1963, p. 1.
[34] Ibid
[35] Michael Barrett, quoted from the London Moral Re-Armament Conference in 'Dirt, Debts and Decadence: Drama Festival Under Attack', *The Scotsman*, Monday 9 September, 1963, p. 4.
[36] Eleanor Hunterston, 'Dragged in the Gutter', letter to the editor, 'Points of View', *The Scotman*, Wednesday 11 September, 1963, p.6.
[37] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The True Enemy of the Arts', letter to the editor, 'Points of View', *The Scotsman*, Saturday 14 September 1963, p. 6.
[38] C. H. Stuart Duncan, 'Enemy of the Arts', letter to the editor in response to Hugh MacDiarmid (above), 'Points of View', *The Scotsman*, Tuesday 17 September, 1963.
[39] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'What is respectability?', 'Points of View', *The Scotsman*, Friday 20 September, 1963, p. 8.
[40] As above.
[41] 'Two Charged over "Nude" Incident: Complaint Made to Police', *The Times*, Saturday 14 September.
[42] As above.
[43] 'Festival Nude: Man and Girl for Trial', *The Times*, October 17, 1963.
[44] D. Allan, 'Thirty Years Ago', letter to the editor, *The Scotsman*, Wednesday 11 September, 1963,p.6.
[45] 'Festival Nude: Blame Me , Says American', *The Times*, Tuesday 10 September, 1963.
[46] Kenneth Tynan, 'Dramatists' in Perspective'.
[47] Allan Kaprow, 'Notes on the Creation of a Total Art', *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 10.
[48] Allan Kaprow, 'Participation Performance', *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 181.
[49] Mariellen Sandford, *Happenings and Other Acts*, p. 370.
[50] Allan Kaprow, 'Notes on the Creation of a Total Art (1958)'.
[51] Magnus Magnusson, 'High Jinks End Drama Conference'.
[52] Some of these groups, for example, 'The People Show' could also be classed as pop groups as well as Happenings artists.
[53] For an overview, the best book is perhaps the catalogue by Hanns Sohm, *Happenings and Fluxus* from the 1970 retrospective at the Cologne Kunstverein.
The Festival of Misfits was held in London at Victor Musgrave's Gallery One.
[54] Mariellen Sandford, *Happenings and Other Acts*, p. 369.
[55] Other frequently used locations were small studio theatres (as we will see when we look at the activities surrounding the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh), rehearsal spaces and art colleges.
[56] Mariellen Sandford. *Happenings and Other Acts*, p. 371.
[57] Keith Hartley, *Scottish Art Since 1900*, (London: Lund Humphries in association with the National Galleries of Scotland, 1989), p. 36.

CHAPTER TWO

INACCESSIBILITY: VITAL FAILING OF THE AVANT-GARDE IN A CONSERVATIVE SCOTLAND?

In this chapter the nature of the avant-garde which existed in Scotland is further examined by looking at the development of a paperback book shop through it's evolution into the Traverse Theatre and Gallery, and the work of Ivor Davies, a Welsh destruction artist and lecturer at Edinburgh University. By looking at these examples of experimental art in Scotland, we see the further exegesis of four main themes central to this thesis. These are the relationship of avant-garde art to theatre and performance, the blurring of cultural and artistic boundaries which render the avant-garde holistic in nature, the problems of artistic classification that this holicism causes and the inaccessibility of this kind of work to much of the art going public.

Jim Haynes and the Paperback Book Shop

It could be argued that by the early 1960s, the art scene in Edinburgh was beginning to open up to the possibility that the international outlook, engendered by the Edinburgh Festival, could be sustained throughout the year. The embracing of a more outward looking art could be evidenced in the opening of galleries like the 57 Gallery in Edinburgh, established in 1957, to show the work of younger Scottish artists as well as that of international artists. Perhaps significantly, this gallery was opened by a group of artists (including John Houston), a fact that would allow for the exhibition of art that was not purely commercial. Similar ventures were also undertaken in Glasgow, for example in the Charing X gallery founded by Bet Low, Tom Mcdonald, John Taylor and Cyril Gerber. However, perhaps one of the most

significant developments for the presentation of experimental art in Scotland was not an art gallery, but a book shop run by an American living in Edinburgh, Jim Haynes.

Haynes was from New Orleans and had been stationed with the American Air Force near Edinburgh before studying at Edinburgh University. It was his collaboration with a young man called Richard Demarco, an Italo-Scot working as an art teacher that is important here. The two met in 1959, and with their meeting was born a partnership that would benefit avant-garde art in Scotland throughout the 1960s. Haynes, with the encouragement of Demarco, opened his book shop, the first paperback book shop in Britain, at 22a Charles Street in Edinburgh.[1] The book shop, called 'The Paperback' was near the university where Haynes had studied (Fig.3). Soon, the Paperback was to become a meeting place for what Cordelia Oliver was later to call "all the creative and intellectual non-conformists in town".[2]

Haynes himself was not simply a book shop proprietor. With his installation on Charles Street, Haynes provided not just a centre for literary enthusiasts or browsing customers, but a veritable haven for the talents of diverse artists. In effect, Haynes was a catalyst and facilitator for the meeting of creative minds on the Edinburgh art scene. In many ways the book shop acted as a social venue for experimental art, literature and theatre. When John Calder walked into the book shop by chance the first seeds were sown for the beginnings of both the Writers' and Dramatists' Conferences, through discussion and an exchange of ideas. It was Haynes, along with Sonia Orwell, who assembled and persuaded distinguished writers to come to Edinburgh for Calder's first Writers' Conference.

The cellars of the book shop also provided the space for creative events such as impromptu late night poetry readings, philosophical debates and small performances. These events no doubt prompted the idea of a theatre for this kind of

work, a theatre which would in fact come into being at a later stage in the form of the Traverse Theatre Club.

The book shop cellars only held around forty people, but the ideas engendered there were able to reverberate throughout Edinburgh's artistic community. For example, the cellars were used in 1960 for a performance by a group called 'The Sceptics' of *First Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion*. This was a costume drama version of David Hume's dialogue, performed in a reconstructed eighteenth century atmosphere. The play was so successful, being performed to a full house each night of its run, that the performers returned the next year to put on the second part of Hume's dialogue. This was called *David Hume on God and Evil* (Fig.4) which comprised the actors examining theological problems both on the stage, and later in the evening, with audience members. Again, this provides an illustration of the exchange of ideas that took place. The book shop, even when used as a theatre venue, held the opportunity for philosophical discourse and comment from all concerned and from those with an interest in *all* artistic disciplines; actors and audience members alike.

The Paperback book shop, and 'The Sceptics' performance of the *First Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion*, even gained very favourable reception from the art press. For example, it was heralded by the art critic of *The Scotsman* as, "the contribution to the Festival that owes more than any other to Edinburgh. It can be strongly recommended to anyone who enjoys a good Scottish argument".[3]

In a common with the beliefs of Allan Kaprow and Kenneth Dewey, the idea of audience participation was a vital idea to Jim Haynes, and it was one which the three would go on to share in practice at the Drama Conference. Although the context of late night performance at The Paperback was theatre, Haynes ideas are empathic to those of the 'happenings' instigators. Like them, he had the belief that the audience

should in some way be held accountable for their own responses. They should be participant in the creative experience.

The types of religious and theoretical debate engendered by Hume's dialogue, mixed with the theatrical context and literary venue, share the holistic approach to culture that Kaprow and Dewey desired in their work. In many ways, they also illustrate a realisation of Trocchi's belief that modern art should "pass freely beyond known categories" in the arts.[4]

These ideas of audience participation and the breaking down of artistic classification at the book shop are borne out if we look at other events that found their expression in Haynes' book shop cellars. In 1962, the sort of experimental theatre that 'The Sceptics' had undertaken in 1960 and 1961, was further developed when they performed Fionn MacColla's *Ane Tryall of Heretiks*, a play about the Reformation. This piece was put on under their new name of 'The Curetes' at the 1963 Fringe Festival. A poem by Robert Garioch called 'And They Were Richt' goes some way to demonstrate the importance of audience participation in this 1963 performance:

I went to see 'Anne Tryall of Heretiks'
by Fionn MacColla, treatit as a play;
a wyce-like wark, but what I want to say
is mair taen-up wi halie politics

nor wi the piece itsel; the kinna tricks
the unco-guid get up til whan they hae
their wey. You late-nicht ploy on Setterday
was thrang wi Protestants and Catholics

an eyedent audience, wi fowth of bricht
arguments was hae them kept gaun till Monday.
It seemed discussion wad last out the nicht,

hadna the police, sent by Mrs. Grundy
pitten us out at twelve. And they were richt!
Wha daur debait religion on a Sunday?[5]

This poem demonstrates the argument that Alistair Moffat espouses in his book *The Edinburgh Fringe* that Haynes wanted to bring the audience and actors closer together in his tiny cellar theatre. Here he was allowing them to experience what Allan Kaprow might have called "the real-time physicality" of the thing.[6]

Jim Haynes position as a catalyst for this cross-fertilisation of ideas and art forms is again apparent through examination of the play and the responses it engendered from the audience. Although *Ane Tryall of Heretiks* was a play, the debate that it generated was as much part of Haynes' concept of the whole performance as the scripted play itself.

Furthermore, this cross-fertilisation which was apparent in *Ane Tryall*, the late night poetry readings and heated debates that took place in the book shop also had manifestations within the realm of the visual arts. However, there was much room for expansion of Haynes ideas. His interest in experimental art was not confined to theatre, and he allowed Richard Demarco his first exhibition space on the walls of the book shop.

However, although the Paperback was a radical art space for experimental work, it had a very limited audience given its small size and anonymity amongst the general public. It could be argued that the events that took place in the Paperback were allied to those of the Dramatists' Conference, as many of the same performers were involved. This networking of artists had the advantage of being able to produce a catalytic effect in a limited artistic circle, but it could be argued that this circle was too small for any real reverberations to occur on a large scale within the Scottish art scene.

Nevertheless, even if the embryonic avant-garde present in the Paperback had little resonance for Scottish art as a major artistic force, it provided the seeds and

the inspiration for the genesis of other larger organisations like the Traverse Theatre Club and the Richard Demarco Gallery.

With Richard Demarco's Paperback exhibitions and Jim Haynes' driving force, came the impetus to create viable and permanent alternative spaces for experimental art outside those of the large exhibiting societies and the Royal Scottish Academy. These impulses were to develop into the origins for both the Traverse Theatre Club and Gallery; stepping stones for the development of an embryonic avant-garde in mid-1960s Scotland.

The Traverse Theatre Club and Gallery

The real-time physicality in theatre that Jim Haynes had promoted in his book shop was emphasised in the opening of the Traverse Theatre club in 1962, even in its name. The small theatre only held sixty people and the little stage was flanked on either side by two blocks of seating. It was called the 'Traverse' because the stage traversed the building (Fig. 5). Furthermore, this integration of audience and cast was hailed as an explanation as to what a traverse stage was, in the programme of plays to be performed which was published early in 1963,

> The convention of Traverse theatre is new to Britain and the essential purpose is similar to that of theatre in the round; in that the audience has closer contact with the play. Traverse Theatre is in fact a stage which traverses the auditorium and divides the audience into two blocks; there is no set to hamper the imagination of the audience and everything which happens on stage is at once life-size and more colourful as a result of the close proximity of the players.[7]

The impetus for the establishment of the Traverse Theatre came in a discussion between three men, Kenneth Ireland, one of his assistant stage managers, Terry Lane and John Malcolm, an actor from *Ane Tryall of Heretiks*. Along with Jim Haynes, they had the idea of establishing an all year round theatre club in Edinburgh.

What these discussions resulted in, was the suggestion for a centre that would spread the work that the Edinburgh Fringe theatre did in the summer months throughout the year, albeit with an extra push during the Festival. The centre would also provide an exhibition area. In many ways, what the discussion solicited was an extension of what Haynes already had in the Paperback book shop. As Haynes said, it was:

> ...from the beginning...a social centre open morning, noon and night, where people could have a drink or lunch, see an exhibition, go to the theatre, meet each other. The social aspect of it was just as important as what was going on in the theatre.[8]

Both Terry Lane and John Malcolm had been involved in a number of Haynes' discussions and plays at the book shop, and together with him they were to form the nucleus of the Traverse Theatre. This idea of a venue that would be a place where fringe theatre had a year long home had been previously realised in London where small theatres and clubs existed, albeit with short life-spans. The only other experimental venture, The Arts Theatre Club in London, was largely an annexe to the larger venues in the West End. By the time that the Traverse was coming into being, the only similar venture in Britain was the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London's Dover Street. Like the forthcoming Traverse it housed a number of rooms and a bar and restaurant, as well as putting on discussion forums, small concerts and readings.

Although the seeds for such a venture in Edinburgh had been sown in 1959 with the opening of the book shop, this extension of the Paperback's aims did not find physical form until October 1962, when building work started. The theatre was to be housed in a building in James Court in Edinburgh's Lawnmarket called 'Kelly's Paradise' (Fig. 6). At that time, the building was inhabited by John Malcolm himself and was owned by a man called Tom Mitchell who was enthusiastic about the idea of

a theatre club.[9] A management committee was formed in November 1962, and consisted Tom Mitchell, who became President of the Club, Jim Haynes who was appointed Chairman, and Terry Lane and John Malcolm who were named joint artistic directors.

Terry Lane became director and Theatre Manager of the club from November 1962 until January 1963. At that time, Jim Haynes appears not to have been in Scotland, and therefore, must have missed the final stages of the building work as well as the inaugural performances.[10] Perhaps as a result of Haynes' absence, Terry Lane assumed the position of theatre manager in the Traverse's inaugural period.

During Terry Lane's time as manager, the club had grown to accommodate 2,100 members each paying a subscription fee of one guinea. The Traverse's designation as a club rather than simply a theatre allowed for this charge. However, the other benefit of club status was that the theatre could bypass the censoring body for theatre, the Office of Lord Chamberlain, which necessitated that all new scripts had to be assessed, except those performed in clubs. This absence from censoring bodies perhaps allowed the Traverse more space to become experimental and innovative, and critics within Scotland were approving of Lane's direction and management.

However, the disadvantage of club status was arguably of great detriment to the burgeoning avant-garde. With a subscription fee payable to a small, relatively unknown theatre club, the audience for this kind of experimental art was substantially narrowed. Furthermore, by designating the Traverse a *theatre* club, following traditional classifications, the interdisciplinary nature of some performances would be ignored. Even in a decade where cross-cultural classifications were being broken down, few people interested in experimental 'art' would be drawn to the tiny Traverse

Theatre. Rather, the experience that most people would have of the Traverse would have been through the daily newspapers and their theatre critics.

By the end of 1963, the club had a financial deficit of £3000; too many people were supportive of the idea of the theatre without attending performances. Again, the letters page of *The Scotsman* gave insight on public opinion surrounding the Traverse; some found the plays difficult to understand without guidance, whereas others said that the Edinburgh public were savages and unappreciative of the cultural regeneration that a venture like the Traverse provided. However, the public opinion was certainly not as hostile to the venture as it had been to the Drama Conference, and on the whole could be said to have been relatively supportive, albeit in theory.

Perhaps a little unfairly, the blame for the deficit was subsequently placed at the feet of Terry Lane and he was dismissed by the committee in mid-January 1964. It could be argued that the blame for the deficit lay with a conservative public who were alienated by the close-knit avant-garde and ignorant of many events occurring at the venue. Added to these factors was the substantial subscription fee. Subsequently, Terry Lane was replaced by Jim Haynes in 1964, and Haynes held the post until his resignation in June 1966.

At this point it is important to consider Jim Haynes artistic interests outside those which would fall mainly into the realm of theatre. As was previously argued, his paperback book shop had provided a forum where art forms could meet and merge, cross boundaries of classification and originate ideas. Haynes had provided exhibition space for Richard Demarco in the book shop, and his influence at the Traverse Theatre was to ensure that this arrangement continued. Furthermore, Richard Demarco himself had been on the committee of management at the Traverse from the beginning, and had, again with Haynes encouragement, established a small exhibition

space in the restaurant of the theatre (Fig 7). The intention of the gallery was to provide a space for "the interpretation and presentation of art…which is new, unknown, experimental and excellent".[11]

During the first year of the Traverse's existence Richard Demarco exhibited a number of largely informal exhibitions in the Traverse restaurant, which included photographs by Alan Daiches, constructions by Peter Clapham and a number of his own sketches. In another of these exhibitions during the 1963 Edinburgh Festival Demarco exhibited the junk reliefs of Mark Boyle and Joan Hills. These were assemblages of junk made from found objects. Their intention was to comment objectively on the way in which all objects and events can be worthy of our consideration and contemplation as art objects. In order to do this, they mixed religious imagery with the debris of society and juxtaposed high art and sacred imagery with rubbish. They gave their pieces titles with high art or religious connotations like, for example, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. This piece consisted of found objects including scrap metal, a bicycle wheel, a car number plate and a broken umbrella. In the midst of these things was mounted a photograph of Baudelaire and a Victorian print of 'Christ Before the People'. In effect Baudelaire, proponent of 'la vie moderne', became the new Christ of the modern era and its artefacts.

What is interesting to note about this exhibition of junk reliefs and assemblage is that it is exhibited at the same time as Boyle is involved with the happening at the 'Theatre of the Future'. Again, there is a connection evident between Jim Haynes and Mark Boyle and the experimental art that has been discussed. Also, the happening instigated by Kenneth Dewey, Mark Boyle and Charles Lewsen at the Dramatists' Conference was perhaps influenced by the previous work of Americans

like Allan Kaprow, who also instigated a happening at the conference, and this influence can also be seen here.

With Jim Haynes appointment as director of the Traverse Theatre Club his open approach to the arts continued. Furthermore, Richard Demarco had the chance to reap reward from this arrangement. Jim Haynes had overall artistic control at the Traverse without directing any plays - a definition of director that is unfamiliar today. However, this overall artistic direction brought about the expansion of the Theatre Club's role in the arts. This expanded role was to include a number of new ventures for the theatre; ventures which seemed to be more akin to the types of event that the Paperback had solicited and promoted.

For example, a series of what he called 'talk-outs' on cultural issues was held at the Traverse Theatre Club and many speakers from the Edinburgh art world were invited to debate with club members. Topics for debate included diverse themes such as the necessity for a Scottish National Theatre, poetry and music seminars and titled subjects such as 'What's wrong, or right with Scottish art?' a discussion led by Sidney Goodsir-Smith and Robin Philipson of the Royal Scottish Academy. A childrens' theatre club and workshop was also planned, again extending the scope and appeal of the club.

More pertinently for Richard Demarco was the expansion of the Traverse Art Gallery in 1964. Instead of presenting small exhibitions on the walls of the theatre restaurant, a separate and semi-independent space was formed which would be the base from which Richard Demarco could start his career as a gallery owner. With rooms borrowed from the Bank of Scotland in George Street, opposite the Assembly Rooms, the new Traverse Gallery gained a kind of umbilical existence in conjunction with the theatre.[12] Here, the Traverse Theatre International Contemporary Art

Exhibition provided another exhibition venue for the introduction of international art and new Scottish artists to Edinburgh. During the 1964 Festival, Richard Demarco again exhibited the work of Mark Boyle in the *Traverse Festival Exhibition of Contemporary Art*.

Furthermore, there was to be additional good news for Richard Demarco and the future of the Traverse Gallery. A new, permanent gallery was opened in 1964 at James Court. The first series of work to be shown there by Demarco was that of Alastair Michie, a painter who had trained as an architect at Edinburgh College of Art. During Jim Haynes period as artistic director and manager, which lasted until June 1966, Richard Demarco exhibited the work of artists such as William Johnstone, Louis le Brocquy, Yago Pericot from Barcelona and Douglas Craft from New York.

However, Haynes time as director of the Traverse was not a completely fortuitous venture. Among his more adventurous ideas was the expansion of the Theatre Club's activites into the London theatre scene in 1965, the same year that he resigned as Chairman to concentrate on his role as artistic director. The idea was conceived as a way to raise money for the theatre; the debts that had arisen under Terry Lane's management were growing larger. A seven week season was planned for London's West End and followed on the back (and it was hoped the success) of the Theatre's 1965 Festival Fringe performances.[13]

However, perhaps as a result of the lack of Fringe theatre in London, the venture did not gain much support. The audience for experimental theatre in London was either very small, uninterested in the Traverse performances, or unaware of their presence. Therefore, the theatre lost another £1000.[14] Even with subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council who supported the performance of British Premieres at the Traverse by guaranteeing the club against any losses that it might incur, financial

difficulty was still evident. Indeed, by 28 April 1966, the theatre had a debt of £5454 and its membership had decreased to only 1718.[15] When Jim Haynes resigned in June 1966 over his right, or otherwise, to appoint new staff, the committee accepted his resignation. With his resignation the now established Traverse Theatre lost its connection to its origins in the Paperback. It would also be fair to argue that it lost some of it's importance as a meeting place for cross currents in the arts, and the Traverse Theatre turned it's attention to what we would now recognise as traditional theatre practice.

Jim Haynes final ties with the Traverse Theatre Club were broken in the summer of 1967 when he left the London Traverse to set up his own project. This was called the Arts Lab, and was situated in Drury Lane, in London's Covent Garden. Here, free from official restraint, he planned a venue that had affiliations with his original ideas for the Traverse. The Arts Lab had a gallery and theatre space, a cinema and what he would describe as a freeform programme of events. However, the financial problems that had beset Haynes in earlier ventures also caught up with him here. The project was short-lived, lasting only until 1969. Nevertheless, in the periods where it had not been a residence for Haynes acquaintances, it had been a venue and inspiration for an emerging Fringe theatre.[16] Significantly, all of the companies that Haynes promoted at the Arts Lab had also been seen at The Edinburgh Festival. However, few if any, had been participant in Fringe theatre in London before the intervention of Haynes. By 1969, there were around fifty projects similar to the Arts Lab in Britain.[17]

In London, Charles Marowitz initiated the Open Space. This was a theatre club for experimental acts, in Tottenham Road, established in 1968. Marowitz had several connections with the Edinburgh scene; he was a participant in the 1963 Drama

Conference at the McEwan Hall and had directed a number of plays at the Traverse Theatre during the time that Jim Haynes had been manager and artistic director. Another American, Ed Bernan in partnership with Jean-Pierre Voos, set up the Inter Action Group, another similar venture to the Arts Lab. These two groups were among those that formed the basis for the Fringe theatre in London which is still evident today.

In 1967, Jean-Pierre Voos's International Theatre Club performed at the Edinburgh Fringe. Again, this example illustrates the ties that this kind of theatre in London had to the Edinburgh scene. What is interesting to note at this point is that the majority of these groups had some connection to either Jim Haynes, the Edinburgh and London Traverse Theatre Clubs or, as in the majority of cases, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This highlights the fact that the avant-garde in Scotland had a place amongst international movements in experimental art, and reverberations amongst world wide artistic communities.

Jim Haynes influence as a catalyst for creative activity, and the importance of the Traverse as a forerunner for British Fringe theatre is evident. The ambitions that Haynes had for his various projects were later summed up by him on the collapse of the Arts Lab in 1969,

> The thing that the bookshop, the Traverse, and the Arts Lab had in common was their humanity. There were not fixed hours of entering or leaving, people came in, and lingered and talked and met each other. I keep stressing this fact that love affairs began there but it's true. That's probably why the puritan elements in the country were against the bookshop, the Traverse and the Arts Lab. The ecstasy count, the sensuality count, was very high.[18]

Admittedly, some of Haynes' ideas were non-conformist, but it seems to be the increasing formalisation of business affairs and restrictions on his position as artistic director that caused his split from the Traverse Theatre Club in Edinburgh. Whatever

the real case may be, and it is difficult to establish the facts surrounding his resignation as there are no minutes of committee meetings held at the time, or other important sources, it is possible that a change occurred in the Traverse's atmosphere.

Initially, it could be argued that with the separation of the Traverse Theatre Club from the art gallery in spatial terms a little of the holistic and innovative nature of Jim Haynes' ambitions was lost. The community atmosphere that joined the arts together had been broken. Instead of generating a cross-boundary exploration of the arts under the same roof, the two genres of theatre and visual art seemed again to be divided into separate spheres with the expansion of the Traverse Gallery.

This division was to be softened, to some extent, in the later exhibition programmes of the Richard Demarco Gallery, which Demarco founded when he too left the Traverse. However, the *mainstay* of the exhibition programme within the Traverse Gallery was restricted to painting, and many of the artists shown had connections to what might be called the 'traditional' art scene in Edinburgh. When Richard Demarco also left the Traverse in 1966, to open his own gallery in Edinburgh's Melville Crescent, a chapter in the period of the Theatre Club had closed. With a new management committee elected, and Jim Haynes and Richard Demarco departed, it is to other venues that we must look to explore the development of experimental art in Scotland.

What can be seen in the history of the Paperback book shop and the Traverse Theatre and Gallery is the development of a small but viable avant-garde in existence in mid 1960s Scotland. However, this group was a small and selective one having little room for a substantial art going public to be fully involved. Furthermore, by locating this avant-garde in the sphere of a theatre club other problems occur. By classifying the Traverse's activities as theatrical, a public interested in the 'visual arts'

could be easily alienated. Also, the designation of the Traverse as a private, paying members club placed restrictions on any potential audience that had discovered the venue. The Traverse had important reverberations in regards to fringe theatre across Britain and, indeed, had implications for theatre in international circles. However, it can be argued that it never achieved its full potential in promoting avant-garde art, and it's influence for the history of art dwindled with the departure of Jim Haynes.

Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art

An examination of the work of Ivor Davies, a Welshman working in Edinburgh from 1963-78, further demonstrates the problems that the avant-garde faced when exploring different media for their work and crossing traditional boundaries within the arts.[19] Davies himself was allied to the Traverse Theatre and Art Gallery, having put on an exhibition of paintings in the gallery in November 1965. In the same year, he exhibited a selection of paintings and reliefs at the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh's Castlehill (Fig.8).

However, it is not Davies' paintings, but his ability to crossover between painting, performance and theatrical events that again highlights the versatility of the avant-garde that emerged throughout the 1960s. The performance events and destruction art for which Ivor Davies is most famous, are the events on which should be concentrated here for three reasons. Firstly, they provide a link to the theatrical events of the Traverse Theatre and the happenings of the Dramatists' Conference. Secondly, they stirred the imagination of the public in a similar manner to that of the nude happening, allowing us to gauge public opinion on the work. Finally, by examining the work of Ivor Davies and the experimental nature of his happenings, it

is possible to argue that evidence can be found to support the failings of the avant-garde on the grounds of inaccessibility to the general public.

In 1963, Davies had the idea that he wanted produce a kind of art that had the goal of combining performance with sculptural space and painting.[20] This work would be "something like a stage, or a performance; with both sides of an object extended three dimensionally, and changing three dimensionally…using lights and figures and a dancer or dancers and sound poetry".[21]

The closest comparison Davies could find for his early ideas were evident in the *Tulane Drama Review*, a journal that described the activities of Black Mountain College and the ideas of John Cage, Robert Rauschenburg and Allan Kaprow. The review highlighted the importance of notions of chance and randomness in art and the 'total' artwork; a kind of art that would be able to cross over media boundaries. The ideas expressed in the journal, and those of Allan Kaprow on the creation of a total art work, had much resonance with Davies.[22] When asked about the relationship of art to theatre and theatre to performance, Davies' reply highlights again the idea that there should be no divide between genres,

> I'm interested…in the idea of theatre into art and art into theatre and I didn't see a dividing line between them. In fact, at that time (1966) I didn't see any divide between what they later called performance art and theatre and painting or sculpture even. I wanted the whole thing to be combined into, I suppose, ultimately something almost Wagnerian, like Wagner's idea of *gesamtkunstwerk*. I don't know whether it was quite like that, it was rather a mid twentieth century version of *gesamtkunstwerk*.[23]

This idea that there should be no divide is reminiscent of Jim Haynes' theories, and is illustrated by Davies' work in Edinburgh in the mid-1960s.

Britain's first public demonstration of auto-destructive work was staged by Ivor Davies on 24 August 1966 for the International Student's Club at the Women's Union in Chambers Street in Edinburgh.[24]

> The room had a high stucco ceiling and very good acoustics. The invited guests were protected by a wire netting screen. After a long wait the first explosion occurred (sic) a scaffolding tube which launched a celophane (sic) rocket high in the air. Destroyed charred debris was scattered. The audience anticipated the second explosion, a yoghurt pot full of ochre paint was blasted on to a large sheet of paper and some holes were made in a sheet of stretched polythene. The paint, scattered in needlefine points on its surface.[25]

This event was closely followed on 1 September 1966 by an event at the Territorial Army Drill Hall, Edinburgh (Figs. 9 & 10). It took place before an audience of 100 people protected behind a barrier. Regimental insignia was mounted by Major Alyson of the drill hall against a background and floor of hessian about 20 ft by 10ft, behind which was a series of collages, constructions and assemblages made up of consumer society debris. Carefully painted on a stretched bed sheet support, was an anatomical figure with a moustache, copied from a 19th century medical booklet. The face was hidden by a portrait print of John Bunyan. The organs were covered by gold plastic, which would later peel away, and plaster gloves were exploded. A golden phallus in a polythene cage was added to the assembled figure.

All of these parts were bound together with a mixture of twine and polythene. Other objects used included a suspended female tailor's shop dummy turning slowly, a stuffed toy dog, gum boots holding rocket mock-ups, plastic yoghurt containers in a 3 dimensional setting and a bundle of papers in a 6ft tube of resinated maps. The assembled objects were then exploded by Ivor Davies who was clad in a white boiler suit. The event had combined sculpture, painting, performance and theatre with the air of a happening.[26]

Other events staged by the artist used the same combination of diverse genres. The next event in Edinburgh used the same anatomical dummy that Davies had used in the drill hall, this time with the face of the actor Robert Mitchum superimposed on to its head. This same figure was also used in destruction events in London (Figs. 11 & 12). Again, the dummy and other objects on a stage were exploded

systematically.[27] Another happening was instigated when Davies invited people to dinner one evening. After the dinner, he stuck the leftover debris to the dining table (Fig. 13). Later, he took the table to the beach at Cramond near Edinburgh, surrounded it with six people, then six others and finally by six dummies before detonating the entire thing (Fig. 14).[28]

What Davies was aiming to do during these events in Edinburgh was to show that the use of destructive materials might help to relate new art forms to the elements of aggression and destruction in society. As Davies said, destruction work was:

> ...an attack on society itself, it was critical of the values of society, and it, in a way predicted the increasing violence in society. The wars and of course the obsolescence was the obvious thing, the wastefulness of materials and the deliberate built-in obsolescence.[29]

Of course, this was not a comfortable art for a conservative, or indeed radical, audience, and this was a problem that Davies' would face in presenting his work to the general public. Furthermore, the integration of audience reaction to the work, an objective that Jim Haynes had also strived for, was important to Davies:

> I have been trying to combine sound, light, form and expressiveness to bring out the audience reaction in a way which has never quite been done before.[30]

In fact, Davies had personal links with Jim Haynes and the Paperback book shop, and again links can be traced between the Paperback, the Traverse Theatre Club and other experimental events that were happening in Edinburgh.

One performance of Davies', in October 1966, took place in an empty shop on Edinburgh's Charles Street, in the basement where Jim Haynes 'Paperback' book shop had been situated. It involved a series of explosions inside shop dummies in the shop window (Fig. 15). The event was attended by the police and the fire brigade, and was filmed by the BBC for their television programme, 'Quick Look Round'. The

point of the destruction, according to Davies, was to "illustrate Aberfan and the neglect of British governments to deal with the problems facing the Welsh mining valleys".[31]

However, the plight of Aberfan was largely overlooked by the Scottish media and attention was focused instead on the disruption and shock caused by the event. Similarly, in 1967, Davies staged a number of late night performances at the Traverse Theatre Club, which provoked further shock amongst the general public.[32] These performances involved,

> ...dancers and slides being projected and coloured lights...the Traverse Theatre was then at the top of the Royal Mile. It was tiny and the audience sat on both sides, the show was in the middle. We had a number of explosives inside safe buckets.[33]

However, it was one event held at the Traverse Theatre in July of 1967, involving a nude scene reminiscent of the happening at the Dramatists' Conference at the Edinburgh Festival of 1963, which provoked the most anger,

> A naked woman, her face hidden by a mask, is sprayed with foam on stage. Minutes later, a male actor wallows in animal entrails and holds aloft a skinned cow's head. These incidents are part of a 45-minute late night show called "Still Life Story" (sic).[34]

Still Life Story II was variously described as, a "theatre of blood and old iron"[35], a performance of "inexplicable buffoonery" and a waste of time and money, particularly objectionable to some critics as the Traverse was subsidised at the time by a £10,000 Arts Council grant.[36] Certainly the press had taken an interest in Ivor Davies, even if it was a unfavourable one; "no less than six Press photographers turned up to obtain pictures of the 'way-out' activities supposed to typify modern art", when the Edinburgh Experimental Group was launched in Buccleuch Place.[37]

This kind of experimental performance that had found its genesis at the Traverse, would later be toured nation wide by Davies, with the experimental theatre

group formed after the initial Edinburgh performances. The 'Edinburgh Experimental Group' included a technician, Ray Halstead, and a student, Graeme Farnell, who later became director of the arts centre at Inverness.[38] In March, 1967, this group, along with Max Stafford-Clarke, then director of the Traverse Theatre, issued a press release which summarised their aims,

> A new experimental group will be born at 2.30 p.m. on March 10th 1967 out of a giant egg which will appear in Buccleuch Place. A press conference will follow.
> Edinburgh already has a classical and avant-garde theatre. But the aim of THIS group is to develop an *experimental workshop for the creation of new theatrical forms* - emphasising for example visual and structural elements of theatre - using new sounds - word patterns and *other media of as wide and free a range as possible.* A festival production is visualised. [39]

Therefore, Davies' events were accessible to the press, and to the general public albeit on a secondary level. The actual audience for his performances was very limited, and the art going public would be not be inclined to take his work seriously through newspaper accounts. After all, Davies' events in Edinburgh in 1966-67 attracted many adverse reactions from the press that included criticism describing his destruction work as "juvenile bathos" and "inferior to any fireworks display…seen".[40]

The performances and other events that Ivor Davies undertook in Edinburgh preceded the Destruction in Art Symposium to be held in London in September 1966. This event was taken much more seriously than Davies' events in Edinburgh, attracting international interest. The Symposium was attended by international artists, collagists, instigators of happenings, and "specialists in piano-smashing, car-burning and street fights"; indeed anyone with an interest in destruction art.[41] However, the seeds of this event were sown in the Edinburgh performances. Indeed, Davies later considered the events in Edinburgh to be a part of the Destruction In Arts Symposium.[42]

The London event had its origins in a meeting in 1966 between Ivor Davies and Gustav Metzger, one of the leading exponents of the Destruction in Art movement and an ex-student of Davies' Peter Holiday. Holiday suggested an event at Grangemoor college in May 1966, a small event for students. This event provided the basis for a larger gathering, and the Destruction in Arts Symposium (DIAS) in London in 1966 was born; an event which would bring together an eclectic mix of scientists, artists and writers who were interested in, or who used, destruction in their work.

Leaders in destruction art who attended the conference included collagist and 'happener' Al Hansen; Ralph Oritz, a piano smasher from New York; delegates from creative vandalism movements like the Provos in Amsterdam and the Zaj Group in Spain; Herman Nitsch, Otto Mühl and Günter Brus of Austria and John Latham from London who built and burnt book towers (Fig.16). Ivor Davies' is pictured in *Life* magazine in the very middle of the other international artists (Fig.17).[43]

The fact that Davies was undertaking work in Edinburgh in preparation for the event, again highlights the fact that avant-garde art of international status was evident in Scotland during the 1960s, and that the art scene had the potential to be at the forefront of experimentation. Davies' ideas and involvement with Gustav Metzger illustrates the links between experimentation in Scotland and the ideas of world wide movements in radical art. Furthermore, after the Destruction In Art Symposium, Davies' work was taken more seriously by the media, and especially the art journals, and was included in several international publications including *Time Magazine*, *Life*, *Studio International* and *Structure*.[44]

However, Davies' events in Edinburgh had no major impact on the Scottish art scene or conscious of the Scottish public. His performances were seen by a very

small audience, and were accessible to only a small minority of the general public. For example, the event at Jim Haynes' Paperback book shop was only witnessed by around 100 passers-by who had gathered to watch. Similarly, the 'nude' performance of *Still Life Story II* was available to view to only 60 members of the Traverse Theatre Club. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Traverse was a private club and not open to the general public. This highlights the fact that much of the experimental work that took place in Edinburgh was inaccessible. Late night performances at the Traverse theatre and happenings at the Paperback had a limited audience.

A film that Davies said would be made from video clips of the Edinburgh events was never completed. However, even the film was never intended for public viewing. Rather, it was part of a private diary of the artist's:

> ...when I recorded these events, I did it purely for the record. I like to record what I do like a diary. At that time there wasn't the documentation and documenting of art events to the extent that there is now.[45]

The evidence left of Davies' work in Edinburgh during the mid 1960s is difficult to find, with the exception of the criticism of a largely conservative press. It goes unrecorded in most catalogues and surveys of Scottish art, perhaps because of the difficulty in classifying his work under traditional category headings; poor documentation of events; a public unwillingness to embrace the radical or simply the inaccessibility of his work to a receptive audience.

In addition, the audience exposed to Davies' work and other events of a similar nature, were not necessarily an avid art going audience. Much of the work discussed had a random audience made up of a gathering of spectators who witnessed events by chance. This was the case with the shop window explosion in Charles Street. Others, including the patrons of the Traverse Theatre Club were introduced to

happenings under the guise of theatrical events. Some people became aware of experimental art accidentally, as was the case at the Dramatists' Conference.

Therefore, it is fair to say that the radical and experimental art discussed in this chapter was relatively inaccessible to an art going public, especially in comparison to the purely visual art of painting. These limitations were arguably failings affecting much avant-garde experimentation taking place within Scotland.

Furthermore, to understand the avant-garde required on the part of the public a complex artistic vocabulary and willingness to embrace other art forms outside painting and sculpture. Additionally, these other art forms were often transient - performances, happenings and interactions which left no permanent record to digest or discover after the event. Of course, in the case of Destruction Art, this transience and impermanence was intentional. This fact was emphasised by Gustav Metzger in his manifesto on Auto-Destructive Art, as early as 1959:

> Auto-destructive paintings, sculptures and constructions have a life time varying from a few moments to twenty years. When the disintegrative process is complete the work is to be removed from the site and scrapped.[46]

The very nature of destruction art renders its failure as a permanent and well documented art movement.

Again, as was noted in the examination of the Paperback and the Traverse Theatre Club, we see in the work of Ivor Davies part of an emergent and potentially viable avant-garde in existence in Scotland. However, its development into a substantial movement is impeded by a number of factors. Much of the work discussed took place on a small scale and was relatively inaccessible to an interested public. It was available on a larger scale only through the secondary source of an often unsympathetic press; secondary sources in the form of documentation were not concordant with the nature of destruction work.

Even today, much evidence of the events masterminded for Edinburgh by Ivor Davies are poorly documented and difficult to access. Much documentation comes in the form of newspaper and magazine clippings. The best documentation is found with the artist himself, in the form of personal diaries and archival material. However, Davies is largely ignored in surveys of art in Scotland.

By examining the development of Jim Haynes Paperback book shop and the development of the Traverse Theatre Club alongside the work of Ivor Davies we can see the same themes emerging. It can be argued that the diversity of this work and its ability to cross between the genres of theatre, performance, painting and sculpture rendered serious problems of classification for a traditional art world. These problems perhaps alienated many people who would not have known where to find this work. Therefore, it is as true today as it was in the 1960s, that a major failing of emergent avant-garde art is its inaccessibility and 'underground' nature.

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[1] The building was demolished to make way for a car park for the University of Edinburgh.
[2] Cordelia Oliver, 'Napoleon in a Scottish Pond', *Arts Guardian*, 18 August 1970.
[3] Extract from *The Scotsman*, 1960, reproduced in, Alistair Moffat, *The Edinburgh Fringe*, (London: Johnston and Bacon, 1978).
[4] See chapter One, footnote 14 for reference.
[5] I am indebted to Alistair Moffat for bringing this my attention to this poem, and for the information about the events at Jim Haynes' book shop.
The italics used are my own, to highlight the emphasis on audience participation.
[6] See chapter one, note 47.
It should be noted that although this idea was innovative and new to the art scene in Scotland, this idea of bringing audience and actors closer together had been used by the Oxford Theatre Group in 1955. See Moffat, p. 54.
[7] See Moffat, p. 55.
[8] Robert Hewison, *Too Much:Art and Society in the Sixties*, (London: Methuen, 1986), p.105.
[9] The building had previously been one of Edinburgh's most infamous brothels, as well as the site for Cambridge University's temporary theatre club 'The Sphinx' during the 1962 Festival Fringe. 'The Sphinx' had provided late night cabaret and food.
[10] See Moffat, p. 55. Jim Haynes appears not to have been in Scotland between late November 1962 and 26 February 1963.
[11] See Keith Hartley, *Scottish Art since 1900*, (Edinburgh: Lund Humphries in association with the National Galleries of Scotland, 1989), p. 176.
[12] The decision to expand the gallery and acquire a larger exhibition space was made by the Traverse Theatre Club committee at the 1964 Festival.
[13] The plays performed were: Tom Wright's *There Was a Man*, Paul Ableman's *Green Julia* and C. P. Taylor's *Happy Days Are Here Again.* They were staged in London at the New Arts Theatre.
[14] Jim Haynes along with the director Michael Geliot tried to establish a London Traverse Theatre Club again in 1966, with a season running from 25 April to 16 July. This was more successful and was repeated in 1967.

[15] See Moffat, p. 59.
[16] See Hewison, p. 123. Among the groups that performed or temporarily resided there were The People Show, Wherehouse/La Mama Company, Portable Theatre, The Freehold Company, David Hare and Howard Benton's Portable Theatre and Pip Simmons.
[17] See Moffat, p. 124.
[18] Hewison, p. 123.
[19] Davies worked at the University of Edinburgh as a lecturer in the Department of Fine Art, where he lectured on the History of Art in the 19th and 20th centuries. Concurrently, he continued personal research and painting.
[20] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999. See Appendix A.
[21] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[22] See Chapter One, footnote 49, for Allan Kaprow on the creation of a total art work.
[23] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[24] Davies maintains that he was, "the first person in Britain to use explosives in work, in art work...in Edinburgh...in the Drill Hall". Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[25] From an account kept by the artist on his destruction work in Edinburgh and London from 1966. See Appendix.
[26] The descriptions of these events come from notes made by the artist at the time of the performances, and can be found in his personal archive.
[27] A very similar happening had been put on by the artist in the Mercury Theatre, London, in 1966 and was featured as a photo-documentary in *Time* magazine, September 1966.
[28] Davies originally intended the table to be blown up in a garden at 35 Drummond Street in Edinburgh. However, he was advised by the police not to set off explosions in close proximity to buildings.
[29] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[30] Margaret Hignett, 'The Man Who Loves to Shock You', *The Daily Record*, 14 July 1967, p. 4.
[31] MacKenzie Rhind, 'Look Out! It's Art: Shop is Shattered as Ivor's Show Goes With Bang', *Scottish Daily Express*, Saturday October 29, 1966.
[32] There are no official records of these performances. Information comes from a curriculum vitae of the artist, kindly supplied by himself. The most famous of these happenings was entitled *Still Life* Story *II* from July 1967.
[33] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[34] Margaret Hignett. 'The Man Who Loves to Shock You'. *The Daily Record*, Friday 14 July, 1967, p. 4. The event at Edinburgh was in fact *Still Life Story II*. *Still Life Story I* had been staged by the Edinburgh Experimental Group - Ivor Davies, Ray Halstead and Graeme Farnell - at Durham University Theatre's gathering of dramatic societies at Dunelm House on 19th and 20th June, 1967.
[35] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[36] 'The Independent Newspaper Opinion - Buffoonery', *Scottish Daily Express*, July 1967, p. 8.
[37] 'About the Arts: More a Mishappening', *The Scotsman*, 21 March, 1967.
[38] Davies would tour with this group in 1968 to the Bristol Arts Centre; Dunelm House, Durham University; University College, Swansea and Bradford College of Art. Previously, in 1966-7, around the time of the Traverse performances, he had also worked at the Mercury Theatre in London staging similar performances.
[39] Press release issued by Ray Halstead, Graeme Farnell, Ivor Davies and Max Stafford-Clarke from the Edinburgh University Dramatic Society, 1 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh. From the personal archive of Ivor Davies, Penarth, Wales.
Note that the italics are the present author's.
[40] 'New Art Form or Juvenile Bathos?', *The Glasgow Herald*, Friday 2 September, 1966.
[41] Barry Farrell.,'The Other Culture: An Explorer of the Worldwide Underground of Art Finds, Behind its Orgiastic Happenings and Brutalities, a Wild Utopian Dream', *LIFE* (Atlantic Edition), Spring, 1967, 86-102.
[42]Interview by the author with Ivor Davies (Appendix A). Also, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archives: GMA. 37, Richard Demarco Archive, letter from Ivor Davies to Richard Calvocoressi, 11 March 1989: "The first DIAS destruction was in the Drill Hall in Edinburgh; this preceded the September DIAS London."
[43] Barry Farrell, 'The Other Culture', *LIFE* (Atlantic Edition, Spring, 1967), 86-87.
[44] *Time Magazine* (September, 1966); *LIFE* (Atlantic Edition Spring, 1967); *Studio International* (December, 1966) and *Structure* (Spring, 1968).
[45] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[46] Gustav Metzger. 'Auto-Destructive Art', London, 4 November 1959. Taken from Gustav Metzger,

'damaged nature, auto-destructive art', (Nottingham: coracle@workfortheeyetodo, 1996), p. 59.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DOMINANT HEGEMONY OF THE PAINTERLY TRADITION AND THE PLACE OF THE AVANT-GARDE

In this chapter it is important to consider what might be called the 'traditional' art scene in Scotland in the 1960s. By doing so, the restrictions that the artistic climate within the country could place on what might be termed non-traditional or experimental art can be examined.[1] It is necessary for comparison to place the avant-garde alongside the artists that dominated Scottish art throughout the 1960s. In this way, exploration of the hegemony of the painterly tradition, the marketplace for it, and its acceptance amongst the public is made possible. This acceptance can be placed in contrast with the market for the avant-garde. In highlighting the problems of the art market, limitations hindering the growth of the avant-garde can be further examined.

In general terms, art historians would perhaps describe the 1960s as a decade in which art freed itself from past tradition, embracing instead the liberation of a decade which provided a climate of "anything goes".[2] Indeed, it was this idea, and exact phrase of "anything goes" that both Keith Hartley and Duncan MacMillan use in their established surveys of art in Scotland in the twentieth century. What they argue is that artists became open to the influences of a contemporary metropolitan society. They become aware of the possibility that factors like advertising and popular imagery could be drawn upon in the context of the visual arts, in order to convey artistic concepts and ideas. It was the idea behind the image that was to become the defining factor of a piece of art, regardless of its physical media. Furthermore, it was the dominance and importance of the idea that allowed a movement away from

painting, towards an art that utilised such diverse media as assemblage, the environment, photography and performance as its vehicles.

However, in Scotland, these ideas were the exception rather than the norm among established artists and art institutions. Certainly, an embryonic avant-garde existed, but the artists involved remained outside of the established art societies and their work was largely inaccessible to the general public. The predominant artistic practice within Scotland fell into the category of painting in the visual arts. Indeed, it is possible to argue that "anything" did not go, a fact emphasised by the refusal of the Scottish public to fully embrace the work of avant-garde artists. The type of painting that became popular and accepted was a decorative painting, challenging perhaps in view of the formal tradition, but not radical in the sense of the avant-garde.

The Edinburgh School

It was the work of a group of painters called the 'Edinburgh School' that dominated the art market in Edinburgh during the 1960s. The influence they had over painting in Edinburgh made them the predominantly influential artists in the Edinburgh art scene from the 1920s onwards. These artists drew on the influence of William Gillies (1898-1973), John Maxwell (1905-1962) and William MacTaggart (1903-1981). Members of the group, which included Anne Redpath (1895-1965), Robin Philipson (b. 1916), David McClure (1926-1998), Elizabeth Blackadder (b.1931) and John Houston (b. 1930), provided the basis for much of the painting in Scotland until well into the 1980s.

Although the artists in this group were not officially a school, they can be grouped together due to their common interests. Certainly, they were far more closely bound than the avant-garde. Some members of the avant-garde shared common aims,

and used the same venues like the Traverse Theatre and the Richard Demarco Gallery. Nevertheless, they were very individualistic and largely remote from each other. In contrast, the interests of the Edinburgh School were very similar, and concentrated on landscape, still-life and "painterly" and expressive styles.[3] Furthermore, all had trained at Edinburgh College of Art, shared an artistic base in Edinburgh and a more or less common chronology in terms of artistic development.

The importance of the first generation of Edinburgh School painters - Gilles, Maxwell, Redpath and MacTaggart, should be emphasised here. Although all trained at Edinburgh College of Art it is their positions as teachers there, and as academicians of the Royal Scottish Academy, which perhaps influenced the younger artists most. This influence and style came to pervade much of the painting produced in Edinburgh, and especially in the College.

William Gilles became Head of Painting in 1946 and Principal from 1960-66. In 1947, he was elected to the Royal Scottish Academy and in 1970 he received a knighthood. John Maxwell began teaching at Edinburgh College of Art in 1929, and although he was later to retire in 1943, he was made an academician in 1949, and was highly influential. In 1951, Anne Redpath became the first woman ever to be appointed as a full member of the academy. Furthermore, her home in London Street, Edinburgh, became the focus for Edinburgh painting when she moved there from Hawick in 1949. Similarly, William MacTaggart, who had studied with Gillies at Edinburgh College of Art became an academician in 1948. This role led to his appointment as President of the Royal Scottish Academy between 1959 and 1969, and he was knighted in 1963.

In the work of these four painters we can trace distinct European influences. Indeed, Gillies, Maxwell and Redpath spent some time training in Europe, as all won

travelling scholarships, and some of the influences from this time spent abroad are evident throughout their work. Gillies travelled to Paris in 1923 after winning his scholarship. There he studied under André Lhote at the Académie Montparnasse, which Lhote had opened in 1922. However, Lhote's post-Cubist style did not influence Gillies and he later moved on to Florence. Other European influences can be detected in Gillies work. For example, in his expressive painterly style, especially that developed from the 1930s onwards, we can detect the influence of Edvard Munch. This interest may have been cemented by an exhibition of Munch's work which had been shown at the Scottish Society of Artists in 1931.

Similarly, Maxwell won a travelling scholarship and also went to France in 1926. There he studied under Fernand Léger. However, it was not Léger's work that inspired Maxwell. Rather, it was Léger's interest in mystical themes. These themes led Maxwell to explore French symbolist art. In particular, he was drawn to the work of Odilon Redon. In turn, this led him to study the work of the Russian-born Marc Chagall, who also worked predominantly in Paris. Like Maxwell, Chagall's interest lay in the depiction of fantastical elements and images, rather than the exploration of any kind of social realism. Indeed, it is easy to compare the radiant colours, mystical scenes and flower pieces of Redon, and the work of Chagall, to that of Maxwell (Fig.18).

The work of Anne Redpath, whose favourite subjects included highly decorative still-lives of domestic objects, had also been influenced by the French, notably in her studio still-lives and Border landscape scenes of the 1930s and 1940s. Similarly, William MacTaggart used the French model combined with elements of a northern European style. This can be seen in his vivid landscapes that show the influence in particular of Georges Roualt (Fig. 19).

The style and expression of the first generation of the Edinburgh School was cemented in the work of the following generation that had benefited from the tuition of Gillies and Maxwell. Furthermore, the next generation of Edinburgh School painters also succeeded the first in the art institutions of the city. In addition, the European influence was passed on and developed. For example, this artistic succession can be exemplified in the career and work of Robin Philipson, who had studied as a pupil of Gillies and Maxwell from 1936 to 1940. Following in the footsteps of Gillies, he was to become Head of Painting at Edinburgh College of Art in 1960, a position he was to hold until 1982.

This succession and cohesiveness of styles and interests was to ensure the continuing influence of this kind of work at Edinburgh College of Art and in Edinburgh art circles, until well into the 1980s. Consecutively to his post at Edinburgh College of Art, Robin Philipson was to hold the position of President of the Royal Scottish Academy, a position that he was awarded in 1973. He also gained further distinctions including, in 1965, fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and member of the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland. He had a numerous one-man shows, and his work was exhibited in public collections throughout Britain and America.[4] His bold and vivid style of expressionism was given impetus through the work of Oskar Kokoshka, whom he greatly admired, and this influence can be seen in his series of paintings of cock fights from the 1960s and 1970s (Fig. 20).

Elizabeth Blackadder continued the tradition that had existed in Edinburgh of decorative abstraction in her water-colours, developing and extending the aims of the Scottish Colourists (Fig. 21). Her subjects largely consist of flowers, still-lifes and cats. John Houston had a marked interest in bold colourful landscapes (Fig. 22), and his affiliations to Gillies, Maxwell and even William MacTaggart are clearly evident.

Both Blackadder and Houston became full members of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1972.

Perhaps it was the positions that members of the Edinburgh School held within the Royal Scottish Academy, and their affiliation to the Art College in Edinburgh that gave them the dominance and leadership that they engendered within Scotland. Certainly, their popularity in Edinburgh was evident in their share of the art market and the work of their artistic successors. Their interests clearly did not lie in any kind of break or freedom from past tradition. Nor did they embrace an 'anything goes' philosophy, or experiment with diverse media. What the Edinburgh School did, in fact, was quite the opposite.

The Edinburgh School largely rejected any notions of art as a social or intellectual activity, and as a result, social and experimental polemic is absent in their painting. Rather, this polemic is found in the work of the avant-garde. However, it can be argued that the marketplace for the avant-garde and that for the painting of the Edinburgh School artists was not, in fact, the same marketplace, nor did it have the same characteristics.

The work of the Edinburgh School found success within the art establishments of the capital and the commercial galleries dealing with mainly middle-class buyers, interested in buying paintings for their homes. In comparison, the work of the avant-garde was consumed in a completely different way. In an economic sense, it could be said that the avant-garde experiments were consumed in a kind of commercial manner, for example, in the work of Ivor Davies at the Traverse Theatre. After all, theatre members did have to pay a guinea membership to attend performances there. However, much avant-garde work was *not* commercially consumed in this way, and was not intended to be. In fact, the destruction work of

Ivor Davies was not intended to be marketable. Indeed, it was supposed to provide criticism of an indulgent consumer led culture. Ironically, *Still Life Story II*, that had been performed at the Traverse Theatre Club is an example of his destruction work being commercially exploited.

Nevertheless, events like *Strategy Get Arts* presented through the Richard Demarco Gallery in 1970, and many events at the Paperback book shop were not commercial in the same sense as Edinburgh School painting. Of course they were consumed by the audiences that participated in events, but this consummation is arguably different from that taking place in the dealers' galleries. The audience that these events attracted were often interested in theatre, literature and art, and were not primarily interested in buying art as decoration for their homes. The same dealer/customer transaction found in the selling of the work of the Edinburgh School was not present in the work of the avant-garde. Furthermore, the work of the Edinburgh School was well established within the teaching institutions in the city and within the Royal Scottish Academy. In comparison, the art societies and the Royal Scottish Academy that favoured the Edinburgh School, had little interest or enthusiasm for the radical activities of the avant-garde, and there is no evidence of the avant-garde exhibiting within these institutions during the 1960s.

It must also be recognised that there were economic restrictions within Scotland on the nature of the work that even the Edinburgh School produced. In turn, it can be suggested that these limitations had equal if not greater implications for the development of the avant-garde. This is not to say that the Edinburgh School would have produced dramatically different style of work had they painted outwith Scotland. Nevertheless, it could be argued that they perhaps pushed the boundaries of experimentation as far as they could go in a conservative climate, whilst still relying

in the most part on the art market. This art market could support a limited number of commercial artists. However, the art market within Scotland was particularly small, and as a result, could not sustain work that was not in demand from a buying public. This economic factor is emphasised by the fact that all of the figures involved in the Edinburgh School sustained their livelihoods as teachers.

Of course, this conservative marketplace that could not fully support even the best selling Edinburgh School artists, had little hope of providing any success for a radical avant-garde. Therefore, the marketplace and the established venues for exhibiting art would not pull the avant-garde together as a group, in the way that they did for the Edinburgh painters and their followers. Alongside the inaccessibility of the avant-garde, this lack of commercial marketplace would also inhibit the growth of the avant-garde.

Furthermore, in order to make a living as an artist without taking on another job, many artists resident in Scotland moved away to art centres such as London or New York. It could be argued that this was the fate of many avant-garde artists, and another reason why the avant-garde within Scotland did not gain the impetus to develop fully. In comparison, to remain in Scotland was a decision that most of the members of the Edinburgh School made. As a result, the reliance on the formalist qualities of painting that we see in their work was an economic as well as an artistic decision. This type of painting could be relied on to sell, therefore guaranteeing at least moderate success and a viable living for an artist if it was coupled with a teaching career. In addition, the work of these artists was popular outside Scotland. This popularity could be exploited from within Scotland by artists who had connections through the Edinburgh School and Royal Scottish Academy with

international galleries. Artists producing this kind of work could also use dealers to represent them in public and private galleries abroad.

For example, Elizabeth Blackadder had been represented not only in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, but in the New York Museum of Modern Art. She also had a one-woman show at the Mercury Gallery, London in 1966. Similarly, John Houston had a one-man show at the Mercury Gallery in the same year. In the previous year, he had also gained acclaim for his painting after being included in the exhibition *Seven Scottish Painters in New York* at the IBM Gallery in 1965. Robin Philipson had gained even more prestige. Alongside his various academic and institutional accolades, he had been visiting professor of painting at the University of Colorado in 1963, and had exhibited work in the New York show mentioned above, and in many American public collections.

The avant-garde could not rely on dealers' galleries and art establishment connections for two reasons. Firstly, they did not have the support of the Royal Scottish Academy or the connections that the academy could afford them. This advantage was, however, a privilege that the Edinburgh School had. In addition, the kind of performance work and experimental events that many artists undertook were reliant on the artist's presence. This kind of work could not be exported and shown by dealers, and therefore necessitated that the artists travel outside Scotland in order to exhibit their work to the same extent as the painters. This absence of the marketable 'art object' to be exported and consumed, perhaps led again to a lack of the kind of cohesiveness amongst the avant-garde that can be seen amongst the artists of the Edinburgh School.

Scotland had a limited sustainable gallery system to offer space for artists to show and sell work in the early 1960s outside of the confines of the large exhibiting

societies such as the Royal Scottish Academy, the Society of Scottish Artists and the Royal Society of Watercolourists. Smaller galleries were starting to be established by the beginning of the 1960s, but they would have to rely, at least initially, on a type of art that they could rely on to be commercially viable. This reliance would lead to the exclusion of avant-garde artists in favour of artists producing work in the form of popular art objects. These galleries included the 57 Gallery in Edinburgh and the Charing Cross Gallery in Glasgow. Other galleries followed towards the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s: the Compass Gallery in Glasgow in 1968; the Printmakers Workshop in Edinburgh in 1967; Glasgow Printmakers in 1973 and Peacock Printers in Aberdeen in 1974. However, these galleries came too late for the avant-garde of the 1960s, and few, in any case, were interested in the radical experiments of the avant-garde. In addition, the subsidies from the Scottish Arts Council, newly created in 1967, did little to help the situation of the avant-garde until the end of the decade.

Similarly, the National Gallery of Modern Art had only opened in August 1960, and was not yet a viable option for exhibitions for younger non-established artists. The lack of abundant commercial galleries that stunted the art scene in Edinburgh was lamented by David Baxandall, Director of the National Galleries of Scotland in 1966. He criticised the situation, and indeed, the Edinburgh School itself,

> Modern Scottish Painting has many virtues but a good deal of it suffers from the effects of inbreeding. We all know the sort of painting that has been called 'Edinburgh School', in which pleasant colour is combined with skill in handling paint broadly but tastefully, decoratively rather than expressively.
> Any painter who follows this style in Scotland is fairly sure of support from the picture-buying public; it is the accepted and established thing. As a result, many painters have produced variations on the styles of leading local painters here in Scotland and a very cosy time is had by all. It is just a little parochial and it doesn't have all that much to do with the main current of contemporary painting.[5]

However, not all of the pupils of Edinburgh School painters were content to follow in the footsteps of their teachers to produce variations on the Edinburgh style of

painting. Indeed, radical departures within the realm of painting were made by artists in the 1960s who, whilst being taught by artists like Robin Philipson and John Maxwell, vehemently denied the tradition of 'belle peinture' that they advocated.[6]

Alexander Moffat and John Bellany: Rebels in the Establishment

In the work of Alexander Moffat and John Bellany the continuation of the idea of an art that looks to past tradition in Scotland can be seen. However, instead of looking to the Scottish Colourists or to artists like William McTaggart (1835-1910), they looked back further. They developed an interest in figuration and narrative, which could be traced as far back as the eighteenth century. They, too, also looked to European influences; the work of Bellany was to be inspired by such diverse sources as Jacques-Louis David, Eugène Delacroix and Gustave Courbet and later by artists like Max Beckmann and Otto Dix.

Alexander Moffat was also to be inspired by the writers of the Scottish Renaissance like Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman MacCaig, Sydney Goodsir Smith, George MacKay Brown and John Tonge. These writers believed that they could regenerate Scottish cultural and political life, by taking Scottish themes and concerns and making them universal, modern and international. Like many members of the Edinburgh School, Moffat and Bellany travelled extensively in Europe. In 1963, they went to Paris and in 1965, Bellany explored Holland and Belgium with a travelling scholarship. In 1967, they travelled together to East Germany.

Moffat and Bellany share these themes of looking towards Scotland's past, as well as to European influences, with the painters of the 'Edinburgh School'. However, what sets them apart, is that it is possible to class these painters as operating in a more radical and experimental vein, albeit within the traditional medium of painting. Their

search for a new and vital form of expression within the medium of painting culminated in the mid to late 1960s with the search for a figurative art which could convey social content.

By examining events staged by Alexander Moffat and John Bellany during the three successive Edinburgh Festivals from 1963, the happenings at the Paperback book shop and the Drama Conference of the 1963 Edinburgh Festival can be placed in the context of their counterpart events. Bellany and Moffat directed their aims through the established means of painting and were encouraged in their work by Robin Philipson, who was at that time head of painting at Edinburgh College of Art where both men studied. In 1963, during the Edinburgh Festival, they showed their work outdoors on the railings of Castle Terrace in Edinburgh and subsequently in 1964 and 1965 on the railings outside the National Gallery in Edinburgh (Fig. 23). The first of these events in 1963, was to have what Duncan MacMillan describes in his survey *Scottish Art in the Twentieth Century* as having, "a little of the air of a 'happening".[7] Today, this event may not seem to be particularly radical, but in the light of tradition within the Edinburgh art world in the early 1960s it takes on some significance.

This significance becomes evident if we consider the traditions of teaching and accepted practice within the arts. The events were an extraordinary gesture of defiance against the establishment from two relatively unknown students, rejecting the accepted norm within painting. The dominance of decorative landscape and still-life painting propagated by the Edinburgh School has already been considered. The teaching of these artists in art schools and colleges focused mainly on the study of nudes and antique casts, in order to teach proportion and anatomical correctness. Neither of these options were attractive as artistic models to Bellany and Moffat, and they were interested in alternative courses. For example, in their early painting, both

followed and were inspired by the abstract expressionism of Alan Davie and The New York School. However, this interest was short lived, and their focus shifted direction after their trip to Paris in early 1963. Indeed, Moffat himself said of the railing exhibitions that "Our Festival exhibitions at Castle Terrace (1963) and at The Mound (1964 and 1965) were dedicated to Courbet; they were acts of homage."

Therefore, what Bellany and Moffat did, and continued to do in their later work was to publicly display their belief in an art that could have social and intellectual significance outside of the decorative and aesthetic fact of the paint itself. However, it could be argued that what they aimed to do, however radical in the light of Edinburgh school painting, still operated within the traditional framework of painting, and indeed, within the traditional establishment. In many ways the argument that they were "as much indulged offspring of the system as rebels against it" holds some weight.[8]

In conclusion, it is possible to determine that artists working within Scotland in the first half of the 1960s who were too radical to be accepted into the limited art market had four choices. Like some of the artists within the Edinburgh School, an artist could work within the permitted artistic boundaries that would allow him to make a living through his art and teaching. Alternatively, (s)he could leave Scotland to pursue a career in an art centre like London or New York. Other options left to the artist working in a radical vein outside the bosom of the establishment, were to stay in Edinburgh and attempt to endure in a largely unsympathetic environment, or stay briefly before moving on.

Among the Scottish artists working in Scotland during the 1960s who left Scotland was Alan Davie, who was a student at Edinburgh College of Art between 1937 to 1941. After serving with the Royal Artillery during the Second World War,

he moved to London. Eduardo Paolozzi, similarly a student at Edinburgh College of Art, also left Scotland for London and Paris. Mark Boyle has been based in London since 1958 with his wife and fellow artist Joan Hills. Boyle had been born in Glasgow, and Hills had studied architecture in Edinburgh before their move. Similarly, Bruce McLean, who had studied at Glasgow School of Art from 1961 to 1963, left the confines of Scotland to study on the advanced sculpture course at St. Martin's School of Art in London, where he was eventually to settle.

Artists who chose to live within Scotland throughout their career and pursue an artistic vocation outside the traditional establishment of the art colleges and the Royal Scottish Academy were few. One exceptional artist who did was Ian Hamilton Finlay. It could be argued that he remained outside the established art world network primarily because he never belonged solely to the tradition of the visual arts. Rather, his interests lay in diverse arts, and again in his work we see an interest in the cross-fertilisation of culture that existed in Edinburgh in the Festival, the Paperback book shop and the Traverse Theatre Club.

However, many artists like Finlay who make up the category of the avant-garde in Scotland due to their experimentation, stayed in Scotland for a limited period only before leaving. Many were visitors, like Allan Kaprow, Kenneth Dewey and Ivor Davies. The lack of marketplace and the implications this had for radical art were substantial. Perhaps the single most important factor of this conservative market for the avant-garde was the movement away from Scotland by radical artists due to lack of support and exhibition space. Much of the work being created by the avant-garde in Scotland throughout the 1960s was made by artists who were not permanently based there. It was a transient avant-garde that was in existence in the country. Furthermore,

events were inaccessible and sporadic, many occurring unplanned throughout the Festival months.

These factors all led to a lack of cohesiveness amongst artists of an avant-garde nature. These artists were, in the main, working individually. Although the Paperback book shop and the Traverse Theatre Club provided meeting places and catalytic centres for radical experimentation, they were too small to bring a fully fledged avant-garde to fruition, or to bring all artists of similar mind in Scotland together to make one powerful movement. This lack of cohesiveness, caused in part by the conservative Scottish market and the very nature of the avant-garde, was one of the major failings in the development of the avant-garde in Scotland. The avant-garde would need to establish their own space for the exhibition of work and exchange of ideas in order to survive, and it is to an Edinburgh Gallery established by Richard Demarco in 1966 that we must turn to trace its progress.

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[1] By the 'traditional' art scene in Scotland, I am referring to the work of those artists whose work falls easily into the traditional categories of painting, sculpture or the applied arts.
[2] This description of "anything goes" to define the art of the early sixties within Edinburgh, is used by both Keith Hartley in *Scottish Art Since 1900* (London: Lund Humphries in association with the National Galleries of Scotland, 1989), p. 36, and also by Duncan MacMillan in *Scottish Art in the Twentieth Century*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1994), pg. 124.
[3] By painterley, I mean an interest in the plasticity of paint, and an interest in medium over subject matter.
[4] One man shows in Edinburgh 1954, 1958, 1961 (Festival), 1965 (Festival) and in London 1960, 1962 and 1964.
[5] David Baxandall, *Arts Review*, BBC Scotland, 1966. Reproduced in part in *Richard Demarco: A Life in Pictures*, (Edinburgh: Northern Books, 1995), p. 54.
[6] The lectures of Dr. Tom Normand, from January - April 1996, were of great assistance in the preparation of this section.
[7] Duncan MacMillan, *Scottish Art in the Twentieth Century*, p. 125.
[8] As above, p. 124.

CHAPTER FOUR

A NEW SPACE FOR EXPERIMENTATION: THE RICHARD DEMARCO GALLERY, 1966-c. 1976

In this chapter, the development and significance of the Richard Demarco Gallery, and its implications for radical art in Scotland, will be examined. The interconnectedness of the 1963 Edinburgh Festival, the Paperback book shop, the Traverse Theatre Club and the Richard Demarco Gallery will be explored in a previously unwritten history. This allows for a cohesive picture to be drawn of the most important venues for experimental art in Scotland in the 1960s. As Richard Demarco asserted in 1988,

> The Writers' Conference happening caused the Spirit of the avant-garde to explode in the heart of the official Edinburgh Festival.. It prepared the way for the Traverse Theatre and therefore the Demarco gallery to come into being.[1]

This new history also highlights the fact that the gallery provided a venue for Scottish art to be shown on an international stage, like that of the Festival, all year round. It also allowed for Scottish artists to work with, and discover, the art of international artists, many of whom were previously unseen in Scotland. In addition, by examining the programme of the gallery from its inception in 1966, through to the end of the decade, a sense of the relationship of the avant-garde to performance and theatre is again allowed.

Furthermore, the experimental nature of the work that is discussed in this thesis, art that crosses over boundaries between the arts, did not suddenly become classified and accepted with the inception of a new gallery space in 1966. Rather, the situation remained where Scottish modernism existed alongside more radical experiments taking place within visual art. Even in the new gallery, with its rich

heritage in experimentation gleaned from the Writers' Conference, the Paperback book shop and the Traverse Theatre Club, a reliance on a dependable commercial art remained evident. This type of art and the marketable product it necessitated, was vital to keep any gallery alive during the period. In the Richard Demarco Gallery, however, commercial artwork was set alongside avant-garde experiments like those of the Cricot Theatre II and Joseph Beuys.

Of course, other artists working within Scotland in an experimental vein had no connection with Richard Demarco. However, it can be argued that a substantial number of artists working outside the confines of established art in Scotland, had been connected at one point to the Edinburgh Festival, the Paperback book shop, the Traverse Theatre Gallery or the Richard Demarco Gallery. It is the experimental activities of the Richard Demarco Gallery that will be examined in this chapter. The discussion will be limited to the period 1966-c.1976 in order to explore fully the connections existing within Scottish art during the period. Nevertheless, the international spirit that Richard Demarco talks about above, and that permeated many of the more radical art experiments taking place during the 1960s, can be explored during this period.

1966 - The Inauguration of The Richard Demarco Gallery, 8 Melville Crescent

The importance of the inception of the Richard Demarco Gallery at 8 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh, in 1966 cannot be ignored (Fig. 24). Set up after Demarco left the Traverse Gallery, the new gallery aimed to provide exactly what Edinburgh lacked in terms of art space and patronage for young Scottish artists. During his last year at the Traverse, Demarco had been keen to expand the variety of exhibitions and activities that the gallery undertook. For example, in 1966, the

University of Durham had mounted a substantial Traverse exhibition, and Traverse shows had also been sent to other universities. However, Demarco's interest in this kind of expansion of the theatre's undertakings was met on the committee, of which he was a member, with little enthusiasm. It was this lack of interest in the expansion of the gallery's aims that led Demarco to set up the new gallery in Melville Crescent.[2]

In a similar way to that in which the Paperback book shop provided the inspiration for the Traverse Theatre Club, so the Traverse provided the impetus for the creation of the Richard Demarco Gallery. Demarco indeed acknowledges this debt to the Traverse in his autobiographical book, *A Life in Pictures*, when he says,

> I immediately rejoiced in the very first Edinburgh International Festival. The key word for me, even as a 17-year-old schoolboy in 1947, was 'international.' The Traverse theatre was born out of the internationalism of the Festival. I should know because I was fortunate enough to play a role among those who founded the Traverse. Chief among them was that legendary exile from New Orleans, Jim Haynes, whose whole life is still dedicated to creating an international communication system. The Demarco Gallery was born out of the Traverse.[3]

Furthermore, art critics such as Cordelia Oliver in the *Arts Guardian*, realised with hindsight in 1970 that,

> The original Traverse Gallery was a tiny shoestring affair in comparison with the present Richard Demarco Gallery in Melville Crescent, but it was in the Traverse ambience that he did his limbering up, bringing painters from abroad and nursing and promoting young Scots.[4]

What the new gallery also aimed to create in Edinburgh was a continuation of this ambience; a centre for international art, that would bring diverse artists from all over the world to exhibit alongside young Scottish talent. As was declared in the catalogue introduction to the inaugural exhibition of the gallery,

> It probably seems to the art-conscious Londoner, New Yorker or Parisian that Edinburgh, in spite of two decades of International Festivals, is a 'provincial' city, an opinion which until recently was perhaps justifiable. But the success of ventures such as the Traverse Theatre (in the establishment of which we were all closely involved) has led us to believe that Edinburgh is ripe to regain the place she held in her 'Golden Age' when she was the centre of thought and culture in Europe.[5]

Demarco goes on to talk about the differentiation between different art forms, reasoning that it is the *visual* arts that have been largely ignored by the Edinburgh art world and its public. However, it could be argued that what Demarco means here is that the more radical visual arts were overlooked, rather than the work being produced by artists such as those of the Edinburgh School, which was well regarded by a substantial art buying public.

In comparison, much radical and experimental art had a small audience, with a limited interest from the buying public and little established market value. The marketplace that did exist for art during the 1960s in Scotland was largely subsumed by the established painters. Furthermore, art without a 'saleable' quality, for example the 'happenings' at the Writers' Conference or the performance art at the Paperback bookshop, had little resonance with the Edinburgh art buying and general public. It had a small and limited audience, and was in that sense consumed, but it did not generate adequate financial wealth.

Therefore, visual art that defied the clear boundaries of painting, sculpture and applied art again posed a problem of definition. This was a type of art without a sense of place, largely relegated to what might be defined as the 'underground' in Scottish art, little understood and little cared for in a commercial sense. This problem would exclude this art from many of the commercial galleries available for artists to exhibit work.

However, the inception of the gallery at 8 Melville Place was to go some way to changing this situation,

> While *music* and *drama* of an international standard have been brought to Edinburgh through the Festival, there has been no 'Biennale', no serious attempt to present to the people of Edinburgh and her many visitors the international *contemporary* art scene. And in a pioneering way the exhibitions of this gallery hope to rectify the omission.[6]

The inaugural exhibition of the gallery showed the work of 57 artists that were already established in their fields, and all could be classified as painters or sculptors in the traditional sense.[7] Some of the artists had even been shown before by Demarco in the Traverse Gallery. For example, Alastair Michie (Fig. 25), Yago Pericot (Fig. 26), Barbara Balmer (Fig. 27), Frank Phelan and William Wright.[8] Indeed, Alastair Michie, who had studied architecture at Edinburgh College of Art, had been the first artist that Demarco had exhibited in the Traverse Gallery at James Court. It is interesting to note here, that the inaugural exhibition set the work of the traditional Scottish painters alongside international talent. Elizabeth Blackadder, John Houston and Robin Philipson all exhibited.[9]

However, it is also vital to note that the inaugural exhibition had the subtitle, 'The Richard Demarco Gallery Inaugural Exhibition of *Paintings, Sculptures and Prints*'; surely not the way to bring the, "contemporary art scene" mentioned above to the Scottish public (Fig. 28).[10] This initial exhibition, and indeed the subsequent exhibitions at the gallery in its inaugural year, remained largely within the realm of painting and sculpture displays.[11] Admittedly, avant-garde artists from across the world working within these fields displayed there to much acclaim, for example, Edgar Negret, a Columbian sculptor who exhibited abstract non-reflective metal forms at the gallery in 1967. In 1968, he was to go on to win the Sculpture prize at the Venice Biennale under the aegis of the Richard Demarco Gallery. However, art that was imbued with the cross-fertilisation of visual, performance and literary art forms was not evidenced in the gallery programme in 1966.

As is examined above, what was certain, was that the gallery was fulfilling its aim of bringing biennale calibre artists to the attention of the Edinburgh Festival and its public. Furthermore, work was being undertaken at the gallery to produce

shows for the Official Festival programme. One resulting show was called the 'Edinburgh Open One Hundred', the first open exhibition of contemporary British Art to be shown in Scotland, at the Hume Tower in Edinburgh.[12] The show consisted of one hundred paintings selected from 1,500 submitted in an open competition. It was organised in association with Edinburgh University, the Edinburgh Festival Society Ltd., and the Scottish Arts Council.

In these two examples, it is possible to see that the Richard Demarco Gallery was realising its intentions, and providing what it said it would in the catalogue of the inaugural exhibition - a venue for both international and home-grown talent. This promise would continue in the later exhibition programme of the gallery, in annual exhibitions that were to run for several years, displaying each year a new generation of young Scottish artists. These exhibitions were called 'The Young Contemporaries'. They would be presented alongside progressive international art. For example, in January 1968, the 'Young Contemporaries' show was swiftly followed by an exhibition of the work of young artists from Brazil, which had come straight from the Paris Biennale des Jeunes.

However, somewhat of the spirit of Jim Haynes's adventurous crossing over of artistic boundaries, and indeed Demarco's enthusiasm for the theatrical side of the visual arts which had been nourished at the Traverse, seemed to be lost in this first year of organisation at the Melville Crescent gallery. Rather, it is to later exhibitions and exhibiting artists that we must look in order to understand what quality it was that set the Richard Demarco Gallery apart from the large exhibiting societies and the academic institutions. This initial phase in the existence of the gallery would see it compared to existing galleries already established in the capital.

Simply A Dealers Gallery? Setting the Richard Demarco Gallery Apart

David Baxandall, the Director of the National Galleries for Scotland, who had belittled the Edinburgh School painters in a 1966 interview for the BBC *Arts Review* programme, had much to say about the new gallery in Melville Street. In favourably describing the layout and inception of the gallery, Baxandall seemed to see nothing in it which would set it apart from any other art viewing space, albeit one that would only be found outside Scotland, "...you see everything by well arranged artificial light. The walls are white (sic)…the result is a gallery where paintings and sculpture can be seen with ease". [13] Furthermore, he goes on to describe the nature of the gallery in terms of the kind of dealers' galleries existing in London at the time. However, he did believe that the Richard Demarco Gallery was the first in Scotland to display the work of contemporary Scottish *and* international artists,

> The opening exhibition showed a selection of the kind of work you might find in a London gallery that deals with the more up-to-date and fashionable manifestations of modern painting and sculpture. They are mostly English works, a few Scottish, and the odd American, Frenchman or Swede (sic)…for the first time in Scotland we have a dealer's gallery that sets out to show a changing selection of the sort of work that painters, sculptors and collectors find most interesting in the big world outside Scotland (sic)…it could be a real stimulus to the painters and a source of education to the picture buying public.[14]

There are a number of points to be made here in relation to the gallery's aims. How could the gallery be both instilled with the spirit of the Traverse Theatre Club's experimentation and yet also be likened by Baxandall to a *pleasant* London gallery?

It is necessary to look at the work of the gallery, at least in the first few years of its existence, as almost two separate entities. To ignore either is to undermine the worth of the gallery as an integral centre for experimentation in the 1960s. Certainly, the gallery was begun in the style of a dealer's gallery, showing work for sale to private patrons in an established gallery layout. Two floors were used for exhibition space and a gallery was situated in the basement. In this respect, David Baxandall's

comments in 1966 are entirely justifiable, and indeed, give an insight into the layout and the decor of the building. Also, with the description of dealer's gallery comes the *commercial* aspect of the gallery, and many of the artists popular with the buying public were exhibited on the walls at Melville crescent.

However, it is necessary to realise that the spirit of the gallery, or at least the adventurous spirit that had made Richard Demarco break with the Traverse, permeated the walls of the gallery. Once outside the gallery, the commercial aspect lost such importance. Furthermore, after the initial installation of the gallery in 1966, and critical approval, perhaps Demarco felt that other more adventurous ideas could be introduced. In many ways, it could be argued that in the first months of the existence of the gallery Demarco was testing the water. By exploring the activities that Demarco undertook throughout this period *outside* Melville Crescent (and occasionally within it), we can see many links and similarities to the idea that art without a frame or market value has a value of its own.

Breaking Boundaries - The Richard Demarco Gallery and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

It can be argued that Richard Demarco's interest in the avant-garde can be seen expanding, and being introduced to the gallery in 1967. For example, the exhibition that took place in the official gallery programme in March 1967 illustrates this theory. The exhibition was of Contemporary Italian Art, and included 37 artists. This presentation of contemporary Italian art was inspired by a trip that Demarco had made to Rome, where he visited Maria Alfani, the owner of a small private gallery. During the same trip, he explored the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna. The exhibition of 1967 was an important landmark in that it was the Richard Demarco

Gallery's first major exhibition of an entire school. The friendships that Demarco had nurtured during his time in Italy were to be of immense use here; indeed, the exhibition was put on with the collaboration of Palma Buccarelli, Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Rome.

Furthermore, the work of artists on display, such as that of Piero Manzoni, Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascalli, Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana, was crucially important. This work was pushing against the boundaries of conventional definitions of painting and sculpture in a way that had not been evident in the work of other artists exhibited until that time.[15] For example, we can see this experimentation in the work of Piero Manzoni. Until 1956, he had worked in a conventional figurative style. From 1957 onwards, he produced work that fell into the genre of what he called *Achromes*, textured white paintings influenced by artists like Burri, who was shown alongside him at the Richard Demarco Gallery. However, the ideas that Manzoni engendered are what we should be concerned with here. From 1959 onwards, he devised a series of provocative works and gestures, which could be seen to be allied in part to happenings, that included signing people's bodies and designating them works of art. (Fig. 29). Regarded as one of the forerunners of Arte Povera and Conceptual art, he also exhibited a block on which inscribed upside down is the title, 'The base of the world' (Herning Park, Denmark, 1961), as well as cans of his own excrement.

It could be said that the exhibition of these artists, whose work played with traditional art classifications, was an indicator of the kind of exhibitions which would later follow in the gallery programme, and indeed, in Demarco's personal programme. The realm of the visual arts was not the only art form to be explored by the gallery, and expansion into music, dance and performance in Melville Crescent was perhaps aspiring to the place that Demarco had envisioned when he left the Traverse in 1966.

By March 1967, when the Italian exhibition was displayed, Richard Demarco had begun to explore avenues concerned with more than the purely visual in art. Musical performances and theatrical events were initiated in the gallery at the same time. For example, in March whilst the Italian exhibition was taking place, the gallery presented a recital by the tenor Kevin Miller. Lectures also began to take place in a manner similar to those at the Traverse instigated by Jim Haynes. Topics debated included discussion by artists on the art worlds of London, New York and even Buenos Aires. [16]

Furthermore, in 1968 Demarco's reputation as something of a theatrical entrepreneur was established when he presented a show by Clive James and Tony Buffery. Lindsay Kemp and her theatre troupe who performed dance and mime also had a show, *White Pantomime*, at Melville Crescent in 1969, as did Nancy Cole. The performance of Cole gives us an example of how the Richard Demarco Gallery retained its links with Fringe Theatre and avant-garde productions from all over Europe. In the same year that Cole performed at Melville Crescent, she gave her first presentation at the Edinburgh Fringe in *Gertrude Stein's Gertrude Stein*, a solo performance based on the works of Gertrude Stein.[17]

Moreover, Richard Demarco's links with Jim Haynes remained, and in association with Haynes' Arts Lab, he organised a show for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe of 1969. Together, they presented Geoff Moore's modern dance company, Moving Being, whose dancers were accompanied by the Incredible String Band (Fig. 30). Other performances taking place included the Pakistani raga music of Salamat and Nazakat Ali Khan, and a production of *The Scaffold* by John McGrath, John Gorman and Mike McGear. An important point to be made here, is that the majority

of the avant-garde theatre and music sponsored by the Richard Demarco Gallery, occurred during the period of Edinburgh Festival and Fringe.

Furthermore, the contribution of Richard Demarco to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was to continue throughout the late sixties and into the next decade. It could be argued that it was this continuing interest in Fringe theatre, imbued in Demarco as the legacy of his involvement with the Paperback bookshop and the Traverse Theatre Club, that kept the impetus for experimental art at Melville Crescent alive. Indeed, some of the most memorable artists and exhibitions that came to the Melville Crescent gallery were in some way associated with the Edinburgh Festival or Fringe. For example, it was Demarco that was responsible for introducing Eastern European Theatre to the Fringe.

In 1971, Miriam Raducanu's dance group came to the Fringe in collaboration with Richard Demarco. Similarly, in 1972, Tandeusz Kantor's Polish Cricot Theatre II group visited the Fringe at Demarco's instigation, returning again in 1973 and 1976 respectively.[18] Their theatre had the philosophy that the linear continuity of a text could be broken down in the actions taking place on stage; the piece would therefore become simultaneous and multi-focal. Characters could be seen talking simultaneously or enacting the role of one or more characters, or indeed, the same character. In this way, they were breaking boundaries in theatre in much the same way as the artists who were breaking down the boundaries of conventional visual art that we have been examining in this thesis.

In 1972, the Cricot Theatre II performed *The Water Hen* in a hall in Forrest Hill, Edinburgh, called 'the Poorhouse' (Fig. 31).[19] In 1973 this was followed by *Lovelies and Dowdies,* and in 1976 by *The Dead Class*. Joseph Beuys had even been persuaded to contribute to *Lovelies and Dowdies* after meeting Kantor, through

Demarco, at the 1973 Festival (Fig. 32). *Dead Class* was a play conducted eccentrically by Kantor, who remained onstage throughout the entire performance (Fig. 33). The play was performed in Edinburgh College of Art's Sculpture Court. Demarco thought that this was a fitting location, as the play was regarded by him as a work of "kinetic sculpture" and "a good art lesson".[20] This location is also notable as collaborations between the traditional and established art college and the radical avant-garde had been rare during the 1960s. Again, the breaking down of traditional boundaries seems to be recognised in this location, and in Richard Demarco's comments. The manner and atmosphere of the Cricot Theatre II performance is described by Alistair Moffat in his book *The Edinburgh Fringe*, when he discusses the last play, *The Dead* Class, of 1976. He says,

> ...a devastating piece of theatre (sic)...with the audience being kept waiting in the foyer until everyone has arrived. Then the doors fly open and people are hustled quickly into seats to the accompaniment of crashingly loud waltz music. Lines of life size dummies sit in rows of school desks on stage confronting the audience. The action of the play is concerned with ageing and death. Although parts of it were hard to understand, *The Dead Class* left some powerful images in the mind.[21]

It could be argued that the gallery at Melville Crescent, and Richard Demarco's interest in Fringe theatre, provided a kind of cross-fertilisation of ideas, art-forms and art-world contacts. For example, previously to Kantor's performances at the Fringe, in 1967, the Richard Demarco Gallery had shown an exhibition entitled Sixteen Polish Artists (Fig. 34).[22] This was presented in association with The Union of Polish Artists. Similarly, Eastern European connections in the visual arts of Romania and Yugoslavia had also been established at the Melville Crescent gallery alongside those in performance and theatre.

Re-establishing the Parameters of the Visual Arts - The Richard Demarco Gallery in the early 1970s

Although it is impossible to discuss all of the exhibitions taking place at the gallery in its initial years, it is necessary to mention those that transgressed international and cross-cultural boundaries in art and that highlighted the growing reputation of the gallery as it matured.[23] One such exhibition which took place in 1970 was entitled *Strategy Get Arts*, an exhibition that Richard Demarco regarded as giving "for the first time(sic)...the official Edinburgh Festival Programme a truly contemporary exhibition."[24] This was a show of contemporary art from Dusseldorf subtitled 'Art and Anti-Art, Dusseldorf Art Scene Today', and it included such prestigious figures as Joseph Beuys, Sigmar Polke, Hans Richter and Günther Uecker among others.[25] At the time, Beuys was the director of the Dusseldorf Art Gallery.

The exhibition was included in the official programme of the Edinburgh Festival, and was a show of contemporary German art. What was unique about it was that it was planned to be non-retrospective and almost an attempt at a non-exhibition; it was intended to have an air of the unplanned. It had no set gallery layout or list of artists exhibited. In fact, it took place outside of the gallery at Melville Crescent, and was deliberately not set in an art gallery. This rejection of gallery space is significant, and further underlines the non-commercial aspect of much of the avant-garde art that Demarco was exhibiting and promoting.

Strategy Get Arts was to be located in an Edinburgh College of Art, and was intended to be a living, "breathing" piece of art. In Demarco's mind, in the art school, the artists would provide a display that would be "fulfilling its proper function to defend artistic truth no matter where it would spring from".[26] Furthermore, it would include no "masterpieces" if the artists could possibly help it.[27] What Demarco

envisioned would be that the artists would respond to the art school building, its huge life-rooms, and the paint-splattered floors. Like the elements of chance and randomness favoured by John Cage, Allan Kaprow and Ivor Davies, *Strategy Get Arts* would be spontaneous and have no boundaries of artistic classification. As Ivor Davies noticed about many of the events at the Traverse Theatre and the Demarco gallery,

> I do think that...they were different from conventional theatre, and they were different from conventional painting. To me the events...involved painting and theatre and sculpture and dance and everything - it was all in one. I wanted to reach a point where these events were central to all these different arts like a wheel.[28]

The events at *Strategy Get Arts* seemed to be the culmination of ideas like these of Davies, in the programme of the Richard Demarco Gallery. Not only had the gallery been able to rid itself of a purely commercial function, and adherence to traditional classifications in art, but it had expanded these very ideas until they stretched outside the gallery walls.

Interestingly, the press at the time classed the event as a project in art education. The emphasis was placed on the artist at work and included 42 films, 16 music concerts, and 3 environments, as well as pictures, sculptures, photos, a game by Robert Filiou and a banquet by Daniel Spoerri. Arguably the most memorable work was undertaken by Joseph Beuys. This included a film made by Beuys on Rannoch Moor in reaction to Scotland's physical nature and beauty, and her position on the sea-girt Western extremity of Europe. The piece was called *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch) Scottish Symphony* (Figs. 35 & 36). Furthermore, Beuys exhibited and improvised events at the Art College in Lauriston Place (Fig. 37). He also repeated a performance event called *The Pack (das Rudel)*, previously shown in 1969 in Cologne art market, where twenty sledges fell out of the boot of an old Volkswagen van (Fig. 38). In the exhibition structure, two rooms had been allocated for the work of Beuys - one for a

permanent concert and occasional happenings, and one for showing his Volkswagen and the photographs taken during the course of *Strategy Get Arts*. This was to be the first of many collaborations between the Richard Demarco Gallery and Joseph Beuys, before Beuys death in 1986. Other projects that Beuys worked on with the gallery included the event *Three Pots Action* at the Poorhouse, Edinburgh in July 1974 and the re-interpretation of the *Poorhouse Doors* in 1982 (Fig. 39).

In some ways, the exhibition *was* educational, and indeed was intended to be, but its aims were more sophisticated than the press suggested. What the exhibition aimed to do was to test the breaking points of the Richard Demarco Gallery. Where other exhibitions had pushed at the boundaries of conventional art, here was an exhibition that wanted to break these boundaries down, re-establish a dialogue between the artist and the general public and re-instate the artists essential role as a leader, without whom society could be culturally and spiritually weakened.[29] This re-establishment of the role of the artist in society was also a comment on the position of the artist in Scotland. As Demarco says,

> I know well that life for the truly professional artist in Scotland is difficult. How many Scottish artists can avoid earning their reputation as teachers? The profession of the artist hardly exists.[30]

Furthermore, the exhibition was intended to be a living, breathing piece of art. This entailed the questioning of the art itself.

Strategy Get Arts, more than any other exhibition in the gallery's history up to that point, was able to question accepted boundaries in the arts. These boundaries related to the classification of art into painting, sculpture and applied art, boundaries created by the walls of a commercial art gallery and boundaries created between the artists of different countries. These boundaries were taken on by the artists and broken down by them in *Strategy Get Arts*. In fact, in this exhibition we see the same

questioning of art in Scotland that we can trace through the Dramatists' Conference, the Paperback book shop and the Traverse Theatre Club. Here, the very direction being taken by the visual arts in 1970 was being explored.

Demarco envisioned that art could be taken further by applying the same introduction of art into unusual spaces as had happened in *Strategy Get Arts*, and taking it further, into the realms of schools, police stations, bus depots and even buses,

> Can you imagine giving one bus to an artist during Festival time, asking that artist to speak to the folk who'd be using it? That would be a helluva lot of people and I'd bet my new pence that most of them would never be taking a bus to an art gallery.[31]

What Demarco was trying to address here, and what had been gradually happening in the programme of the Demarco gallery, was a move away from the commercial aspect of selling art, and a recognition that the gallery was trying to deal with the problems that this posed.[32] It is interesting to note here a report from 1971, prepared for a meeting between the Richard Demarco Gallery directors and the Scottish Arts Council. Three main points arise for discussion - the place of performance art (or art which is not purely optical) in the visual arts, the new role of the art gallery at the beginning of the 1970s and the validity of the art object and art market. These points constitute some of the main issues in which this thesis deals.

Firstly, the problems of accommodating performance art within a traditional gallery structure were debated. At this point, the gallery was recognising that visual art could be expressed through performance, and this was stated in the board meeting minutes.[33] It was suggested that the gallery needed to update itself with equipment such as slides, film projectors and tape recorders in order to "create an environmental art experience in which the gallery itself becomes an art object".[34] Furthermore, the suggestion was made that the gallery might consider using more alternative spaces outside the Melville Crescent walls, on a more regular basis. These ideas were

perhaps spurred on by the experiences of Paul Neagu, a Romanian artist. He had wanted to use Greyfriars Churchyard during the Festival. Furthermore, Neagu visualised other events taking place that would require alternative locations; his ritualised banquets involving edible art sculptures, were unable to be housed in the gallery for lack of space.

Again, the question of the role of the artist and the commercial aspect of the gallery was being questioned. Interestingly, this was stated in the report through the words of Allan Kaprow. Richard Demarco had borrowed Allan Kaprow's words from an article in *Artnews* from 1971, in order to provide 'A Warning and Advice to the Demarco Gallery from Allan Kaprow.' Of course, these words were borrowed from Kaprow rather than directly spoken. Nevertheless, the message to the board was clear,

> In Vancouver Gallery's April Newsheet there is a quote prominently displayed from Allan Kaprow's article in *Artnews*, Feb. 1971, which is a warning to anyone involved in galleries, 'To escape from the traps of art, it is not enough to be against museums or to stop producing marketable objects; the artist of the future must learn how to evade his profession'. If I may say so, the Demarco Gallery has been dangerously near being defined simply as an art gallery where artists exhibit their work and where it is sold to the few people in society who need it or can afford it.[35]

Following on from this, the notes to the board ask them to consider 'The Validity of the Art Object and Art Market'. Here, the Richard Demarco Gallery, and the Scottish and international artists who were associated with it, seemed to be taking on the challenge that the most avant-garde artists in the world were concerned with at the time. As Demarco says,

> ...the art object has been questioned by the most serious artists today i.e. the exhibition of the art object and the buying and selling of it in a world that is already cluttered enough with man-made objects. Art objects in the traditional sense, whether they be original paintings or sculpture, are expensive and can relate only to a small number of people in society.[36]

This tackling of a complex art historical issues taking place in Scotland at the time demonstrates that the gallery had moved on from its beginnings in 1966, and from the comments of David Baxandall.

This progression is easily demonstrated in comparing the work of artists included in the inaugural exhibition of the gallery, examined at the beginning of this chapter, to the kind of artists involved in exhibitions such as *Strategy Get Arts*. In this development, we see the same experimentation and questioning nature that had occurred within the Paperback book shop and the Traverse Theatre Club.

Furthermore, the kind of radical art that had been exhibited was not being brought to Scotland exclusively by cosmopolitan artists. Artists working within Scotland were experimenting too, often alongside their international counterparts. This can be demonstrated by looking at the exhibition held in the Melville Crescent gallery as a sister exhibit to *Strategy Get Arts*. A variety of artists displayed their work here, in a variety of media, in an exhibition aptly called *New Directions*. Included in the show were the Scottish artists Pat Douthwaite, Alistair Park, Rory McEwen and Michael Docherty. Alongside them, were the Romanian artists Paul Neagu, Horea Bernea and Paul Illie.

By 1973, when the exhibition programme took place at the gallery, the programme was so varied, and the gallery so prestigious, that it included in it a variety of exhibitions including a display of Austrian art, a show of young Parisian artists and four Galleria del Cavallino artists from Venice.[37] Starting in August 1973 for six weeks, and incorporating three weeks of the Festival, a programme run by the gallery called Edinburgh Arts '73 took place. The Cricot Theatre II produced the aforementioned *Lovelies and Dowdies* and Tadeusz Cantor gave master classes and lectures on his work as a visual artist and the philosophies surrounding the Cricot

Theatre. Joseph Beuys also returned to Edinburgh and gave a non-stop, twelve-hour lecture. Richard Demarco described it as being,

> …inspired by the writings of Anarcharsis Cloots in relation to the French Revolution, this was a piece of sculpture where school blackboards could be seen to be the ideal surface for the drawings and diagrams he chose to illustrate his philosophy on art education, interdisciplinary research and communication.[38]

These interests in art education, philosophy and inter-disciplinary studies, were surely reflected not only in the lecture of Beuys and the writings of Cloots, but were reflected in the aims of the gallery which housed them there.

Also involved in Edinburgh Arts '73 were the Yugoslavian artists Rasa Todosijevic, Zoran Popovic and Marina Abramovic. They had come to perform from the student cultural centre gallery in Belgrade. It was here that Abramovic met Joseph Beuys, and he agreed to perform in the centre at Belgrade later in 1973. Other events that took place involved arts groups in community events, lectures, music and dance; the dance initiative involving the Scottish Royal Ballet.

Of course, the progression and inter-disciplinary approach to the cultural arts that we have seen engendered through the conferences of the early 1960s, through the Paperback book shop and Traverse Theatre Club to the instigation of the first Richard Demarco Gallery at Melville Crescent, did not stop here. This spirit of awakening in the art scene in Edinburgh had reverberations outside and far from any of the aforementioned ventures. The Richard Demarco Gallery was to move from Melville crescent to the Old Town in 1973, but by this time, the distinction between it and other dealer's galleries had become apparent. The spirit of the gallery had also permeated the art scene outwith the gallery walls and outwith the realm of the traditional art going public.

Joseph Beuys had warned Richard Demarco in 1970 that things at the gallery would change even more throughout the next decade. "If I come to Edinburgh" Beuys

said, "and we work together, your gallery will no longer be able to justify itself. It will have to change".[39] Demarco embraced this need for change and described it, shortly before the gallery's farewell to Melville Crescent (Fig. 40) and move to the Old Town,

> And change it did through the avant-gardism brought to Scotland through the exhibitions: "Startegy Get Arts" from Germany, Romanian Art Today and the Atelier 72 exhibition from Poland. They represented a new way of presenting and making art. They were three official Edinburgh Festival exhibitions which the Demarco gallery presented for the years 1970, 71 and 72. Added to that was the experimental nature of the Demarco gallery's summer schools with Joseph Beuys, Tadeusz Kantor, Frank Ashton Gwatkin, Hugh MacDiarmid, Buckminster Fuller, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Paul Neagu...among many others.[40]

Having explored a slice of this flux and innovation in the history of the Richard Demarco Gallery in this chapter, the imporatnce of diversity, exploration and change in the 1960s avant-garde art scene is illustrated. The gallery was an undeniable nucleus in the late 1960s, however small, for avant-garde international talent and home-grown experimentation.

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[1] Richard Demarco, Foreword to 'Roma Punta Uno', 1988. Reproduced in Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures* (Edinburgh: Famedran, 1995), p. 26.
Note that here Demarco states that the Writers' Conference and the 'happening' occurred in the same year, 1964. In fact, as we have explored in earlier chapters, the Writers' Conference took place in 1962, the 'happening' and Dramatists' Conference in 1963. The conference was banned from taking place in 1964. Later in *A Life in Pictures*, p. 120, Demarco refers to the happening correctly as having taken place in 1963, when he says, "During the fifties and sixties, Kantor staged several happenings pre-dating the infamous Allen (sic) Kaprow/ Mark Boyle 'happening', at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival Writers' Conference, inspired by John Calder."
[2] The gallery was set up by Richard Demarco with the help of Andrew Elliott, James Walker and George Martin.
[3] Richard Demarco, From 'My Scotland', 1988. Reproduced in Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*, p. 44.
[4] Cordelia Oliver, 'Napoleon in a Scottish Pond', *Arts Guardian*, 18 August 1970.
[5] Richard Demarco, Andrew Elliott, John Martin and James Walker. *The Richard Demarco Gallery Inaugural Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures and Prints, August - September 1966*, ex. cat., No. 1. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1966), p. 3.
[6] As above, my italics.
[7] The artists shown, in alphabetical order, were: Norman Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Milton Avery, Barbara Balmer, John Berry, Elizabeth Blackadder, Martin Bradley, Jack Bush, Lynn Chadwick, William Crozier, Kristjan Davidson, Hans Enri, Sam Francis, Terry Frost, Nicholas Georgiadis, Willy Gordon, Roy Grayson, Henri Hayden, Joseph Herman, Patrick Heron, Ivon Hitchens, Gordon House, John Houston, John Hoyland, R. B. Kitaj, Mauro Kunst, Colin Lanceley, Richard Lin, Lucebert, Alfred Manessier, Alastair Michie, David Michie, Sidney Nolan, Victor Pasmore, Yago Pericot, Frank Phelan, Robin Philipson, John Piper, Serge Poliakoff, Patrick Procktor, Alan Reynolds, Ceri Richards, Leonard

Rosoman, Ian McKenzie Smith, Graham Sutherland, Joe Tilson, Tony Underhill, Keith Vaughan, Brett Whiteley, Christopher Wood, William Wright, Bryan Wynter and Brian Yale. In association with the Richard Demarco Gallery, the paintings and sculptures of William Featherstone, Michael Tyzack and Alan Wood were also shown at the Saltire Society, Gladstone's Land, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh.

[8] Yago Pericot had been exhibited in 1964 and 1966. Barbara Balmer had her first one-woman show at the Traverse in 1965. Frank Phelan and William Wright both had their first one-man shows at the Traverse in 1966.

[9] Blackadder exhibited *Still Life with Prayer Rug* and *The Grey Table* (1965), Houston exhibited *Aviary* (1955-56) and *Falling Figure* (1966) and Philipson exhibited *Far Away* (1965) and *The Stoning: Study* (1966).

[10] Richard Demarco, Andrew Elliott, John Martin and James Walker. *The Richard Demarco Gallery Inaugural Exhibition of Paintings, Sculptures and Prints, August - September 1966*, ex. cat., No. 1. Note: my italics.

[11] The exhibitions taking place at the gallery in the years 1966-1967 are as follows:
Aug./ Sep., '66 - Inaugural exhibition, 61 artists. **Nov., '66** - one-man show, Jorge Castillo. **Dec., '66** - Christmas, 125 artists. **Jan./ Feb.,'67** - Three one-man shows: Juuko Ikewada, Ian McKenzie Smith, William Redgrave; at Goldberg's (alternative exhibition space) Redgrave's "The Event". **Feb./ Mar., '67** - one-man shows: Edgar Negret, John Eaves, Nigerian artists from Oshogbo. **Mar./ Apr., '67**, Contemporary Italian Art, 37 artists, Apr./ May '67 - three one-man shows: Martin Bradley, John Christoforou, Cecil King. **May, '67**, two one-man shows: Justin Knowles, Frank Phelan. **May/ Jun., '67** - at Gallery of Union of Polish Artists, Warsaw: 15 British painters. **Jun./ Jul. '67**, retrospective, Patrick Heron. **Jul./ Aug., '67** Group show. **Aug./ Sep., '67** - Festival Exhibitions: *At the Demarco Gallery*: group show of 57 artists, *At Edinburgh College of Art*: Six one-man shows: William Crozier, Nicholas Georgiadis, James Howie, Tess Jaray, Tony Underhill, William Wright; also The Group One Four: John Berry, Roy Grayson, Mauro Kunst, Brian Yale, *At Goldbergs*: Prints from Editions Alecto, London Graphic Arts Associates, and Maltzahn Gallery. Also open air sculpture, including work by Laurence Burt, John Dee, Bill Featherston, David Gilbert, Tom Hudson, Denis Mitchell, Edgar Negret. *At Hume Tower*: 1st Edinburgh Open 100: the 100 best paintings selected from 1,500 submitted in open competition, presented in association with the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Festival Society Ltd., and the Scottish Arts Council. **Oct., '67** - 16 Polish Painters in association with the Union of Polish Artists, the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, the Kensington and Chelsea Arts Council. **Nov., '67** - John Piper Retrospective Exhibition in association with the Marlborough Galleries. **Dec., '67** - Four one-man shows: Tapestries by Aurelia Munox, Tapestries by Sam Shaw, Nail paintings by David Patridge, Sculptures by Julian Snelling.

[12] The 1st Edinburgh Open 100 Exhibition of the 100 best paintings submitted in open competition in the United Kingdom and Eire, The David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh, 25 Aug. - 25 Sep. 1966.

[13] See Chapter Three. David Blaxandall, *Arts Review*, BBC Scotland, 1966. Reproduced in part in Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*, p. 54.
The gallery occupied three floors of a house in Melville Crescent.

[14] David Blaxandall. *Arts Review.*

[15] Interestingly, little is said by Demarco in his semi-autobiography *A Life in Pictures* on the subject of the Italian show. All that he mentions is that, "Art objects stretching to the limit long held definitions of painting and sculpture were shown, representing artists as historically important as Piero Manzoni, Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascalli, Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana." He goes on to say, I would suggest quite significantly in a paragraph of it's own, "The exhibition should have had the international spotlight of the Festival." As nothing further is mentioned in the book, or in the archives, I would suggest that Demarco felt that the gallery's achievements had been under-recognised.

[16] See Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*, p. 74-81.

[17] This show had been toured all over Europe and America. As an actress Cole had been associated with La Mama troupe in Paris, and had European connections to Fringe theatres in many countries. As a result she had a great knowledge of Fringe Festivals, small theatres and companies. Her decision to perform in Melville Crescent in the same year as her Edinburgh Fringe debut, ties the Melville Crescent gallery in a little way to its roots in the Fringe Theatre of the Traverse.

[18] The theatre group is sometimes referred to as 'The Impossible Theatre' or 'The Theatre of Death'.

[19] The play was written by Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, a painter-playwright and exponent of the Polish avant-garde between the two world wars. The 'Poorhouse' was a semi-derelict workshop on the medieval site of Edinburgh bedlam. The walls of the 'Poorhouse' defined the perimeter of Greyfriars Churchyard. This space was provided by Demarco in order to provide conditions that he imagined

would be close to those of Krakow's wartime underground theatre world.
[20] Richard Demarco. *A Life in Pictures*, p. 120.
[21] Moffat, Alistair. *The Edinburgh Fringe*, (London: Johnstone and Bacon, 1978), p. 71.
[22] The Richard Demarco Gallery. *Sixteen Polish Artists*, in association with The Union of Polish Artists, The Museum of Modern Art, Oxford and The Kensington and Chelsea Arts Council. Oct. 8 - 28, 1967. The artists included were Mario Anto, Janusz Eysymont, Ryzard Gieryszewski, Jan Karczewski, Aleksander Kozyrski, Wladysaw Krolikiewicz, Wieslaw Kruczkowski, Grezegorz Morycinski, Andrzej Mozejko, Juliusz Narzynski, Antoni Oledzki, Roman Opalka, Barbara Szubinska, Anna Trojanowska, Irene Wilczynska and Maria Zaboklicka-Budzichowa.
[23] For the best published listing of exhibitions, see *A Life in Pictures*. However, I can find no complete official listing anywhere in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art archives, publications or indeed the Demarco European Art Foundation archive.
[24] Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*, p. 74-81.
[25] List of participants in Strategy Get Arts. In the main exhibition at Edinburgh College of Art,'Art and Anti-Art, Dusseldorf Art Scene Today: Alverman, Becher, Beuys, Bohmler, Brecht, Bruning, Christiansen, Dohl, Filiou, Gerstner, Graubner, Heerich, Janone, Kagel, Klapheck, Knoebel, Kolhofer, Kruiret, Luthe, Mach, Mommartz, Morgan, Palermo, Polke, Reusch, Richter, Rinke, Rot, Ruthenbeck, Spoerri, Thomkins, Uecker, Walther, Weseler, Wewerka.
Also included was Keith Crichtlow and Alan Hacker's 'Sound in Space', four late night concerts on 25, 26, 28, 29 August 1970. The gallery also commissioned work by Burtwistle and music by Boulez for the concerts.
[26] Richard Demarco, 'In the Serious Light of Day.' Un-catalogued lecture found in the archives of the Richard Demarco European Art Foundation at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. GMA. A. 37. RDA A.1-A.4.
[27] As above.
[28] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies. Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[29] These are the intentions that Demarco states in relation to *Strategy Get Arts* in the Edinburgh Students newspaper, 'Strategy get Arts', *Student*, 3 November 1970, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Student Publications Board), 1970.
[30] As above.
[31] As above.
[32] It could be argued that the form of commerce had changed - the gallery was less commercially viable, but was receiving subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council, which had been formed from the Arts Council of Great Britain, in 1967.
[33] Report from the Richard Demarco Gallery on the future of the Gallery, to be circulated among the Gallery Board of Directors, Sandy Dunbar and William Buchanan of the Scottish Arts Council and Cordelia Oliver in preparation for the Board Meeting on 12 October 1971. Found in the Richard Demarco archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. Cat. No. GMA. A. 37 RDA A. 17- A. 19.
[34] See above.
[35] Richard Demarco. See above.
[36] See above.
[37] The Austrian exhibition included the performances and drawings of Arnulf Rainer; sculptures of Anton Christian, Bruno Gironcoli and Mario Terzic and the performances of Gunter Brus, Peter Wiebel and Valerie Export. Among the Parisians were Piotr Kowalski, Christian Boltanski, Wolfgang Gafgen, Gerard Gasiorowski, Jean Le Gac, Etienne Martin, Gerard Titus-Carmel and Vladimir Velickovic. From Venice came the artists Romano Perusini, Franco Costalonga, Anselmo Anselmi and Paolo Patelli.
[38] Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*, p. 68.
[39] Joseph Beuys in converation with Richard Demarco. See Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*, p. 73.
[40] Richard Demarco. *A Life in Pictures*, p. 73.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUCCESS OUTSIDE SCOTLAND: THE INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF THE SCOTTISH AVANT-GARDE

This chapter examines avant-garde Scottish artists who found success outside Scotland and concentrates on the work of Mark Boyle, Bruce McLean and Ian Hamilton Finlay. The nature and significance of their international success is explored in the context of the Scottish avant-garde as a whole, in order to highlight its strengths and weaknesses.

It is arguable that one of the main failings of the avant-garde in Scotland, and its failure to develop and grow beyond an embryonic state as a movement, is that there was a lack of cohesion amongst the artists who fall into the category of the avant-garde in the 1960s. Ivor Davies supported this theory when he said, in describing radical movements in art during the period,

> ...there was a discernible avant-garde in existence. It was a kind of very raw element...There was a sort of avant-garde, although it wasn't a very clear-cut avant-garde. To some extent it centred around the Traverse theatre.[1]

The avant-garde that Davies describes here revolved around events that have been explored in the history of the Dramatists' Conference, the Paperback book shop, the Traverse Theatre and the Richard Demarco Gallery. However, many of the artists, although having connections at some point in their careers with these venues, were very much operating in separate and individual spheres. The venues available were too small to sustain or solidify an active and permanent avant-garde.

This separateness can be seen when examining the work of Mark Boyle, a Glasgow-born artist. Although Boyle had been involved with the staging of the 'happening' at the Dramatists' Conference, he had also exhibited a number of reliefs at the Traverse Theatre Gallery during the 1963 Festival. He left Scotland for London

in 1964. However, it was the later work of Boyle, accompanied by his family, in the still continuing project *Journey to the Surface of the Earth*, that found him international success. What the project, which began in 1964, entails, is to reproduce exactly one thousand randomly selected sites around the world. Friends of the Boyle Family chose these sites by throwing darts at a map. The sites that they hit would determine the locations that would be explored by the Boyle Family.[2] The sites were then visited by the family, who would take moulds of the pieces of ground in question, make fibreglass reliefs of them, then paint the pieces as precisely as possible in order to reproduce almost exactly the pieces of ground chosen (Figs. 41 & 42).[3]

The object of the project was to reduce the business of art to elements of experience in much the same way as Davies had intended with his destruction work. At the same time as producing these reliefs, which were called earthprobes, the family kept documents of their feelings and thoughts in each place, before exhibiting the results in galleries throughout the world. In this way, the Boyles aimed to attack the established position of art.

The Family undertook other projects during the 1960s that bore further similarities to much of the work taking place in Edinburgh. The first earthprobes were made under Mark Boyle's name in 1964. However, when he and Joan Hills met in 1956, before they went together to London, they collaborated under the names 'The Sensual Laboratory' and 'The Institute of Contemporary Archaeology'. These names were the umbrella for a diverse mix of theatrical events and multi-media presentations that included their first light shows. These light shows were established in order to provide visual accompaniment to the live performances of the experimental music group Soft Machine, who toured the USA with the Boyles and Jimi Hendrix in 1967 -

68. Again, the Boyles were experimenting with an art that defied precise and easy definition.

A project that can be compared to the work of Mark Boyle and Allan Kaprow at the Dramatists' Conference in Edinburgh in 1963, was an event created by Boyle and staged in London in 1964. It was called *Street*. A party of audience members were invited by Boyle to a performance at Pottery Lane, London W11, in a building marked 'Theatre'. They were taken into the 'theatre' by Boyle and seated in some "blue plush chairs", only to find themselves looking out through a shop window onto a London street peopled with unwitting passers-by who had become cast members. [4] Like the work of Allan Kaprow, Boyle's work in its entirety drew freely on a number of disciplines - poetry, theatre, music, dance, painting, video, slides and narrative. However, outside of Scotland, this diversity was not seen as a detrimental factor in his work, even although his work often defied categorisation.

The Boyle Family exhibited their work internationally, and to much acclaim from an international public and critics. In fact, their work had many aims in common with the work that was being carried out by the avant-garde in Edinburgh during the 1960s. For example, it was an art that was predicated on random processes, an art that used technology, art as performance, and an art without boundaries.

However, the international critical reception that the Family received was a world away from that received by the avant-garde art to be located in Edinburgh, and it's reception is still more favourable to this day,

> ...it (the work of the Boyle family) was the epitome of the new art of the 1960s...It has been pointed out that avant-garde art has rarely been greeted with such enthusiasm and fascination (by those who risk the encounter) as has that of the Boyle Family. Ten years after *Journey to the Surface of the Earth* began, Boyle Family represented Britain at the 39th Venice Biennale, then again in San Paolo in 1987. The Family's major exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London, shows how enduring their unique art proves itself to be.[5]

This significant international acclaim can be placed in direct contrast with the criticism that Mark Boyle's work at the Traverse Theatre and the Dramatists' Conference received in 1963, in order to highlight the conservative nature of the Scottish response to radical art during the 1960s.

Like Mark Boyle, Bruce McLean has not lived in Scotland since the 1960s. Although he originally pursued his career in art at Glasgow School of Art from 1961-63, it was the time he spent on the postgraduate sculpture course at St. Martin's School in London, from 1963-66, that was most influential for his future direction and inspiration. The nature of McLean's work is in-keeping with the nature of many of the avant-garde experiments that took place in Edinburgh. McLean's interest in breaking down the conventional barriers in sculpture is analogous to Mark Boyle's aim of attacking the art establishment.

Bruce McLean aimed to bring sculpture back to real life as he saw it, and away from the 'New Generation' sculpture that was being produced in St. Martin's at the time, under the guidance of professors like Antony Caro and William Tucker. McLean attacked this type of sculpture ironically in work like *People Who Make Art in Glass Houses, Work* of 1969 (Fig. 43). This piece was a comment on the New Generation sculpture. It also criticised the sculpture course at St. Martin's College, attacking its reliance on formalist concerns for arranging blocks of wood, fibreglass or metal in balanced compositions on the floor. This can be seen in work like *Two-part Installation for concrete slab* of 1967. McLean saw this work, and much of the sculptural tradition, as arbitrary and pompous. In the mid-1960s he composed a number of witty sculptures from rubbish found on the streets, arranging it tastefully and with attention to formalist values, in order to ape the work of Caro (Fig. 44).

He further poked fun at the establishment by placing himself on his own sculptures, in various comic poses, on different sized plinths. This was a comment on the sculptors reliance on the plinth in traditional sculpture. This can be seen in *Pose Work for Plinths II* (Fig. ?) where McLean's work is part performance; a theatrical emulation of what he regarded as the pomposity of the sculptural tradition, and especially the late work of Henry Moore. In this way, he had become the art object himself, thus further attacking the traditional art establishment.

This impatience with the limitations of established art forms was homogeneous also with those ideas that Allan Kaprow had been exploring at the Dramatists' Conference concerning the breaking down of barriers between performance, theatre, sculpture, the visual arts and music. Like Kaprow, McLean had other ideas of what sculpture should really be about; it should relate to real life and real situations in order to be meaningful. As McLean puts it, he was interested in non-permanent sculpture,

> ...the idea of a puddle as a sculpture, because it is not eternal, it exists only when it rains. The sun takes away the sculpture because it makes a different situation.[6]

This idea gained solid form in his photographs of puddles. Similar transient sculptures included objects that were placed on a piece of wood before being allowed to float downstream, *Floatwaway Sculpture*, 1967 (Fig. 46) and wood shavings placed on ice, *Vertical Ice Sculpture*, 1967 (Fig. 47). Therefore, the idea that there was any necessity for an art object, or need for an art gallery, was eliminated in his work. The production of a tangible and commercial commodity was of no importance to him. However, the art market dealt with this transience through the use of photo documentation and so McLean began to turn toward performance events that parodied society in general, as well as traditional sculptural conventions.

Other events that Bruce McLean conceived during the 1960s highlight this disinterest with the object, and again have many similarities to the ideas of the avant-garde who were operating within Edinburgh. His interest in performance began at college, and he had staged a number of performances as a student both at Glasgow School of Art at and St. Martin's College. In 1961, his performance experiments in Glasgow involved taking an armchair and situating it, and himself, in various public places throughout the city. In 1965 as a second year student at St. Martin's College, he directed a performance, in collaboration with Andrew Hall, that involved two separate actions being performed simultaneously in different locations. The piece involved not only performance but objects too, curtains, cardboard cut-outs, mattresses, and silhouetted figures. Whilst McLean positioned and re-positioned the objects on the roof of the art college, Hall moved around two cut-out figures on the street below. Neither of the artists could see each other, and passers-by on the street did not know what was happening on the roof. The piece was an exploration of the boundaries of sculpture and its relationship to everyday life. It was called *Mary Waving Goodbye to the Trains* (Fig. 48). In its simplicity and association with the conventions of everyday life, this event could be compared to Mark Boyle's *Street*.

By 1969, this experimentation had culminated in performance collaborations with Gilbert and George, called *Impresarios of the Art World*, where McLean would act out parodies of the sculpture of artists named by Gilbert and George. Many of the artists parodied had been McLean's teachers. This, by now familiar attack on the art world was a constant theme in McLean's work. It can also be seen in 1971, in his first solo exhibition in London called *There's a Sculpture on my Shoulder*, at the Situation Gallery. During this performance, he knelt on the floor whilst images of famous

modern sculptures were projected above his shoulder. These sculptures were intended to represent the weight of the established art world.

His interest in parody reached its peak in 1971, with the formation of the Nice Style Pose (Fig. 49). The group included Bruce McLean, Paul Richards and Ron Carr. It was a performance group that aimed to, "…deal with the problems of bad style, superficiality and acquisitiveness in a society that holds pose to be very important".[7] Like Mark Boyle, Nice Style Pose performed at rock concerts, for example, performing with The Kinks at the Maidstone College of Art on May 26th, 1971. By immersing his art in popular culture McLean was intending that his work come alive in a way that was directly accessible to the public.

The work of Bruce McLean received similar critical appraisal to that of Mark Boyle and the Boyle Family, and like them, he too exhibited internationally. In 1969, he had a one-man exhibition in Düsseldorf, and took part in the major international survey of contemporary art shown in Bern and London, *When Attitudes Become Form*, in which he exhibited a series of postcards. In 1972, he had a one day show called *King for a Day* at the Tate Gallery, where he exhibited 1000 booklets containing ideas for new sculptures.

Again, this success highlights the individuality of the avant-garde figures connected to Scotland, and the fact that there was no viable avant-garde movement solidly established in Scotland, rather a group of artists with common aims and similar themes producing radically different work. After the early 1960s, neither Bruce McLean or Mark Boyle returned to Scotland for any significant time, nor did they work there or exhibit there to any great extent. They did not see Edinburgh as a centre for avant-garde art, which emphasises the fact that the avant-garde established

there was not cohesive enough, permanent enough or large enough to pull experimental and radical artists together in a sustainable way.

Ian Hamilton Finlay, although staying in Scotland, also pursued a very individualistic path separate from those artists working in Edinburgh. Furthermore, he too found international success and acclaim. Finlay, like Boyle, McLean and the Edinburgh avant-garde, also challenged the established art world in Scotland, and the dominant expressive and painterley tradition.

Finlay was born in the Bahamas in 1925, to Scottish parents who returned to Scotland when he was a child. He studied at Glasgow School of Art, before his studies were interrupted and he was called for army service. Later, he spent time as a shepherd in Orkney and had a variety of agricultural jobs before he became a poet and writer in the 1950s. At this time he was writing short stories, poems and plays, some of which were published in *The Glasgow Herald* and others which were broadcast on the BBC.

This evolution from poet to writer to artist is typical of the nature of the avant-garde artist, and by the 1960s Finlay was demonstrating that he was able to cross over boundaries from one genre to another with ease. This resulted in an interest in formally innovative sound poems, in which he was concerned with the sound, structure and visual impact of poems on a page; these poems being regarded by many as the first phase of the concrete poetry movement.

Finlay's development as a poet and artist accelerated throughout the 1960s, he was impatient with the limitations of established art forms and operated from an anarchic base as regards institutions such as the Royal Scottish Academy and the art colleges. By 1961, he had founded the Wild Hawthorn Press with Jessie McGuffie, in order to publish work by contemporary artists and writers. The first book to be

published by the Press was a book of poems written by Finlay in Glasweigan dialect, called *Glasgow Beasts, an a Burd.*[8] Previously, Finlay had published some of his rhyming poems in a book called *The Dancers Inherit the Party* in 1960. The book had international success in America and was admired by poets like Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan and Lorine Niedecker. In contrast the book was "not at all well received in Scotland."[9] Like the work of Mark Boyle and Bruce McLean, Finlay's work was to gain more status and admiration from out with Scotland than from within.

In 1962, the Wild Hawthorn Press published the journal *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.* The publication was a forum for experimental work and debate on contemporary art and culture. It ran for twenty-five issues, the last one being published in 1968. As Yves Abrioux remarks in his book, I*an Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer* "…it (the Press) introduced new kinds of poetry into Scotland and enabled Finlay to establish contacts with the outside world".[10] This mention of the outside world is telling. Finlay was not involved in the Edinburgh circle of avant-garde artists; rather he remained separate, both in artistic terms, and in his desire to remain in Scotland and work outside Edinburgh. However, the developments initiated by Finlay in the journal, allowed artistic debate, innovation and collaboration with other writers and artists, albeit at distance. Furthermore, it allowed Finlay to share and export ideas. In contrast with the happenings performances and destruction art that has been examined, this type of exporting of ideas did not require the physical presence of the artist. In this way, Finlay could export his work through text and photograph, distributing it in the way that the Edinburgh School could export their painting.

In some respects, Finlay's *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.* can be compared to the forums that Jim Haynes provided in Edinburgh through the Paperback book shop. Indeed, Finlay had associations with people involved in events in Jim Haynes book shop cellars. For example, in 1963, Finlay had an exhibition of toys, the physicality and static nature of them created through his need to, "turn from the rhythmic (of his rhyming poems) to the static (of concrete poetry)". [11] This exhibition was held at the home of John Calder in Ledlanet House, Fife.

It could be argued that the work of Finlay was more accessible to the public if they cared to find it, than many of the events that had happened at the book shop and the Traverse Theatre. This was because in producing text work that was published, the work of Finlay could be distributed more widely. In 1963, he had founded the concrete poetry broadsheet, *Fishsheet* (one issue only). However, he also published his first poem/card, *Standing Poem I*, in 1963. This medium that crossed between categories of literature and art and which consisted published cards and booklets, was to remain popular with Finlay throughout his work.[12] His first booklet-poem, *Canal Stripe Series 3*, was published in 1964 (Fig. 50). By 1964, he was also developing an interest in designing text that was to be set in the environment, highlighting the visual aspects of the poems, whilst exploring an interest in man's relation to nature. This can be seen in work like *Star Steer* of 1966 (Fig, 51).

This interest in text and nature was consolidated in his own garden, when he moved to Stonypath in Dunsyre, amongst the Pentland Hills. He moved to Stonypath in 1966, with his wife Sue. In his garden there, he brought together the various creative interests that he had in text, nature, classicism and militarism. In this garden, which was later to be named 'Little Sparta' he created homage to the classical tradition. The garden is now replete with sculptures and textual inscriptions in what

Keith Hartley calls "an antidote to the mainstream modern movement".[13] This theory of the garden as an antidote was confirmed by Finlay when he said, "Certain gardens are described as retreats when they are really attacks".[14]

These ideas, and the garden at Stonypath, have been developed and expanded by Finlay since the 1960s, and a complete evaluation of his work cannot be given here. However, his work during the 1960s again demonstrates key themes in common with the Edinburgh avant-garde, namely a rejection of established art forms and a defiance of order in the face of precise and easy artistic definitions for the work produced. As Yves Abrioux remarks in his visual primer of the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay "Finlay's work is not easy to classify".

The work of Finlay highlights the individuality and diversity of the avant-garde in Scotland in the 1960s. It also emphasises the fact that boundaries between art forms were being broken down by the avant-garde during that decade. Of course, this difficulty in pigeon-holing his work made it work that was not easily consumed by a large public. However, Finlay's work would be recognised in diverse circles for its individual qualities,

> ...in some quarters, Finlay is still cheifly known as Britain's foremost concrete poet. For others, he is primarily a gardener: his garden has received visitors from all over the world and has been recognized as an important British garden, In France, Finlay is highly respected by experts in the field of landscape design. A number of commissions testify to the relevance of his investigations into the way in which art impinges on architecture and the environment.[15]

However, like Mark Boyle and Bruce McLean, Finlay's work was not immediately recognised by the Scottish public, and it could be argued that his work is still more valued abroad than in Scotland. Like Ivor Davies, and Allan Kaprow et al. at the Drama Conference, Finlay attracted the most attention in Scotland during his career

through media coverage of his conflict with the Scottish Arts Council and Strathclyde Regional Council during the 1970s.

This ongoing battle which came to be recognised as the Little Spartan War, was initiated in 1978 when Finlay withdrew his Serpentine travelling exhibition from the Scottish Arts Council's gallery in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. Finlay argued that the absence of the exhibition was the exhibition,

> Beyond the prosaic (almost pedantic, moral) level...what I was aware of was a clearer statement of their content, than the works themselves could have been, *in that circumstance*...the [Scottish] Arts Council clearly found this unacceptable though it had recently mounted (and publicly defended) an exhibition which consisted entirely of blank canvases, carefully framed. (Perhaps this was the ideal "state art" social occasion – so very near in form to my own, yet in effect its opposite.[16]

Communications between the Scottish Art Council and the artist broke down from that point onwards, and further disagreements followed. These battles included a refusal by the Scottish Arts Council to allow Finlay to add documentary to his work in their collection; the withdrawal of rates relief formerly granted to the gallery in Stonypath; the refusal by Strathclyde Regional Council to allow rates relief to the gallery even after Finlay had designated the garden gallery as a garden temple (thus allowing it special status as a religious building) and the confiscation and sale of work confiscated from Stonypath in lieu of rates payments in 1983.[17] However, it is not with the intricacies of these battles that are of concern to this thesis.

What the battle made clear, was that Finlay's introduction as a diverse artist (and not simply a poet, or publisher, or radio broadcaster) to the majority of the general public in Scotland, came via press coverage of the Little Spartan War. This highlights the peculiarity of the conservative Scottish response to art during the 1960s. Up to this point in 1978, it could be said that Finlay's work was little known within Scotland, outside a close-knit artistic circle. This relative anonymity and

recognition only in adverse circumstances is analogous to the situation of Ivor Davies, when he tried to highlight the plight of Aberfan in his work. The majority of media and public response to Davies was unfavourable, and the secondary sources of the newspapers did little to promote any understanding of Davies' art or cause. Rather, they concentrated on the shock value that the art provided. Little was reported which would explain destruction work to the public. Similarly, Ian Hamilton Finlay's objective during the Little Spartan War, to get the authorities to clarify what kind of building would constitute a Garden Temple, was largely overlooked.

The work and careers of Mark Boyle, Bruce McLean and Ian Hamilton Finlay illustrate and highlight the singularity and individuality of the avant-garde. Certainly, they must be included alongside the avant-garde that has already been discussed, but it is essential that it be with the recognition that they, too, had similar aims but no clear or cohesive *group* identity or manifesto. Boyle, McLean and Finlay were also remote in geographical terms from the venues for experimental art in Edinburgh. What sets these three artists apart is that they achieved international acclaim. Their work was, and still is, admired and exhibited world wide.

In contrast, they were not celebrated within Scotland outside of small artistic circles. What they failed to achieve was recognition, popularity and serious criticism. Although they were successful artists in their own right, they failed to impress their ideas on a conservative Scottish public, a public seemingly more interested in negative press reports than radical new experiments in art.

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[1] Interview by the author with Ivor Davies, Penarth, 25 January 1999.
[2] Of course, a number of darts hit the sea, and that is a problem that the Boyles are currently exploring.
[3] The mould is made by placing a plastic substance called 'Epikote' over the surface of the ground, allowing it to dry and peeling it away. This results in the imprint of the surface along with surface debris being etched into the plastic. The resultant fibreglass cast is then painted.

[4] Mark Boyle, *Journey to the Surface of the Earth: Mark Boyle's Atlas and Manual*, published as part of an exhibition at the Haags Gemeentemuseum, 16 May-12 July, 1970.
[5] Christopher Johnstone, ex. cat., *Down to Earth: Boyle Family in New Zealand*, Auckland City Art Gallery, 11Sep-28 Oct, 1990. From the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art archives - Mark Boyle.
The Boyle Family represented Britain in 1978 at the Venice Biennale. Other significant international exhibitions include the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1982 and The Hayward Gallery, London in 1986.
[6] Nina Dimitrijevic, ex. cat., *Bruce McLean*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1986, p. 11.
[7] As above, p. 1.
[8] Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Glasgow Beasts, An a Burd*, 1961.
[9] Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, (Edinburgh: Reaction Books, 1985), p. 9.
[10] Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, p. 9.
[11] Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to David Brown, March 1976. Quoted in David Brown, 'Stonypath: An Inland Garden' and Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, p. 10.
[12] A full bibliography of these cards and booklets can be found in Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, pp. 242-245.
[13] Keith Hartley. *Scottish Art Since 1900*, p. 132.
[14] As above, p. 132.
[15] Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, p. 7.
[16] Ian Hamilton Finlay, letter to Yves Abrioux, October 1983. Reproduced in part in *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, p. 15..
[17] This was the 'First Battle of Little Sparta' which took place in 1983.

CONCLUSION

The empirical material examined in this thesis allows us to understand and follow the development of what was to remain, in Scotland, an *embryonic* avant-garde. In summation, we arrive at a history of the avant-garde in 1960s Edinburgh as a series of events with common features and even a select group of participants. This avant-garde was not an accessible, cohesive, permanent or substantial movement. These factors are illustrated throughout the thesis. However, the events examined demonstrate the existence of what could have been a potentially strong avant-garde, had it not been beset with these difficulties. Moreover, by exploring this avant-garde, and its strengths and weaknesses, a fuller picture of the art scene in Scotland during the 1960s is gained. This examination is fundamentally necessary, since experimental art of this nature is little discussed in the majority of art historical texts on Scottish art. These books concentrate more fully on the dominant hegemony of the painterly tradition in Scottish art during the 1960s.

In essence, the avant-garde in Scotland failed to develop into an established, accepted or mainstream way of thinking about and executing art. It did not become popular, nor did it receive meaningful critical attention. This failure of radical art in Scotland to instil interest and reaction beyond a basic level should be looked at in comparison with world wide experiments; similar events were happening internationally and developing into coherent, established groups and movements, accepted in the history of the visual arts. Scotland fails to recognise or address her avant-garde. The work of the artists discussed produced a furore in the national media, but little or no serious debate.

Furthermore, the events happening in Scotland and the work being produced by Scottish artists' abroad had a place on the international stage, and indeed occurred alongside work by the leaders of avant-garde movements such as Allan Kaprow and Joseph Beuys. Nevertheless, this international success and standing did not develop further than a small network of experimental venues in Scotland, namely the Paperback bookshop of Jim Haynes, the Traverse Theatre Club and the Richard Demarco Gallery.

There are a number of reasons for this lack of successful development. Firstly, there was no institutional enthusiasm for a radical avant-garde. The artists that we have considered work mainly outside of the Royal Scottish Academy, the major galleries and the art schools. The avant-garde was not strong enough or large enough to break the dominant hegemony of the painterly tradition in a largely conservative Edinburgh.

In addition, there was the lack of a sustainable, sizeable marketplace for this kind of work. The Edinburgh Festival and Fringe provided the chance of an international stage, and consequently, an international audience, but this was for a limited period every year. Furthermore, this may have provided an audience for participating artists, but little if any patronage. The very lack of a commercial product in the form of an art object was a fundamental disadvantage. Adventurous dealers' galleries, that were only beginning to emerge during the 1960s, would have to rely on artists that were established and marketable before they could even envisage promoting a more radical art. Even if the galleries were able to support an experimental artist, he would have been unlikely to be as commercially successful internationally, as, for example, the 'Edinburgh School' painters, who could easily export their work. Much of the work of the avant-garde, although transportable and adaptable, was reliant on the physical presence of the artist.

The experimental venues that did provide a stage for the avant-garde could again provide an audience for the artists, but no monetary backing. What support they provided was largely creative. Jim Haynes Paperback Book shop and the Traverse Theatre Club may have provided an audience, where in a sense, the work of artists like Kaprow was consumed. Nevertheless, it was not consumed in any sustainable commercial way. The audience for this work was also a limited one, as the activities of the avant-garde were not coherent enough, nor visible enough to be accessible to a substantial public.

Similarly, the commercial aspect of the Richard Demarco Gallery had limitations, and in itself was not fully established until later in the decade, in 1966. It also relied on saleable work at its inception. The gallery did not promote work of a particularly radical nature until after 1967. Admittedly, it did provide an audience, and even, in some cases, the benefit of some state patronage from the Arts Council, but this was not commercially viable enough to enable an artist to sustain a living purely through his work. Consequently, it would be unable without support to sustain an avant-garde movement. However, the projects, exhibitions and events staged by the gallery from 1967 onwards were able to sustain the spirit of the avant-garde; avant-garde artists from all over the world passed through the Richard Demarco Gallery. The work of the gallery was significant because of the calibre of work it attracted and produced, it's experimental nature and it's basis as a nucleus for a transient avant-garde to meet.

Of course, as a result of this work being commercially in-exploitable it succeeded on its own terms. It broke the hold of commerce over the art object and as a result 'reclaimed' art. By re-defining the nature of art, space, audience and consumption, it generated for a short time a truly 'avant-garde' art. However, it 'failed' in that its

challenge was not sustained in Scotland.

Furthermore, the idea that the work of this avant-garde could not be easily classified and categorised under the aegis of the 'visual arts' created further problems. Even if there had been a sustainable market to support avant-garde experimentation, the avant-garde itself was not always easily accessible to the public. The work drew freely on a multiple discourse that included literature, poetry, theatre, music, dance, video, painting and narrative. Hence, the avant-garde could not be found simply by visiting the art gallery. Consequently, the avant-garde movement in Edinburgh during the first half of the 1960s was arguably an underground movement. Also, when the activities of the avant-garde *were* made accessible, they were taken directly to an uninitiated public; a general public who were in the main shocked and unenthusiastic.

Due to the nature of experimentation, improvisation and cross-fertilisation evident in this kind of art, the avant-garde was to be found in diverse places. For example, the experimentation that took place as a 'happening' at the Dramatists' Conference surprised even those who attended. Furthermore, theatre-goers may have been informed about events at the Traverse Theatre Club, but the theatre was so small that many interested in the visual arts could easily be forgiven for not noticing events there or recognising any significance in them in relation to the Scottish art scene. In addition, the seeds of the Richard Demarco Gallery that were sown in the Traverse Theatre restaurant gallery could have been easily overlooked, even by some of those attending the theatre shows.

Another example of the nature of the avant-garde and its relative inaccessibility to the public, is demonstrated by the 'happenings' of Ivor Davies. As no evidence was left of the work after Davies' 'destructions', people unable to attend events would see nothing

at all. Their experience of his work, with which many people would be familiar, would be through the unfavourable reports of much of the national press. The very theatrical nature of the work taking place was necessarily time-based and transient, providing little opportunity to 'consume' in a commercial sense any of the work after the event.

It could also be argued that there was a fundamental peculiarity and conservative nature in the Scottish response to radical art. Alexander Trocchi would have, of course, agreed with this theory. The nature of 'modern' art in Scotland was characterised by experimentation from within the painterly technique. However, this experimentation was widely accepted. The idea that painting required skill, training and craftsmanship not found in the work of the avant-garde or in their ideas was a view that prevailed for many people in Scotland.

This climate is the reason why some of the more adventurous Scottish artists, who had similar aims and ideas to those radical artists working in Scotland, left the country to pursue sustainable careers in artistic centres like New York and London, where there was more 'spirit' for radical art. It is perhaps telling that artists such as Mark Boyle and Bruce McLean do not return to Scotland to work or exhibit; they did not see Edinburgh as a centre for avant-garde art or experimentation. Therefore, the idea of developing and expanding Edinburgh as a centre for a radical art perhaps became less likely as a result of this cultural migration. Furthermore, these artists found international success and acclaim that it can be argued they would not have received within Scotland.

There was also a lack of cohesiveness and prevalence of individuality surrounding the work of the avant-garde artists connected with Scotland. This separateness is witnessed in the work of Mark Boyle and Bruce McLean, and also in that of Ian

Hamilton Finlay who remained in Scotland. His work remains largely outside of the influence of the Edinburgh venues. Again, although he remained in Scotland, living and working there, his success was an international success, and it is perhaps true that his work received greater acclaim from outwith his country than from within it.

This individual nature can also be seen amongst the artists in Edinburgh who, perhaps, had the potential to create a viable movement within Scotland in the 1960s. Many of the artists who could have formed an avant-garde group were in Scotland for only a short time, some staying only for the duration of the Edinburgh Festival. Therefore, the reality of a permanent avant-garde movement in Scotland was unlikely. Rather, an exciting and radical *transitory* avant-garde existed. This transience also rendered it innately incohesive.

Nevertheless, there was a moment when the avant-garde had a potential foothold in Scottish culture in 1960s Edinburgh. This avant-garde fulfils the criteria of what we now expect from radical 'avant-garde' art. It was aesthetically experimental as well as having a political, social and cultural agenda. We see the emergence of this avant-garde in the early 1960s, but it is transitory, incohesive and impermanent, with little opportunity for outlet in traditional art historical circles. As a result of this, and it's necessarily inter-disciplinary nature we find little historical record of its existence in histories of Scottish art.

Perhaps most importantly, the experimentation and cultural regeneration of avant-garde never became lauded and celebrated. Where other avant-garde art movements became accepted into mainstream culture and academia, the Scottish avant-garde failed to a large extent even to instigate serious critical consideration. Furthermore, it did not

inspire and generate a further avant-garde. The avant-garde that we see emerging in Scotland in the late 1970's and 1980's is one allied to the painterly tradition, interested in figuration and dismissive of the ideas that the avant-garde had been generating throughout the 1960s. In the 1990s, when we do see artists emerge whose ideas can be allied to those of the avant-garde, it can be seen that they face the same problems as their counterparts in the 1960s. The lack of enthusiasm and lack of venues for experimental art still pose problems. As Douglas Gordon argues in *Flash Art*, May/June, 1996, "There is no (absolutely no) private gallery scene here (Scotland), which we all see as the downside of this remoteness". This problem still results in a cultural migration from Scotland amongst artists. These points illustrate that many of the problems that the avant-garde wanted to conquer during the 1960s still remain. In a sense the avant-garde of the 1960s, although recognising these problems failed to tackle them.

The avant-garde of the 1960s must be regarded as a failed avant-garde for the simple reason that they did not re-generate the art scene with their ideas. Instead they left the problems they faced for a new generation to solve. At the same time as they succeeded in their attempt to break down boundaries of accepted artistic practice in Scotland they failed to break down the hegemony of the painters and failed to build a new place for themselves in the consciousness of the country.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH IVOR DAVIES

PENARTH 25 JANUARY 1999

ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT

Could you give me a general impression of the art scene in Scotland during the 1960s?

I can remember a lot of rather avant-garde things in the arts council being closed down because of objections. There was quite a contrast between people who were trying to do experimental things, and the more established groups.
In about 1963, what I was doing was that I had the idea of combining performance with, well…extending sculpture out into space or extending painting out into space and involving human figures as well. It was really the idea of something like a stage, or a performance; with both sides of an object extended three dimensionally, and changing three dimensionally. Also, the use of lights and figures and a dancer or dancers and sound poetry.

Did you know Iain Hamilton Finlay at the time, and were you interested in his experiments with concrete poetry?

Yes, I knew him. He was one of the first people I met in Edinburgh. I think I met him because of an author who had written a book on Kinetic Art, and I went with him to see Iain Hamilton Finlay when he lived in Fettes Row, and Finlay used to give me his *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.* magazines, of which I collected every copy before giving them away to someone else! I liked his things at first, but then when he moved outside Edinburgh, I went to see him. This was much later, in the mid-sixties, and he sounded very antagonistic towards destruction in art. I don't know why…perhaps he

was slightly competitive. He described destruction as "deliberate wickedness". I love that, I think its an interesting phrase.

But I had the idea of these things, and I didn't manage to do very much about it except talk with a particular dancer about it and do some plans, until 1966. The only similar things I'd seen to my ideas were in *TulaneDrama Review*, which was a review which described Black Mountain College in America, and those artists like Rauschenburg and so on. Then, in 1966 I met Gustav Metzger, and saw performances of his, before a friend, an ex-student called Peter Holiday, invited us to put together a destruction in Art Symposium in Grangemoor college in May in 1966. It was a very small event for students. Then, Gustav had the idea of getting a bigger show together in September of that year. So, I helped him, and was central in the Destruction in Arts Symposium in London, which brought scientists and artists and writers together who were interested in destruction, or who used destruction in their work. We had a week of papers being read, and I chaired most of the papers, and I took notes – very precise and careful notes, which I still have. I suppose that they are the best archive in the world on that subject. Many interesting people came. I think perhaps, that it was the biggest meeting of the greatest number of artists from all over the world ever. I can't think of any other one. It only lasted about a week and most of them didn't know each other, they just came together during that week. I did performances that involved explosive materials, explosives that I'd mixed myself, and put them inside various objects to explode.

However, I started the Destruction in Arts Symposium in Edinburgh in August before the actual symposium in London, and I did it in the Territorial Army Drill Hall. I had permission from the army drill, and I remember someone asking "it isn't an anti-military performance is it?" and of course I didn't answer, because basically it was. I

filled various objects, like a teddy bear and a wellington boot, with explosives, and I also filled the various organs of a human figure, which was an anatomical figure painted on canvas, with bags of different coloured material which were systematically exploded. There was also a gun which fired paint over the canvas. Cordelia Oliver wrote about it *The Guardian*, saying that there wasn't enough destruction! I did a film of it, black and white, 8mm.

The next thing was in London where I took the same anatomical dummy and used it with the face of Robert Mitchum, again with things on stage systematically exploded. *Time* magazine photographed the whole thing systematically. Then in Edinburgh, I brought this figure back, and continued with performances such as inviting people to dinner one evening, then sticking the leftover stuff to the table before taking it to the beach and detonating it. I did various performances like that, and one in the old paperback bookshop that Jim Haynes begun, which were a series of explosions inside shop window dummies, so that the shop window dummy, one after the other would explode. At this time I actually asked the police and the fire brigade to be present, but I was horrified because one of the firemen was smoking with all theses explosives about!

Then I did another late night show at the Traverse theatre, which involved dancers and slides being projected and coloured lights. The Traverse Theatre then was at the top of the Royal Mile. It was tiny and the audience sat on both sides, and the show was in the middle. We had a number of explosives inside safe buckets. Then I continued to do this in 1967 up until '68 in Bristol Arts Centre, and in Durham.

Two people approached me in Edinburgh, one was a technician called Ray Halstead, and the other was Graeme Farnell, a student at that time who eventually became the director of the arts centre at Inverness. They said that they wanted to set

up an experimental theatre company and I agreed to work with them. We took this down to Leeds and other places and we accumulated other people, there at the art college and on the way to a party. They were very similar shows to what had gone on in the Traverse Theatre – figures inside boxes etc. One shot was of a plain box with a man inside, then he suddenly turned around and he became a huge eye. There was also raw meat hanging on the stage and one newspaper described the event as the theatre of eye and raw meat, which was meant to be insulting, but I quite liked it.

Would you say that there was discernible avant-garde in evidence within Scotland at this time?

Yes, there was a discernible avant-garde in evidence. It was a kind of very raw element, and I got ideas about the revival of the avant-garde, actually after the second World War from America. I think it was America that created a sort of swinging London in the '60s, but the events in Edinburgh were really different. (By the way in the film of that, the performance that I put on in the Edinburgh Drill Hall, the really annoying thing was that Hippies came out and put flowers on the remains of the explosions!) There was a sort of avant-garde, although it wasn't a very clear cut avant-garde. To some extent it centred around the Traverse Theatre. I did have an exhibition there later in about 1968 or '69 of paintings. But I remember Rene Gilmour inviting me and Gustav round to his house and there were no paintings on the walls. It was all a little grey actually, and he asked us, "would you ever go back to painting, or making objects?" and we both said yes and he was really disappointed.

Would you say that there was a divide between what might be called the traditional media – painting and sculpture – and anything more radical, for example your destruction work or Mark Boyle's *Earthprobes* for?

I used to go and stay with Mark Boyle in London and when I went there he would get a bit nervous because he lived over a bank, and of course, I was bringing explosives with me! Just around the corner, I did stay with a friend and the explosives were unstable and began to go off. I was building an organ, like a theatre organ, but where the explosives would go off when you played and I had to abandon it and get the fire brigade to take it away and detonate it.

Yes, there were several divides really. There was what you could call a very academic art around the Royal Scottish Academy. There was the theoretical and historical interest in the university department which was quite a different subject from practical art; it was history although there was a joint course with the art college. The Royal Scottish Academy was though the really the academic thing. I never really had much to do with Robin Philipson when I was there, although I got to like him towards the time I was leaving, and I was pleased to have dinner with him one evening not long before he died. He was really the figure as far as I can tell, the academic figure in the Royal Scottish Academy. Before him of course, William Gillies. I met William Gillies several times through David Talbot Rice because of the joint course going on between the art college and us, and I like his paintings. There were collectors like Dr. R.A. Lillie who was a strong collector of Scottish painting, who built up a huge collection and finally gave a lot of it to the university when I was there, the Talbot Rice Arts Centre possesses it now.

Then there were the more traditional painting media which were advanced. For example I remember at that time the art college had a number of very promising

people including John Bellany. I remember his early ones, and being quite impressed by them, and thinking that perhaps though they were too influenced by German expressionism in some way, or by some Flemish twentieth century painters, like Ensor. Perhaps I was too critical. Now looking back on them, I think that they're some of his best work. There was that side of things. Then there was painting that came in, sort of minimal painting and so on which was put on occasionally by the Scottish Arts Council, which caused protest by a local councillor - the usual sort of thing saying it was a waste of public money, and one or two were closed.

Then there was the more extremely radical one occasionally breaking out, like the things I was doing, and the things I suppose that Mark Boyle was doing. By Mark Boyle's *Earthprobes*, I think you mean the one's where he threw a dart at a map, and went to that place? I used to stay with him while he was making these things. That stuff used to stink of the chemical substances he used to use! I thought that was very interesting. He went on sort of a modern archaeological site, picking up objects and so on. On one occasion, he went to what looked like a bombed building or abandoned derelict site. He was on the edge of the Destruction in Art Symposium, though he didn't want, as far as I can remember, to get involved very much, he was more individualistic I think.

How did you meet Mark Boyle? Would you say that you had similar aims during the sixties?

I can't remember how I met him, just that I used to stay with him in London. I don't know whether there was really much in common between our art, I think his art was very interesting. In the end, it tended to become a little bit repetitive, the *Earthprobes.*

He's still doing them. I tried to get in contact with him, and he's away on tour just now doing more *Earthprobes*. There are still dart marked sites to do, so he is away doing some now…

Well, maybe in a way it's wonderful that he's just doing that. It's like one artwork continuing. But I don't really want to do that. Ideally, I'd like each work of art to be totally different in style and quality and character, but then I can't resist developing a theme. But I really would like the world not to go for style, at least not in art, but perhaps for, a word that's too anguishing for most people, profound analysis or some criticism of society or the self, or some penetration of the mind in some way. I can't describe it really…I never thought of that, whether we had anything that much in common…there was something in common, I suppose in the fact that in the '60s we weren't so much doing painting as real objects.

I'm interested to know about the relationship existing between the diverse work which can fit under the umbrella term of the 'visual arts.' I'm curious about the historical concentration on painting in Scottish art surveys, and whether that was a reflection of the concentration on painting in actuality, or whether there was a reason that e.g. destruction art etc. is largely ignored. Perhaps it fits into another 'genre'?

Well, I tell you, I think frankly, that a lot of the stuff that the Destruction in Arts Symposium did was never written up in any book, because it really worried society. It was an attack on society itself, it was critical of the values of society, and it, in a way predicted the increasing violence in society. The wars and of course the obsolescence was the obvious thing, the wastefulness of materials, the deliberate built-in obsolescence that people like Vance Packard had written about, which stimulated me a great deal. He was a journalist really who'd written very popular

publications about the way that cars were built with substances that deliberately made them rust, and how refrigerators would go out of date according to their styles, and you couldn't be seen dead in a certain type of car because it was passé and all this kind of rubbish. It was to do with various kinds of obsolescence in society which was capable of being expressed I think in the work that I was doing.

I was the first person in Britain to use explosives in work, in art work, and it was in Edinburgh that I first did this, in the Drill Hall, and I continued to do it for a couple of years. But in 1968, I decided to write a PhD thesis on Russian art, which was also, I think about the most extremely avant-garde period in twentieth century, and I stopped doing destruction in art because, partly I wanted to get back to painting. I was more interested in introspective things like etching, but in a way etching is sort of destructive, it destroys the plate, and I used to destroy plates almost completely, and print them just blank, white relief prints on paper, and try out things like that. Very bad for the lungs of course!

To me, I don't see any problem about doing several kinds of things at the same time, I think it's different aspects of the personality. I think very often galleries, if you become too closely involved with a gallery, it expects you to do work which sells, and so artists tend then to do the work that sells and they become well known because their work is recognisable very easily. And then there was us who didn't do that, and famous ones like Francis Picabia; because they had a lot of money, they did all kinds of work.

I met Marcel Duchamp in 1966 or '7 as well, and I had two very interesting long conversations with him and he told me that he thought that the innovations in the twentieth century were in the beginning, it was a kind of vertical period, and that the sixties were a kind of horizontal period where things were being developed and

evolved, and I totally agree with that, I think it was that. And we know now that a lot of it was financed for the Cold War by the United States.

But Destruction in Art was much more radical than all these avant-garde movements like Pop art, and the sequences of short-lived movements that existed in the '60s and '70s. I think it was much more radical, it was critical of society, these other things were really decorative of society. In a way, Pop art was the representation of America, the kind of social realism of America whereas Destruction in Art asked questions, threw a light on the negative, hidden qualities, hidden aspects of politics of society. So people were afraid of it, and so you never get it, there isn't a book written about it.

Gustav Metzger had quite a bit of influence on my attitudes, but perhaps what it was is that he reinforced attitudes I already had, he substantiated them. I had been doing things with destruction before that, in Edinburgh and I had been doing a lot of painting. I started them in Switzerland in 1959 and they had gravel all over the surface of the canvas or hessian. They were based on the idea of cities in Sicily built upon the hillside out of the stones, back into which they were disappearing. You could hardly see these cities, just the stones. And I had the idea of destruction and gradual change in materials like that, and I did paintings of destruction, houses falling etc.

Kristine Stiles, who wrote a PhD thesis on Destruction fairly convincingly attributes a lot of this to the Second World War. Our house was hit by a bomb, it was quite a frightening experience. It's difficult to assess to what extent that is inside someone. I mean, when the war ended I was ten, so I was quite young, and I think it does leave a mark. It was a very strange period in my life, the rationing that went on. There weren't any oranges or bananas for a long time. It was all very haphazard, and there were these bombs coming out of the sky aiming to kill us. It was terrible. Of

course, they were ostensibly aiming at the docks near here, but they were actually landing in our house and in the garden. I remember one morning, my mother opening the back door onto the garden, she had a great big lawn with a nice seat at the end of it, and it was like a desert, it was a mass of rubble and stones. It was an extraordinary sight. Funny in a way. I think that must have some kind of influence.

Would you say that your work at the time was more allied to performance and theatre than painting and sculpture? (For example, your performances at the Traverse Theatre).

Yes, it was really. It started off being more allied to theatre, and I did put things on in London at the Mercury theatre during the DIAS, and of course at the Traverse Theatre late night show.

I'm interested too, in the idea of art into theatre and theatre into art, and whether there is a tangible dividing line between performance and theatre.

I'm interested too in the idea of theatre into art and art into theatre and I didn't see a dividing line between them. In fact, at that time I didn't see any dividing line between what they later called performance art and theatre and painting or sculpture even. I wanted the whole thing to be combined into, I suppose, ultimately something almost Wagnerian, like Wagner's idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk.* I don't know whether it was quite that, it was rather a mid twentieth century version of *Gesamtkunstwerk.*

I'm especially interested in your work at the Traverse, because it seems to me that even the Richard Demarco Gallery was fairly conservative in its beginnings in 1966, and it wasn't really promoting anything particularly radical until the late 1960s and into 1970, when Beuys came to Scotland.

I don't think I really appreciated how good Richard Demarco was at that time. I was detached and doing my own thing. He brought a lot of life to Edinburgh. It was

comparatively conservative. It was conservative compared to what went on in other spheres, but he did give me an exhibition in the Traverse Theatre, and exhibition of paintings about 1968, I think. I don't think he was at that time promoting anything terribly radical. I think what was valuable of course, was that he was willing to learn, and move onto new things. I mentioned that I saw the performance by Beuys in Edinburgh where he went around the wall. The ridiculous thing is that I didn't even bother to go and see him when I was in Dusseldorf.

The Traverse seemed to be more radical than the Demarco gallery, as did the Edinburgh Festival (and here I'm thinking particularly about the 'happenings' at the Writers' Conference etc.). Again, however, this seems to me to raise the question of whether these events were actually seen as art or theatre, or indeed something completely different.

I wasn't at that Writers' Conference, and I didn't see those so called happenings, I only heard about them, and I don't know altogether who did them. Several people mentioned them at the time, and asked me if I'd done them, but it was nothing to do with me. I think I was trying to get something a bit more radical and hard biting and penetrating and profound than some of the happenings that I'd seen which seemed to be a bit slight. I'm not saying this one was but they seemed to be rather slight. I think the majority of people thought that they were eccentricities. A lot of people were intrigued by them.

I felt tremendous success when somebody told me that the newspapers had started doing cartoons making fun of destruction in art, because that is really an arrival, it's like, at one time the newspapers used to make fun of holes in sculpture when Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth were doing that; people shaking hands through them and all that. That showed that they were really outrageous and

extraordinary. Now nobody makes cartoons about holes in sculpture. That people were actually perceiving destruction in art as something eligible for that kind of cartoon pleased me more than anything. There were a great many popular articles in the press and *The Scotsman* and other newspapers.

I do think that these events were different from conventional theatre, and they were different from conventional painting. To me the events, at least the ones I was involved with, involved painting and theatre and sculpture and dance and everything - it was all in one. I wanted to reach a point where these events were central to all these different arts like a wheel.

Here the art gallery question interests me. In many ways this kind of work made the art gallery largely redundant.

Well, the art gallery I think, really started in seventeenth century Holland to sell pictures to wealthy merchants, and it has continued and probably will continue. Different people have different views of art. There's the sort of art which the galleries sell quite rightly to decorate; paintings for Flemish houses and so on. Some of them are extremely important, fine works of art and major masterpieces by great artists. Some of them are more radical in their view of society, and when they come to examine society there is another kind of art which isn't necessarily for hanging on the wall. It's like the embodiment of an idea, it's a kind of applied philosophy in a way, but it's painting as well. We see this in Europe and Russia in the nineteenth century and right through the beginning of the twentieth century in different ways; a kind of realism like that extensive at the time of Courbet, and in Russia much more extreme forms of realism, Pushkin or a pair of boots was the question. A thousand good Cooks is worth more than one Raphael; this sort of extreme nihilistic attitude. The point at which art ceases to be art for arts sake or painterly beauty and becomes more

concerned with society. I probably misquoted a few of those things, but this was the general idea of the nihilists in Russia.

I did see one or two performances of McLean in London. My only encounter with him in Scotland was when I actually started to criticise the avant-garde, and he got very annoyed. I thought he was going to hit me! A lot of people said I should sue him for threatening, but I didn't mind! I took a kind of anti avant-garde stance, it was a bit perverse of me, because the avant-garde was becoming not exactly an established or snobbish thing, but it was too respectable in a way. At the time in the sixties, this was much later though in the '70s or'80s, it really was radical, it was penetrating I think - a criticism of society, whereas later the art colleges took up these things. Well that means it's become academic, it entered the academy.

I'm interested in the idea that radical artists working in Scotland like yourself, Boyle, Finlay and even McLean were using alternative platforms for your work. I'm interested in the idea of the Festival, the garden, the beach and even the street as alternative 'stages' for this kind of work.

Yes. I wish you'd met a friend of mine, he died a few years ago, called Paul Davis who did exactly that. He took art out, and it was extremely radical art and he influenced me enormously.

This also leads me to the question of the closeness of this kind of art to real life - if there are no spectators, or if those spectators don't know that what you are doing is art, then the dividing line between art and experienced reality becomes unclear.

Maybe art is experienced reality. When you are looking at a painting, you're looking at the painting as an object, and it's part of reality, it's paint on canvas. You

become conscious that it's paint on canvas while you become conscious of some references that it makes to another kind of reality. I'm not sure what you're asking… **I'm thinking for example about when you blew up the dummies in the shop on Charles Street - there were people walking past, going about their everyday business. They didn't know what you were doing. It was part of their everyday, they didn't know that what you were doing was art. Therefore, it becomes part of their reality whether it is art or not, or whether they know or not that it's supposed to be. I think that's an interesting idea, and I think a lot of performance art does that too.**

Yes, that's very interesting, because you could have a notice with an arrow pointing saying 'this is art.' It would be ridiculous. In any case, I don't think a lot of people realise…well, the idea of art is artificial. It's totally foreign to British tradition, I think…fine art. I think it's a kind of recent thing, recent idea. Certainly the avant-garde is recent…foreign.

But the truth is I think, that people have been reading poetry for centuries. People have been reading it for centuries and they don't really understand the nuances and the meaning of what's going on. Some of the words have been changed by scribes, people recopying it and so on. Like with Shakespeare. I think that when people watched Shakespeare's plays they weren't really following everything. A lot of Shakespeare is extremely boring, the long historical stuff and inaccurate, and some of the intended jokes aren't particularly funny. But they were written to entertain people, and a lot of people didn't think of them as art, and certainly wouldn't have understood the fuss that we make over them now.

Yes, it's true that people see things that they don't think of as art, but then everybody sees it differently anyway. I mean, somebody who's very much a painter

would think it was uninteresting, or rubbish perhaps, to see a performance like that. Others would understand it historically or something.

I'm thinking here of your explosions. I'm interested in your opinion. Were the events supposed to be an extension of life in any way, in a sense describing what Kaprow was talking about in relation to his 'happenings', when he called them "art as experience?"

Yes, they were intended to be. When things were exploding and breaking down, there was tremendous control actually over the systematic explosions. For example the one in the Paperback Book shop, the shop window dummies were there, one would explode and the room would be filled with smoke and you couldn't see anything, but then the smoke would go and you would see it was missing. So it was almost a kind of musical in space, but it was a plastic art. It was a visual art in itself, which perhaps nobody needed to associate with destruction in society, or destruction in the world generally; the arms race or destruction of language or something like that…destruction of communities.

I've moved on since then, thanks to the influence of Paul Davies, to take an interest in the destruction of minority communities, like my own community in Wales where people have been cleared out of their communities and villages in order to build bombing sites, or firing ranges or reservoirs. So, I continued to feel strongly about performance and art being a representation of the destructive elements in society and the transformations in society which are very often undesirable.

Also, did you keep records of any of these events as documentation of your work, or as pieces in their own right? I'm thinking of photographs of the events - do you see them as art?

I'd never actually thought of that to be honest, but when I recorded these events, I did it purely for the record. I like to record what I do like a diary. At that time there wasn't the documentation and the documenting of art events to the extent that there is now.

I'm thinking of the relationship to conceptual art where the actual documentation of what was supposed to happen is important, because it was primarily an idea and the writing down of that idea or thought is actually the piece of art.

No, I didn't do that intentionally. Although there are a lot of documents in which I wrote out things for performances, which are drawn over at the time and which I now just keep as what you describe, but I didn't really intend that at the time. I kept them as records…in a way all records are kind of objects in their own right but the photographs I just thought of as photographic snaps of the thing

(Later: But yes, pieces in their own right. I did keep one or two).

Where do you see your work in relation to the American 'happenings', and to other non-conventional art that was being produced/undertaken in Scotland?

I went to see Jim Dine once and he was furious at the performances that were recorded in Life magazine in 1966 or '67 about what we'd been doing in DIAS because he saw himself as the established man, and the Americans thought of themselves as established. I'm a bit sceptical about American, or Anglo-American internationalism which is really a kind of monopoly, the promotion of a clique in a way. It sounds like sour grapes that I'm not part of that clique, but if I had been, if I'd

wanted to be part of that clique, I wouldn't have gone on doing those criticisms of that sort of clique myself. But I'm rather sceptical of the Anglo-American which calls itself international, it isn't really international.

I'm curious too, about your reasons for becoming involved in destruction work. Can you tell me about this, and about the Destruction in Arts Symposium (DIAS) in 1966? When did you stop doing destruction work and why?

I stopped because it was really exhausting. It was quite nerve-wracking actually. Even doing theatre events where there was no destruction, I found really exhausting and draining. There wasn't much oxygen in the theatre. I turned to writing a PhD thesis, which seems like a very opposite thing, although the subject was Russian art, extremely avant-garde Russian art. I think I also turned to painting because I thought well I can paint. I thought, I know how to paint and it would be a waste not to paint. And I did etching then. Also, I got a bit fed up with people saying, if I was carrying a bag or something, "is it going to explode" all those silly clichés that people with a penchant for the obvious have and would say. Nice people, but a bit boring to hear it time and time again. And I noticed, since there was a television program about my work recently, one or two people started saying it again. It seems to fascinate people. That really is tiresome. It's not why I gave it up exactly, but it dawned on me that newspapers and people were not so interested in what really lay deep inside this destruction work, but the sensation of it. Of course, if you wanted quick publicity, well it wouldn't be difficult, but it would be much nicer to have something serious written about it, which there is now. Kristine Stiles wrote about it in the '80s.

What correlation, if any, do you see between your destruction work, and the work that you are producing now?

Well, I think the criticism of established society and the destruction which has been wrought on the communities in Wales by flooding, driving people out of their homes, by people with second homes coming and disrupting the community, sending up the prices where local people can't afford to buy houses. All this drove a certain minority group in the early 1980s to actually burn down these empty houses. When you see homelessness around, and you see someone with a lot of money from Birmingham or London or wherever having a second home in Wales, then it seems a great pity I think that these people were driven to that. Then the events of recording that event were actually censored in Wales. Paul Davies was the first person to show a burning cottage, but of course you could see in the Hayward Gallery at the same time an exhibition of Magritte with a burning house which wouldn't be censored. It's the context every time.

I'm interested in actually developing some of those points, you can see that in the catalogue of a recent exhibition 'Legends from the White Book', and of celebrating the history the minority people that I belong to. I think it's a mistake for me to pretend to be Chinese for example, although I'm fascinated by Chinese art, as I think it is to some extent a mistake to be part of the so called Anglo-American international world. I think it's more interesting and profound to seek out what you really are. So that's how this destruction in art has tempered my way of looking at life. I feel the influence of a lot of people. I felt a strong influence from the international American world, of the '50s and '60s, though I did reject it at the time. I rejected in the '50s abstract expressionism, and preferred the European form of informal art as they called it then, Debuffy particularly and some of the Italians like

Crippa and so on who were using textures, and I much preferred the Spanish or the Catalan artists who were doing torn canvases and things like that. I preferred them to the more light American work in a way, it was big, it seemed light, it was powerful, spacious…but it didn't have the deep sort of anguish that some of the European artists had, so that really influenced me a lot.

Then in the '60s, I met various people and was delighted to meet people like Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray and Sonia Delaunay. To see Sonia Delaunay coming down, descending the staircase in her studio was like a kind of Hollywood dream in a way, into this Douanier Rousseau jungle that was in the window of her studio, and that had grown up about 16 feet. She couldn't give me a straight answer about Le Douanier Rousseau, but anyway…but meeting and seeing a lot of work and travelling in Europe, living in Switzerland in the late '50s and early '60s, being able to travel around these countries was wonderful. Then, I think, Paul Davies influenced me in the early '80s because he had this very brave, very direct way of working outside galleries, criticising the destruction of communities in Wales and so on.

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Fig. 44. Anthony Caro, *Early One Morning*, 1962, steel and aluminium painted red, 2.9 x 6.1 x 3.3m., Tate Gallery, London.

Fig. 45. Bruce McLean, *Pose Work for Plinths*, documentation of performance at *Situation*, 1971.

Fig. 46. Bruce McLean, *Floataway Sculpture*, Beverley Brook, 1967, hardwood, lino, woodblock. Photographer: Dirk Buwalda.

Fig. 47. Bruce McLean, *Vertical Ice Sculpture*, Barnes Pond, 1968. Photographer: the artist.

Fig. 48. Bruce McLean preparing *Mary Waving Goodbye to the Trains*, St. Martin's College roof, 1965.

Fig. 49. Bruce McLean as part of Nice Style Pose, publicity photograph for *High Up on a Baroque Palazzo*, Garage, London, 1974. Photographer: Craigie Horsfield.

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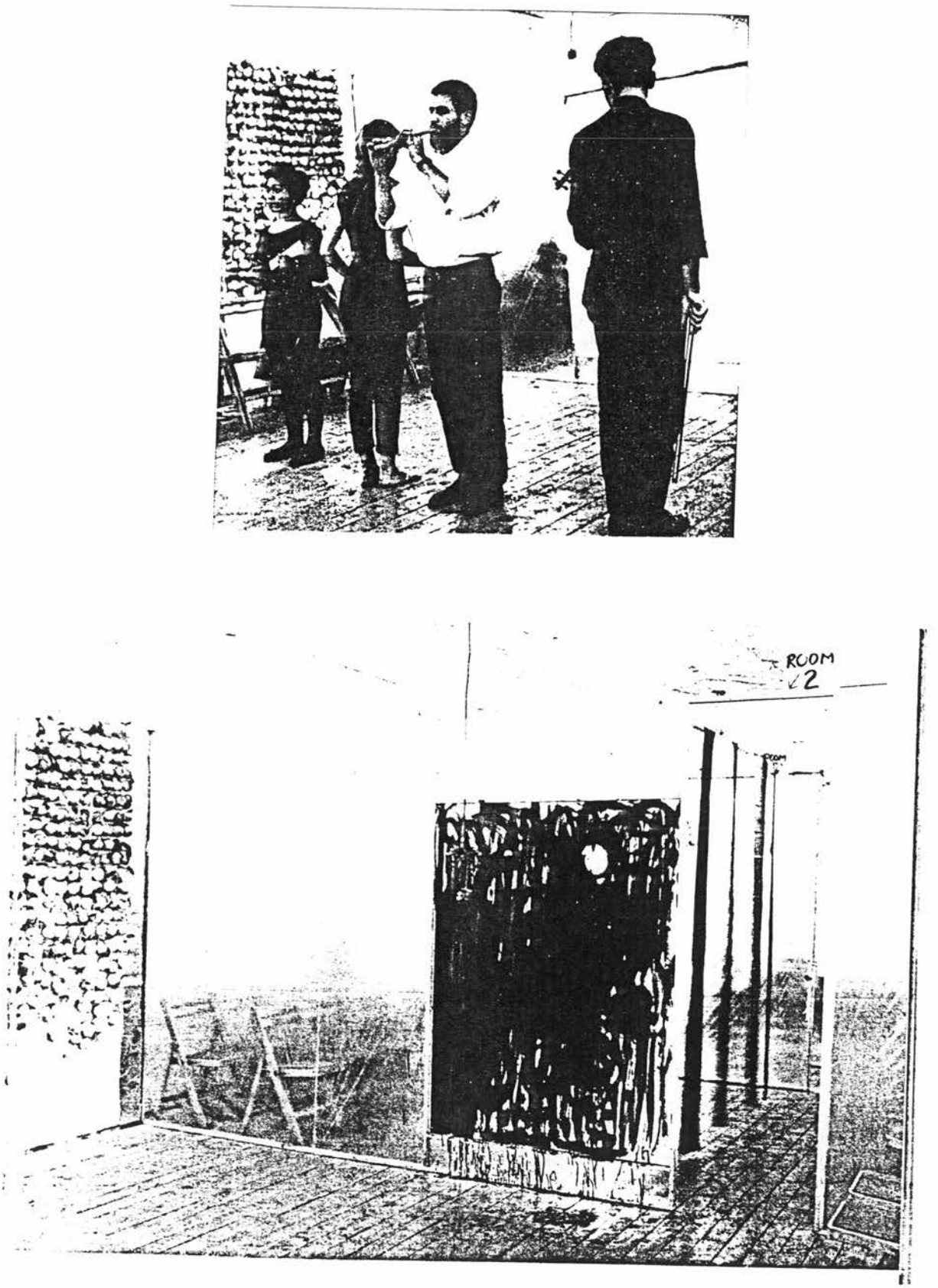


Fig. 1. Allan Kaprow, from *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, 1959, one room of a three-room environment at the Reuben Gallery, New York, now destroyed. Allan Kaprow stands in the centre to the right in the top image.

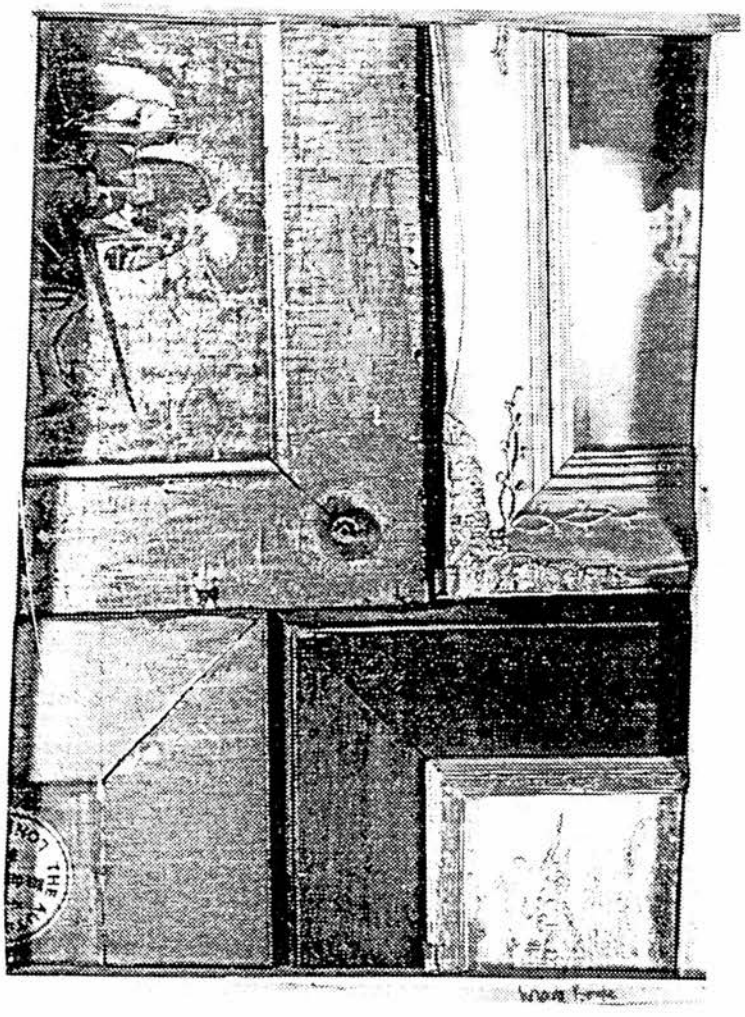


Fig. 2. Mark Boyle, *Frame Relief*, mixed media c.1963, John and Halla Beloff Collection, 49 x 35.2 x 5.5 cm.

Fig. 3. Richard Demarco, illustration of Jim Haynes Paperback Bookshop, n.d., taken from Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*. Paradoxically, the illustration shows a woman burning a copy of Lady Chatterly's lover outside the shop; a shop where the proprietor, Jim Haynes, had no interest in censorship.

Fig. 4. The Sceptics performing *David Hume on God and Evil*, 1961, staged at Jim Haynes' Paperback Bookshop.

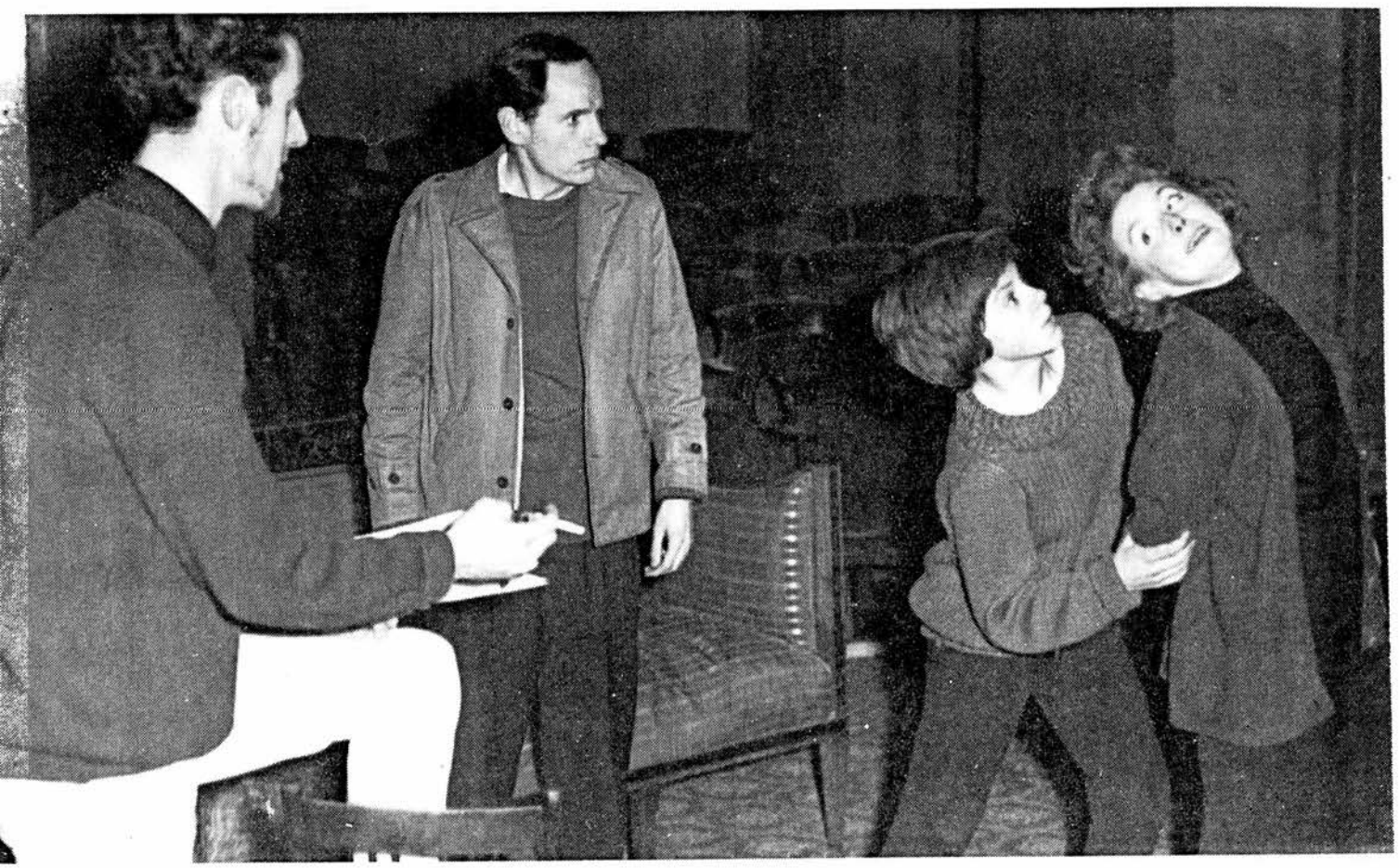
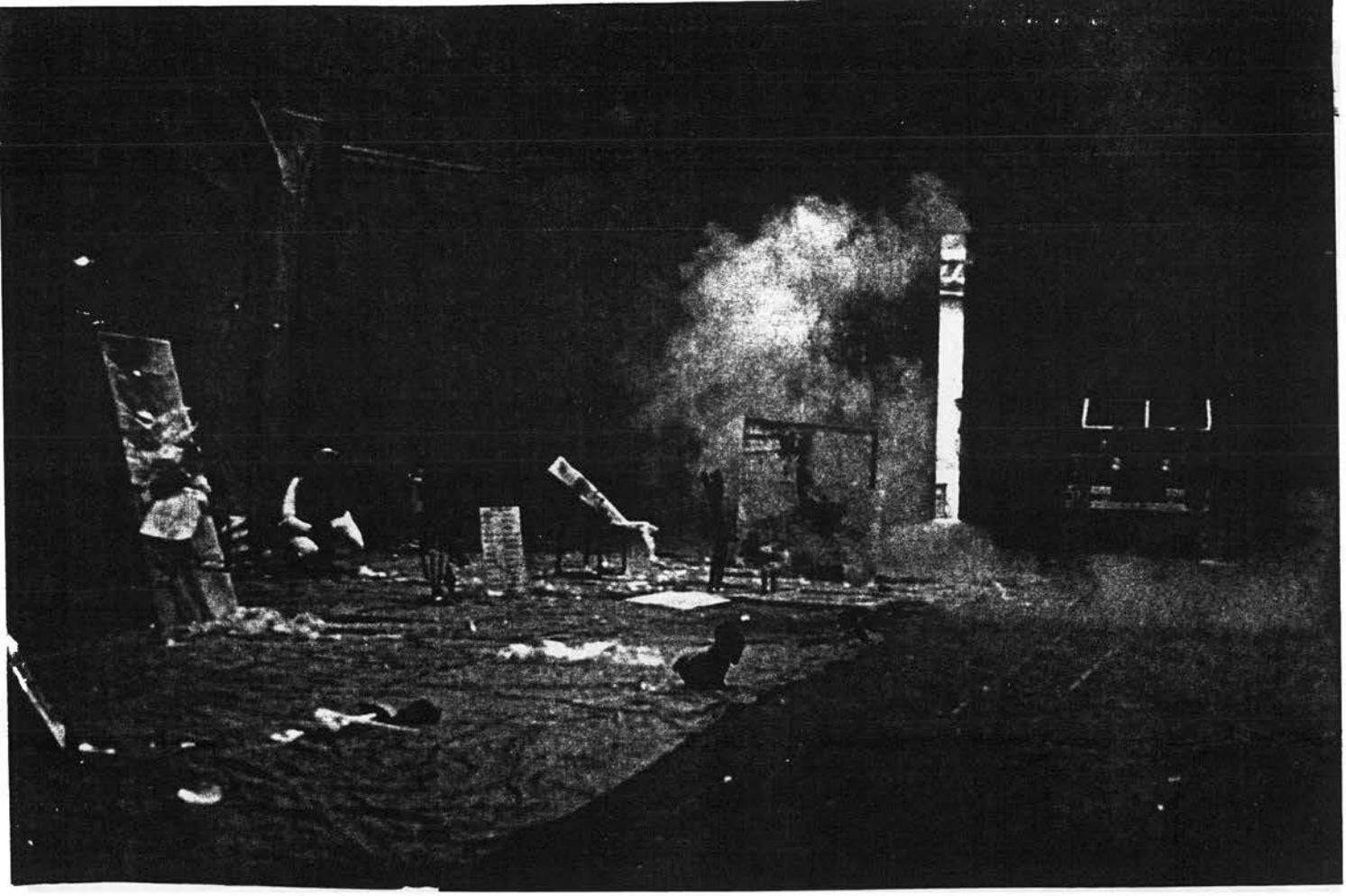


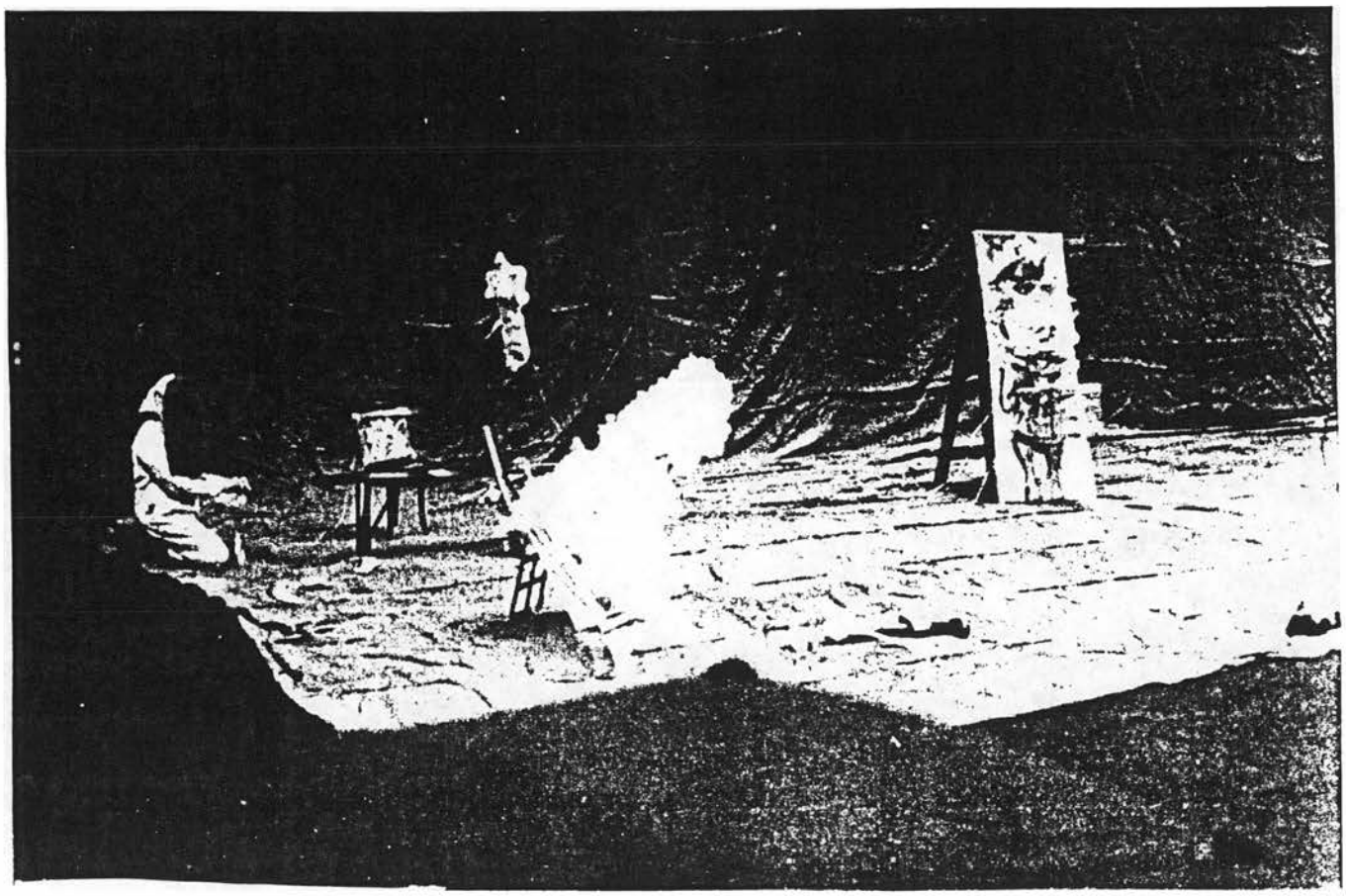
Fig. 5. Rehearsal for *Huis Clos* by Jean Paul Sartre, the first performance at the Traverse Theatre Club, 1962. This illustration provides a view of the theatre that highlights its size and shows seating on either side of the performance area; the stage traverses the theatre.

Fig. 6. Richard Demarco, illustration of the original Traverse Theatre in James Court in Edinburgh's Lawnmarket, 1992, taken from Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*.

Fig. 7. Richard Demarco, illustration of the gallery exhibition space in the restaurant of the Traverse Theatre, James Court, n.d., taken from Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*.

Fig. 8. Cover of exhibition catalogue for an exhibition of the paintings and reliefs of Ivor Davies, at the Outlook Tower, Castlehill, 17-31 July 1965.





Figs. 9 & 10. Ivor Davies, aftermath of the untitled destruction event at the Territorial Army Drill Hall, Forest Road, Edinburgh, 1 September 1966. Photographs courtesy of Ivor Davies.

Figs. 11 & 12. Ivor Davies at a London Happenings event, standing beneath his creation - an anatomical model with the superimposed face of Robert Mitchum - which he exploded. September 1966. Photograph taken from *Life* magazine (Atlantic edition, Spring 1967).

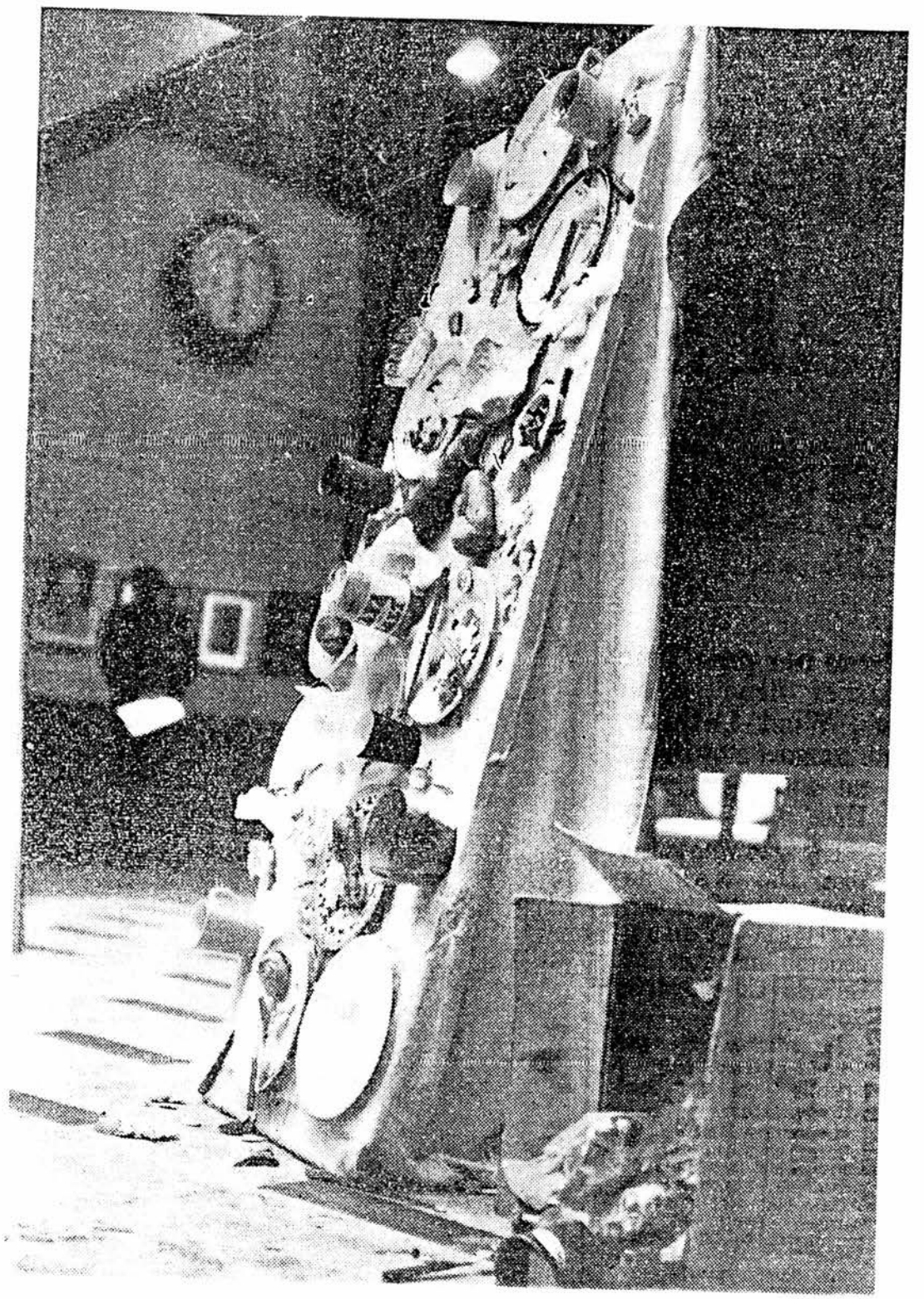
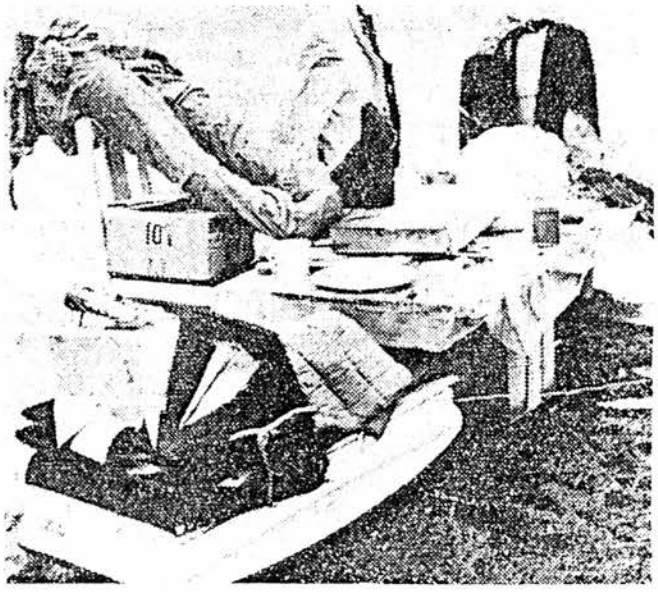


Fig. 13. Ivor Davies, untitled, mixed media, destroyed.



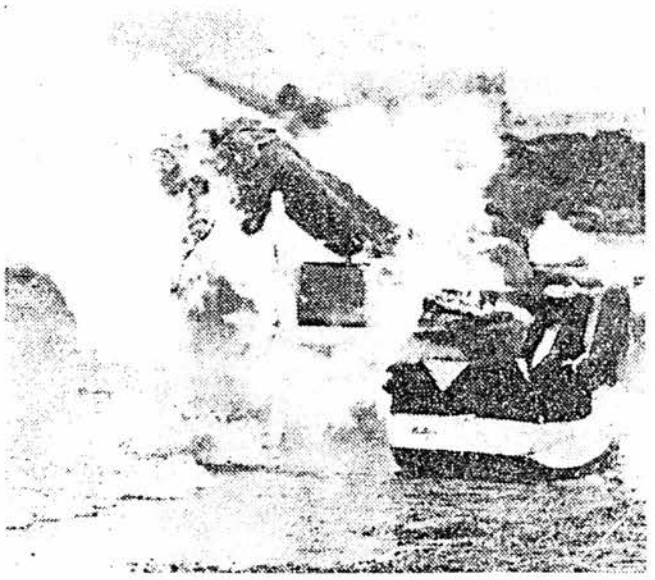


Fig. 14. Ivor Davies, untitled, mixed media, Cramond beach, destroyed.

Fig. 15. Ivor Davies, untitled, 1966, mixed media, Charles Street, Edinburgh, destroyed.

Fig. 16. John Latham, burning book and skoob towers, on the site of the future National Theatre, 1966.

Fig. 17. Photograph by *Life* magazine (Atlantic edition, Spring 1967) of delegates to the first International Destruction in Art Symposium, September 1966. Ivor Davies is pictured standing in the middle of the group.

Fig. 18. John Maxwell, *Still Life in the Country*, 1936, oil on canvas, 61.25 x 73.5cm, the University of Edinburgh.

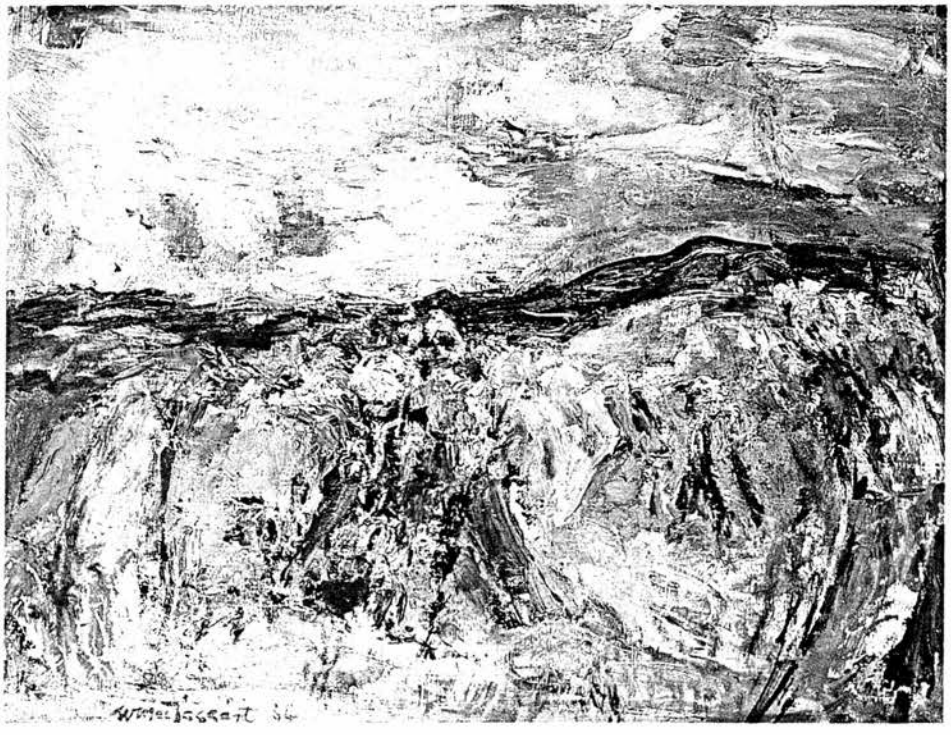


Fig. 19. Sir William MacTaggart, *Stooks at Sunset*, 1964, oil on canvas, 71 x 91cm, Private Collection.

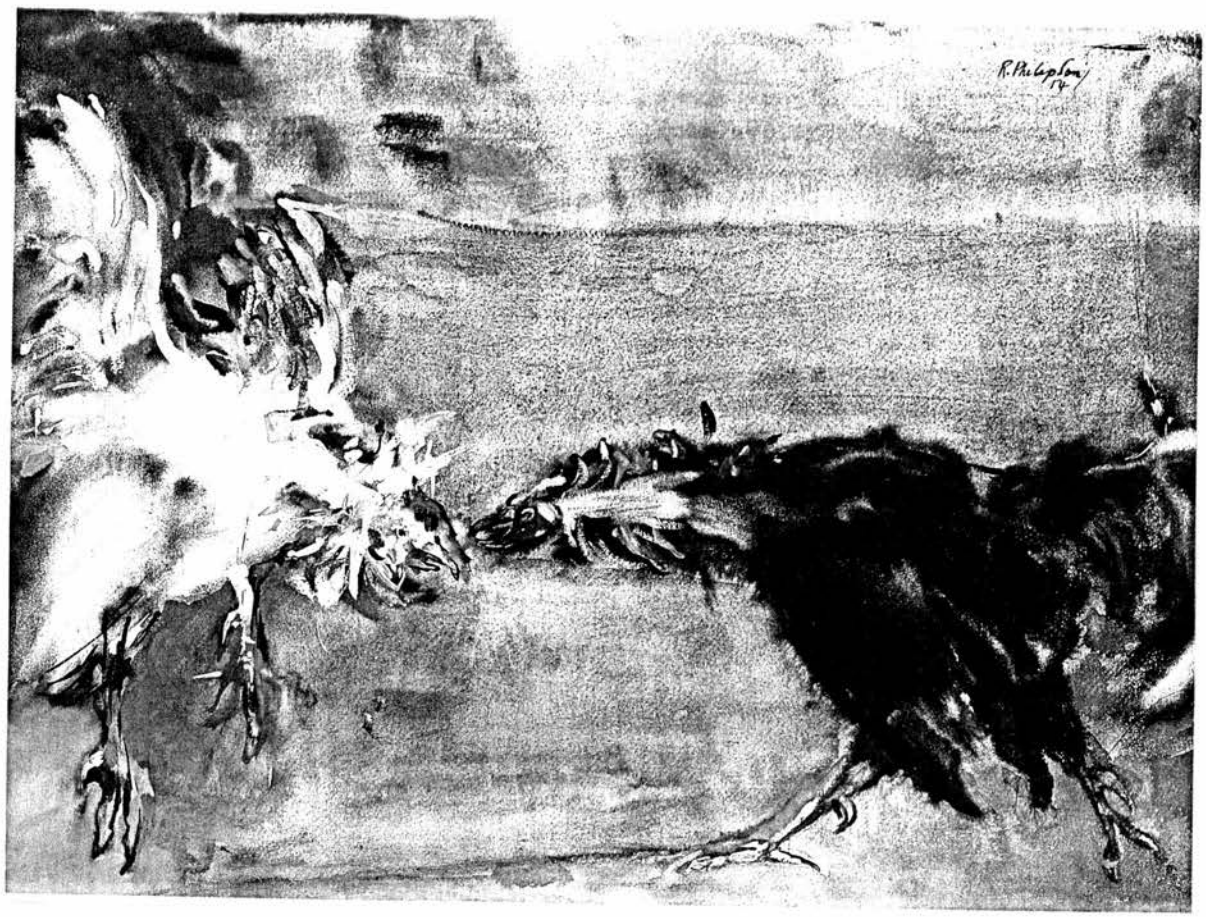


Fig. 20. Sir Robin Philipson, *Cock Fight, Prelude*, 1954, watercolour, 50.8 x 66cm, Private Collection.

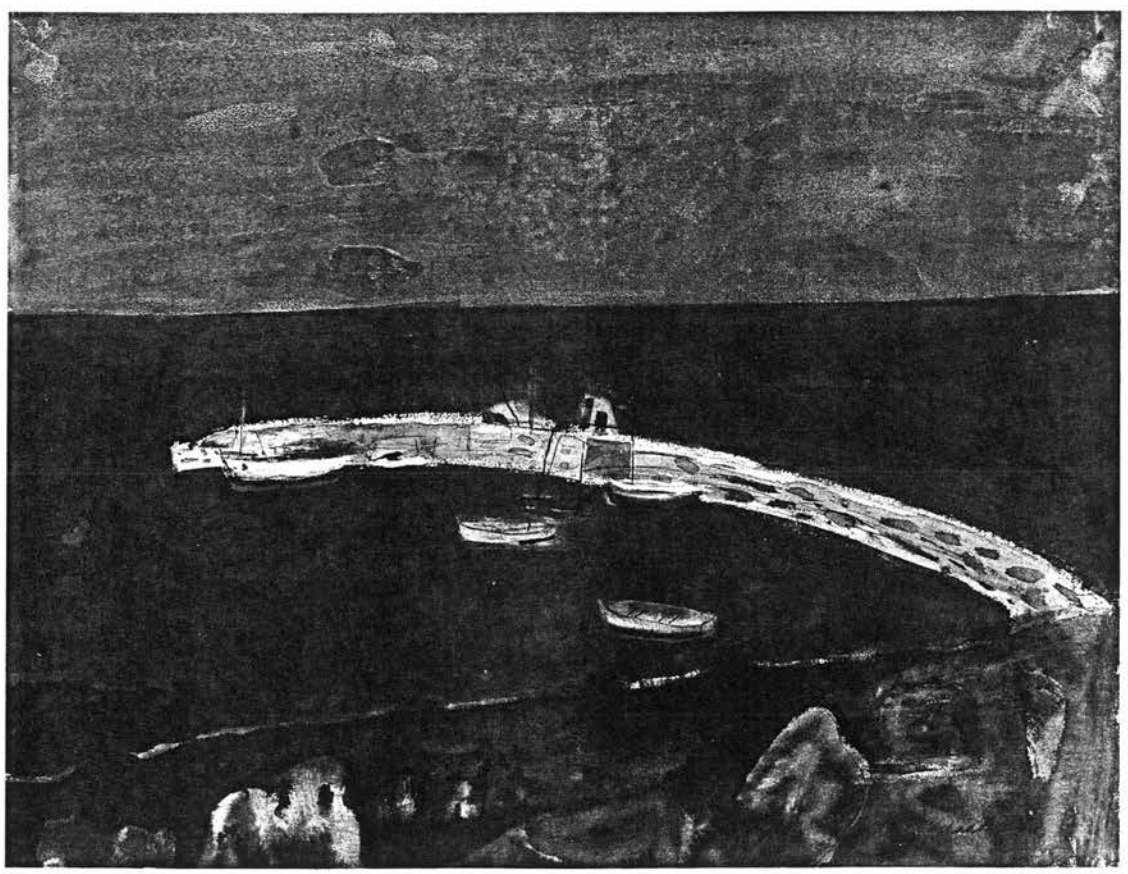


Fig. 21. Elizabeth Blackadder, *Broadford, Skye*, 1970, watercolour, 44.1 x 56.35cm.

Fig. 22. John Houston, *Evening Sky over the Bass Rock*, 1963, watercolour, 85.75 x 95.5cm.

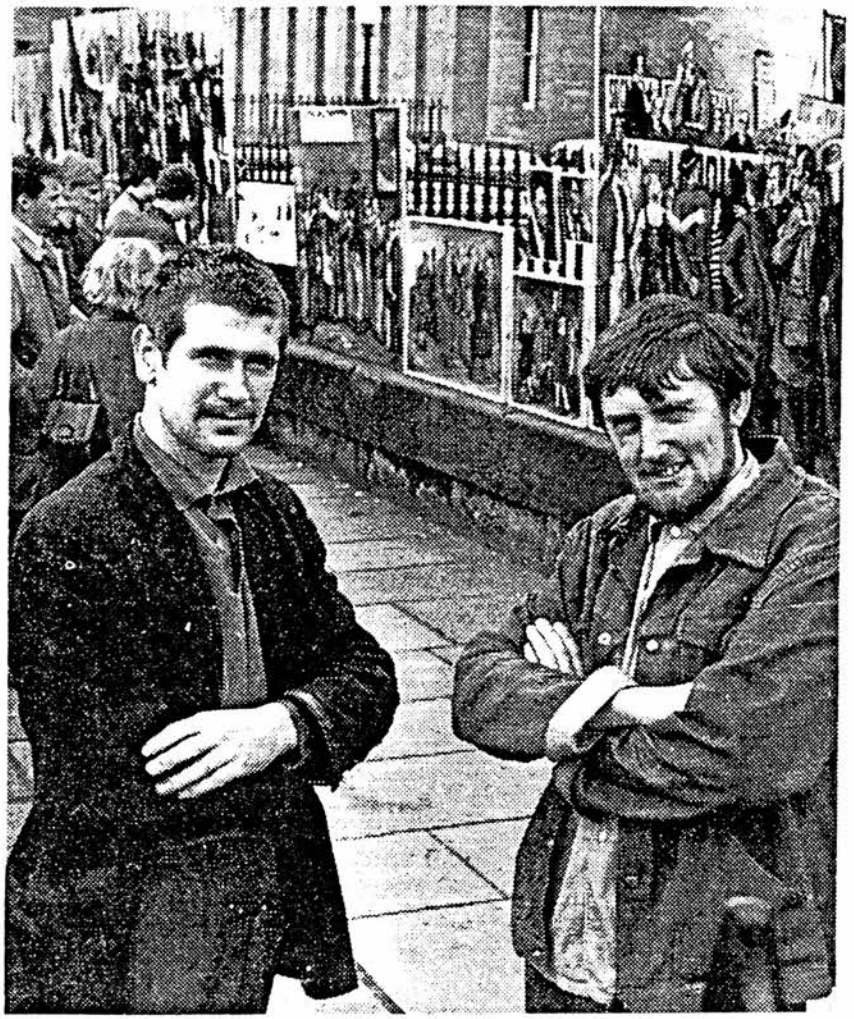


Fig. 23. Alexander Moffat and John Bellany with paintings exhibited outside the Royal Scottish Academy during the 1965 Edinburgh Festival.

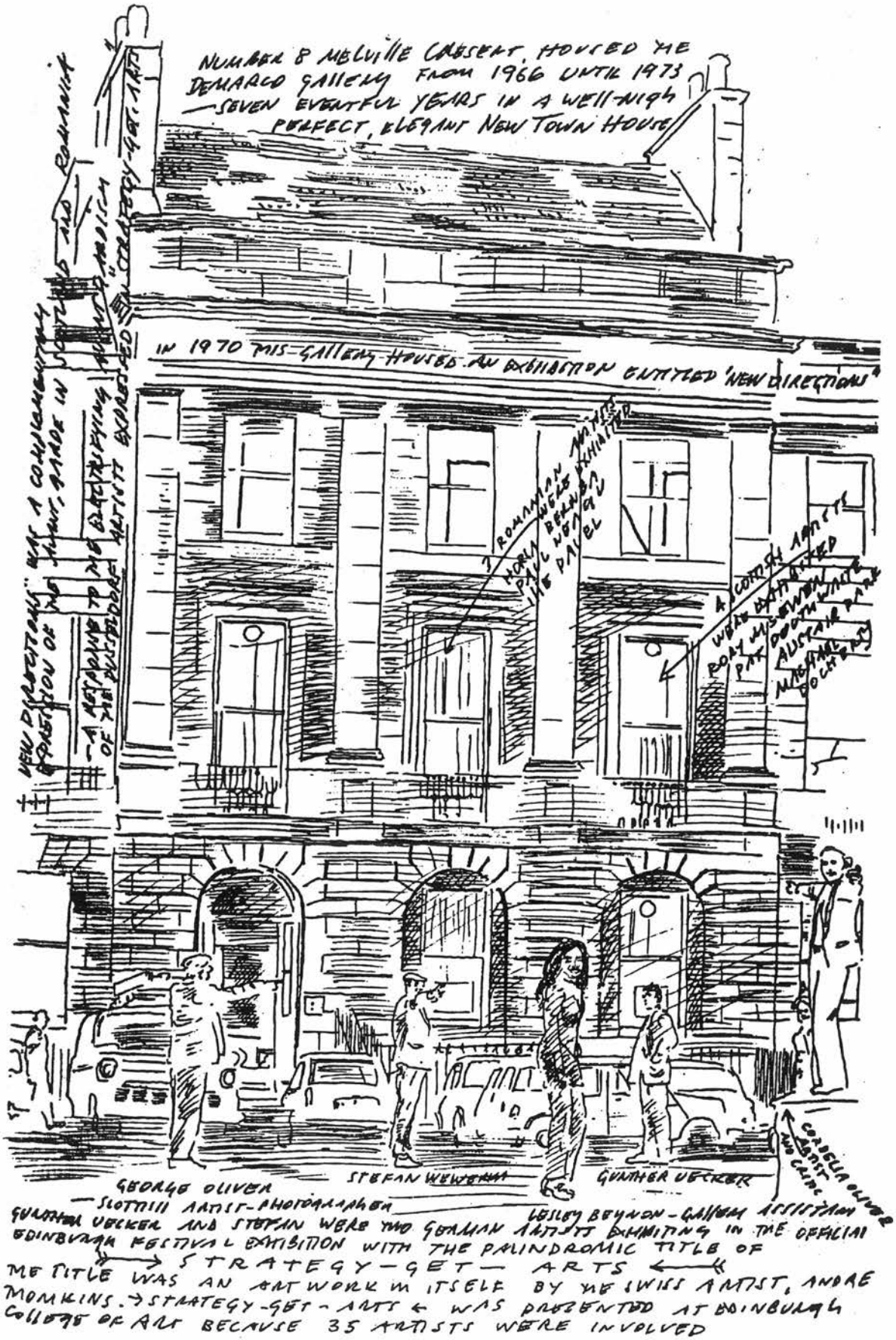


Fig. 24. Richard Demarco, illustration of theThe Richard Demarco Gallery, number 8 Melville Crescent in Edinburgh's New Town, taken from Richard Demarco *A Life in* Pictures. The gallery was housed here from the inauguration in 1966 until the move to the Old Town in 1973.

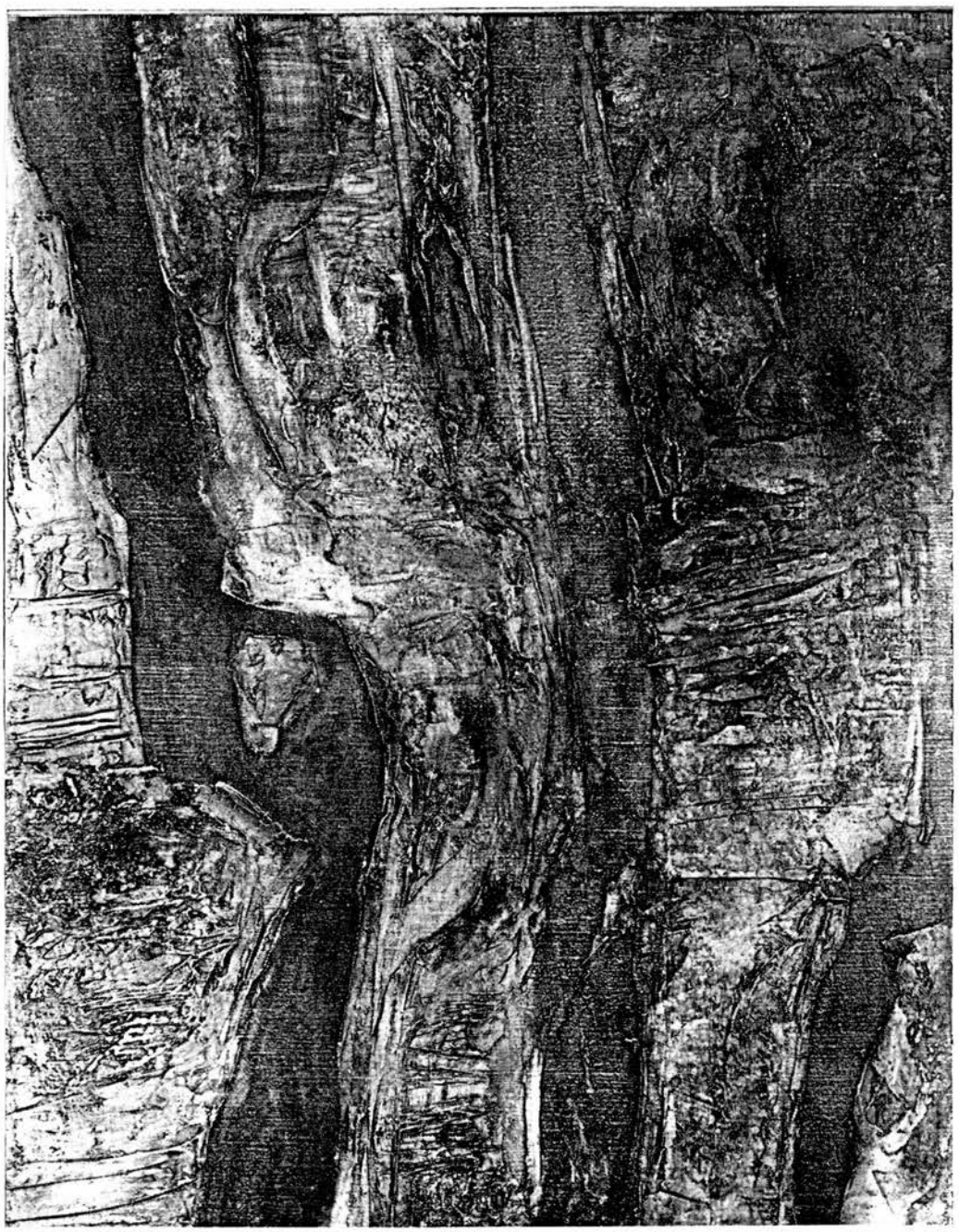


Fig. 25. Alastair Michie, *Movement Over Black*, oil on canvas, 90 x 120cm.

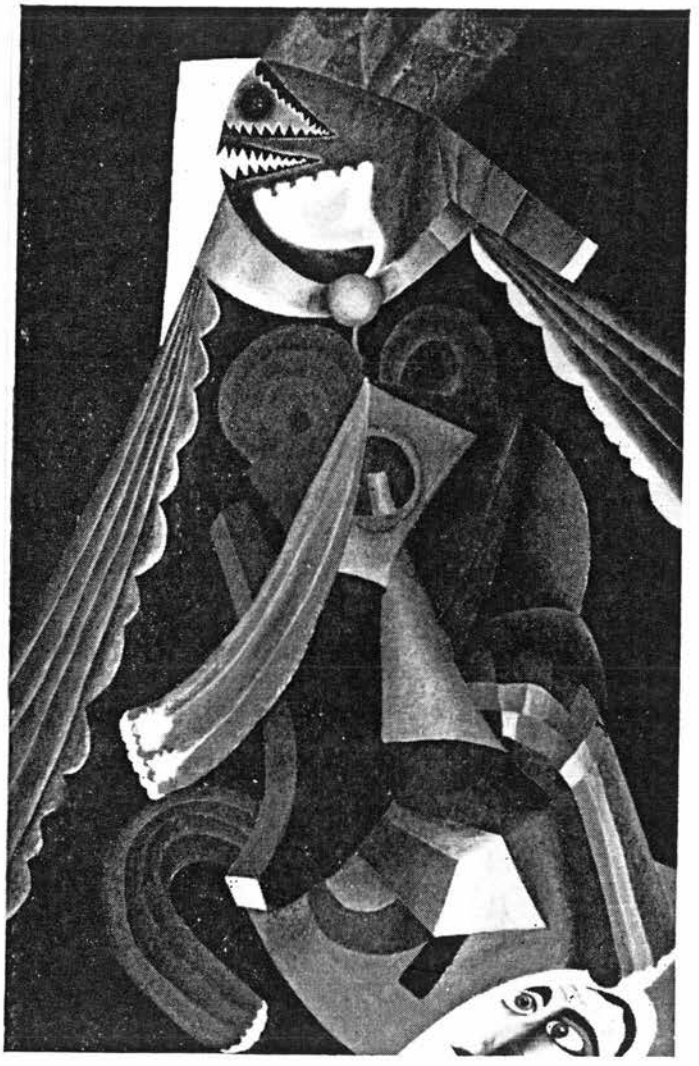
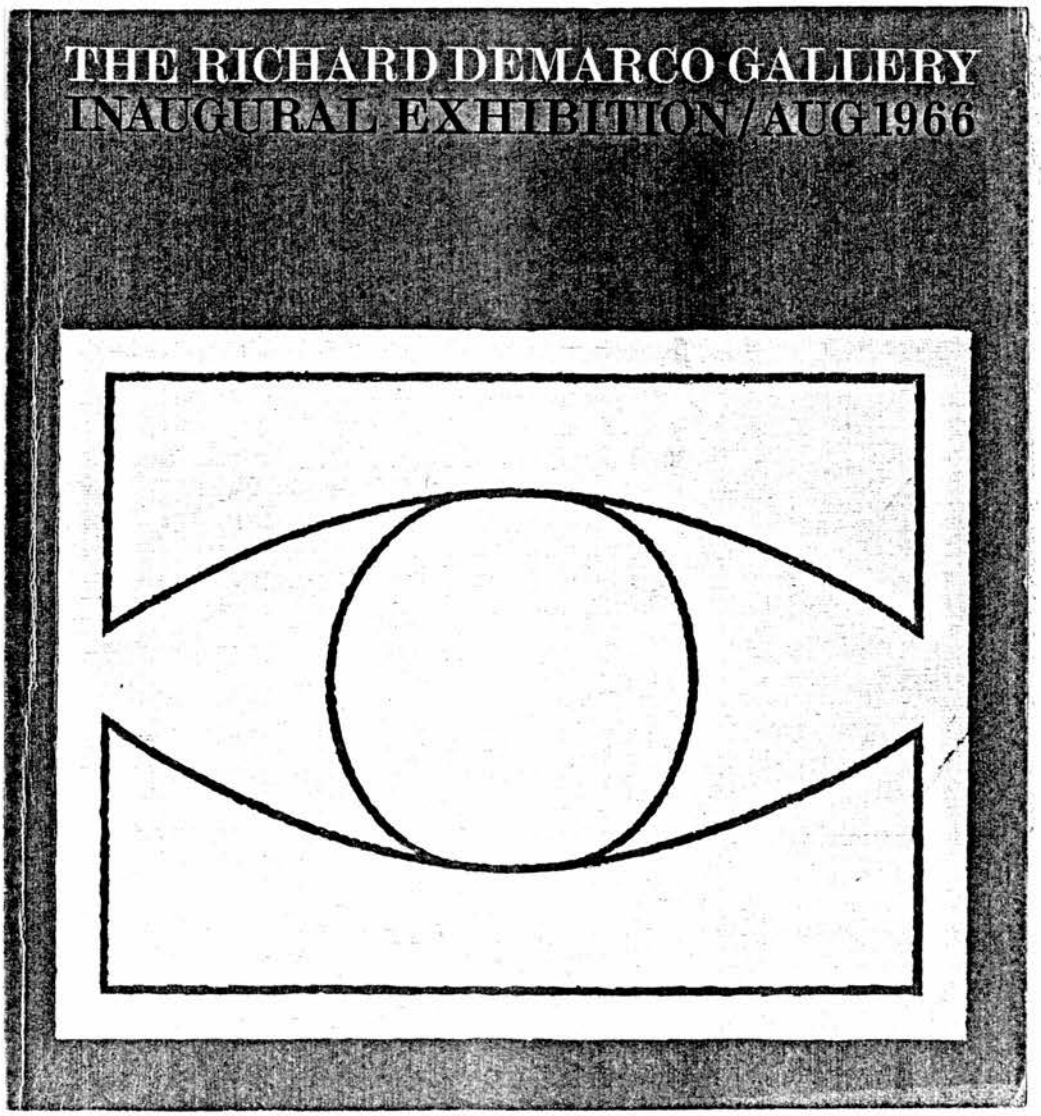


Fig. 26. Yago Pericot, *Cardinal Oil*, oil on canvas.

Fig. 27. Barbara Balmer, *Bedroom Window Oil*, oil on canvas. Comparisons can be drawn between the work of Barbara Balmer and that of Elizabeth Blackadder.



EIGHT MELVILLE CRESCENT
EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND
TELEPHONE 031 225 1050
Gallery Director: Richard Demarco

THE RICHARD DEMARCO GALLERY
INAUGURAL EXHIBITION OF
PAINTINGS, SCULPTURES AND
PRINTS, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1966

It probably seems to the art-conscious Londoner, New Yorker, or Parisian that Edinburgh, in spite of two decades of International Festivals, is a 'provincial' city, an opinion which until recently was perhaps justifiable. But the success of ventures such as the Traverse Theatre (in the establishment of which we were all closely involved) has led us to believe that Edinburgh is ripe to regain the place she held in her 'Golden Age' when she was a centre of thought and culture in Europe.

While music and drama of an international standard have been brought to Edinburgh through the Festival there has been no 'Biennale', no serious attempt to present to the people of Edinburgh and her many visitors the international *contemporary* art scene. And in a pioneering way the exhibitions of this gallery hope to rectify the omission.

We wish to acknowledge the generous help and advice of all the galleries, artists and others who have made the putting together of the exhibitions and catalogue possible. In particular we would like to thank the Axiom, Hamilton, Marlborough, Redfern, Roland, Browse & Delbanco, and Waddington Galleries who have loaned the major part of the work in these exhibitions: and Mr. Bill Featherston.

Fig. 28. Inaugural exhibition catalogue cover of the Richard Demarco Gallery, 1966, and statement of aims from the directors: Richard Demarco, Andrew Elliott, John Martin and James Walker.

Fig. 29. Piero Manzoni, *Living Sculpture*, 1961. Manzoni signed the bodies of various people in order to turn them into living sculptures.

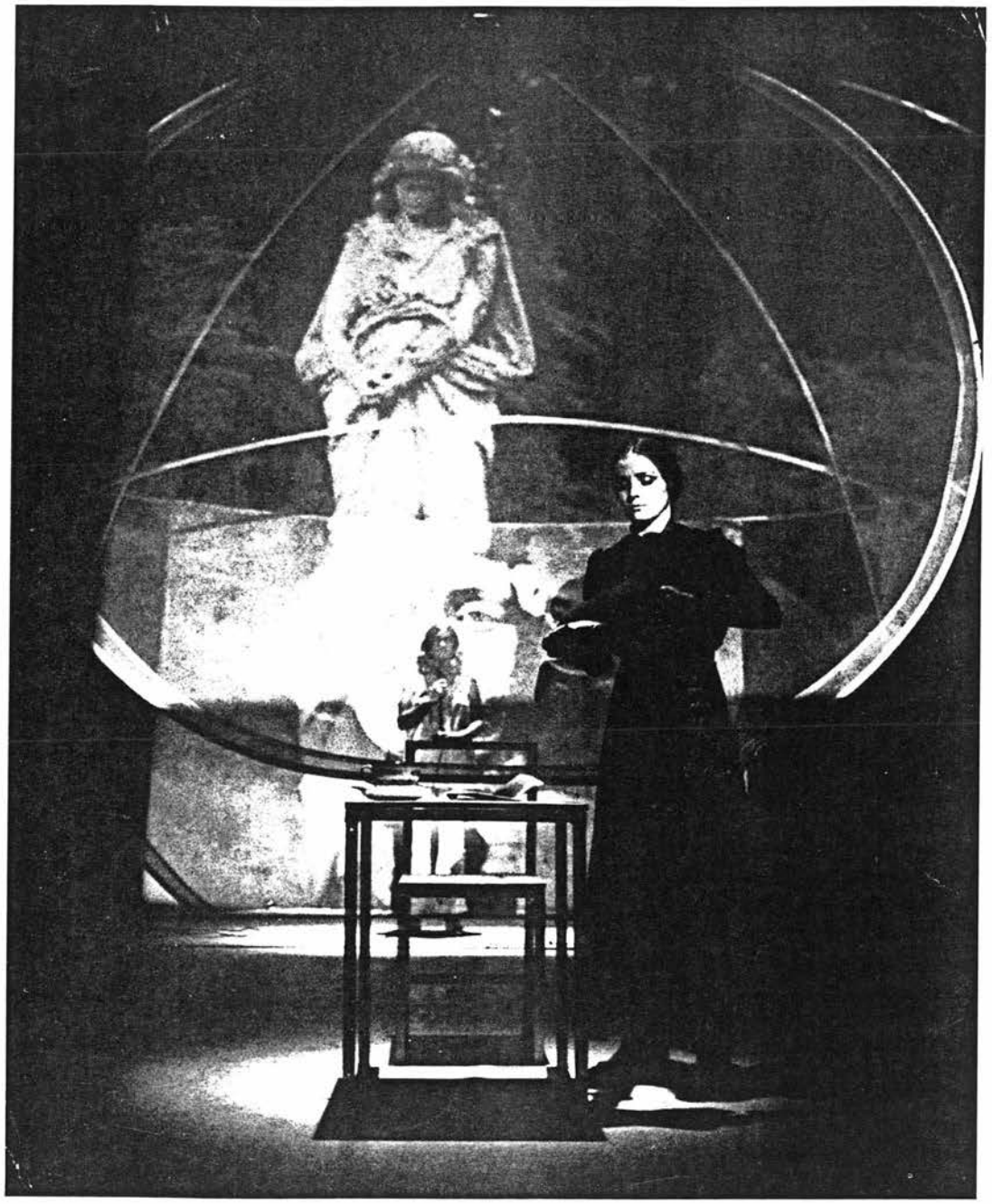


Fig. 30. A performance by the theatre group Moving Being at the 1972 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This event was called *Sun* and was directed and choreographed by Geoff Moore.

Fig. 31. Richard Demarco, illustration of the Cricot Theatre II performing *The Waterhen* by StanislawWitkiewicz, in the Galeria Krzysztofoay, Cracow, taken from Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*. The same performance, also devised, directed and conducted by Tadeusz Kantor was performed by the Cricot Theatre II for the Richard Demarco Gallery in 1972.

Fig. 32. Richard Demarco, illustration of a rehearsal given by the Cricot Theatre II of Tadeusz Kantor's interpretation of Stanislaw Witkiewicz 's *Lovelies and Dowdies* at Edinburgh's Poorhouse, taken from Richard Demarco, *A Life in Pictures*. Students, actors and artists, including Joseph Beuys, participated in Kantor's masterclasses.

Fig. 33. Photograph of a scene from *The Dead Class* performed by the Cricot Theatre II from Poland as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, 1972. The play was directed by Tadeusz Kantor, pictured standing on the left, who stayed on stage throughout the performance.

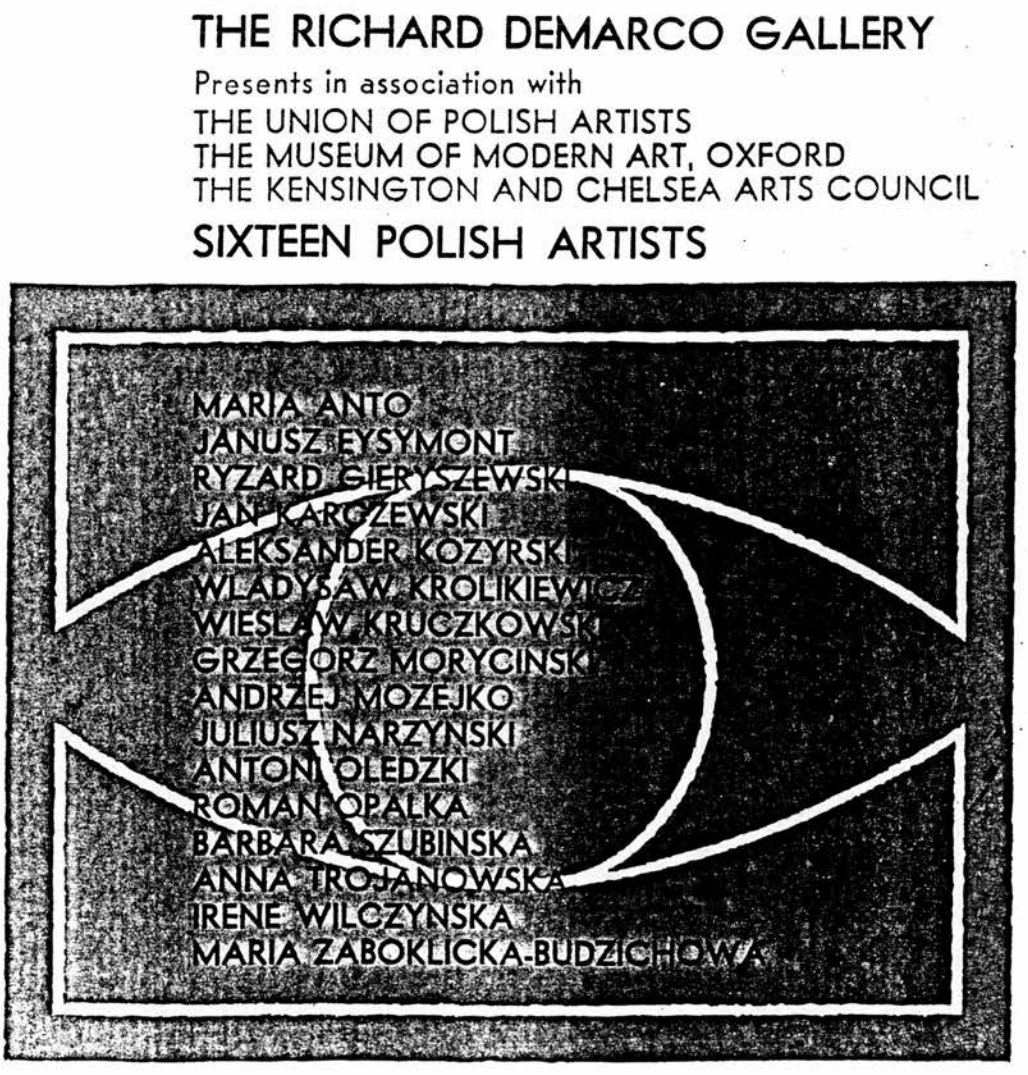


Fig. 34. The Richard Demarco Gallery exhibition catalogue for *Sixteen Polish Artists*, 8-28 October 1967 at 8 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh.

Fig. 35. Joseph Beuys on Rannoch Moor, May 1960. The photograph shows the artist rolling a ball of butter in preparation for the performance of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch) Scottish Symphony*.

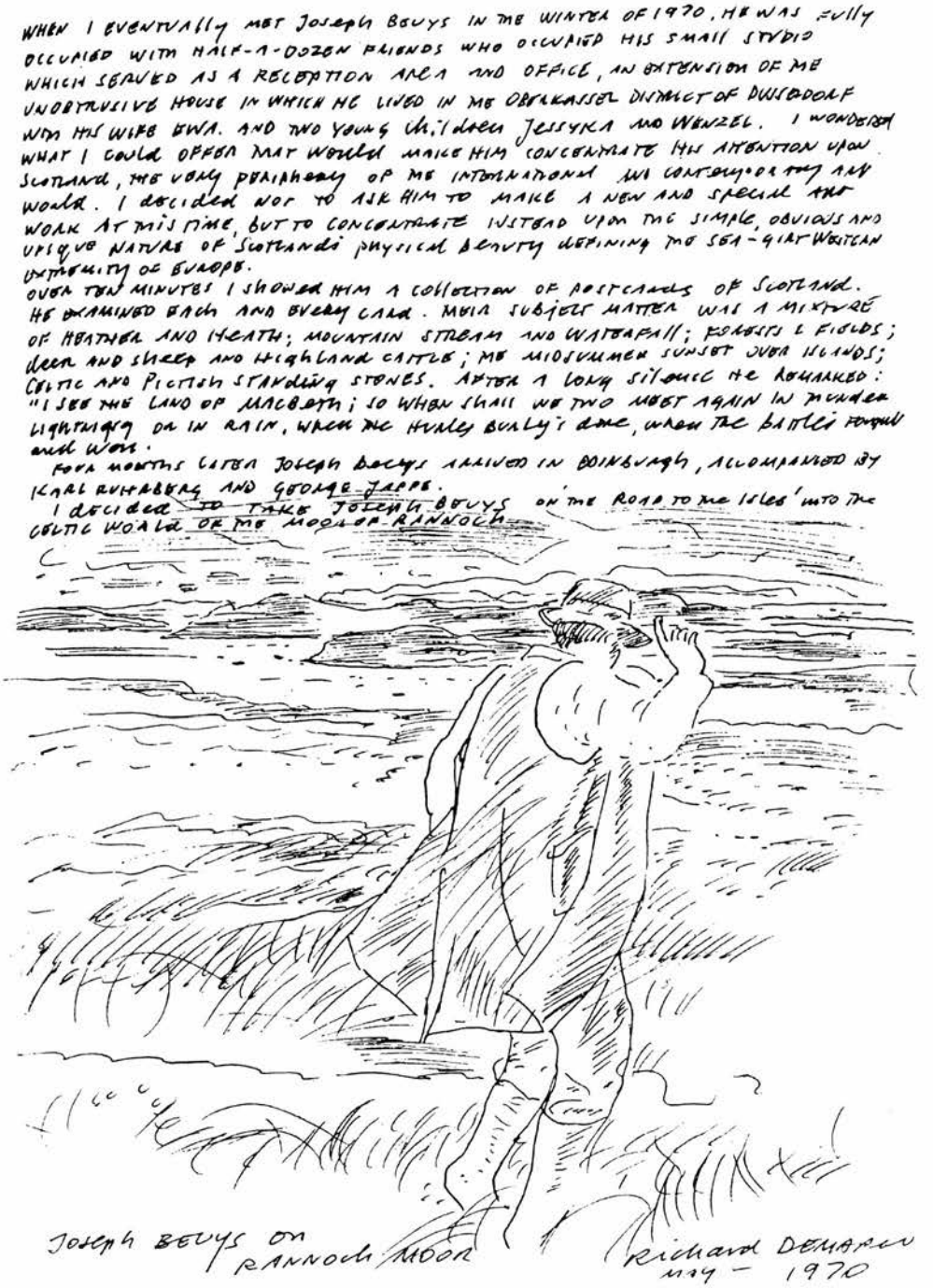


Fig. 36. Richard Demarco, illustration of Joseph Beuys on Rannoch Moor, May 1970, taken from *A Life in Pictures*. The narrative describes the first meeting betweeen Richard Demarco and Joseph Beuys.

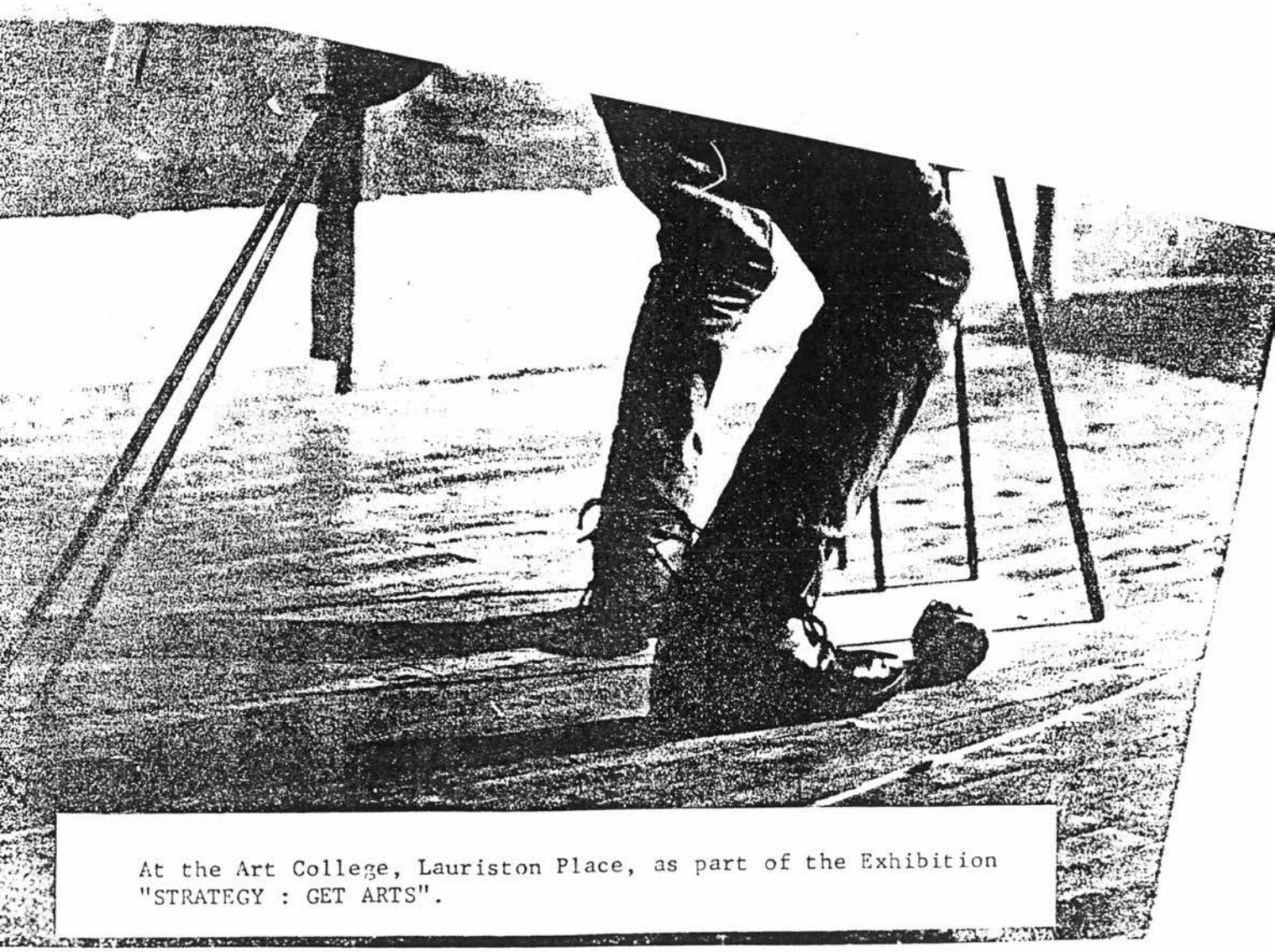


Fig. 37. Joseph Beuys improvisation as part of *Stategy Get Arts*, organised by the Richard Demarco Gallery at the Art College, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh.

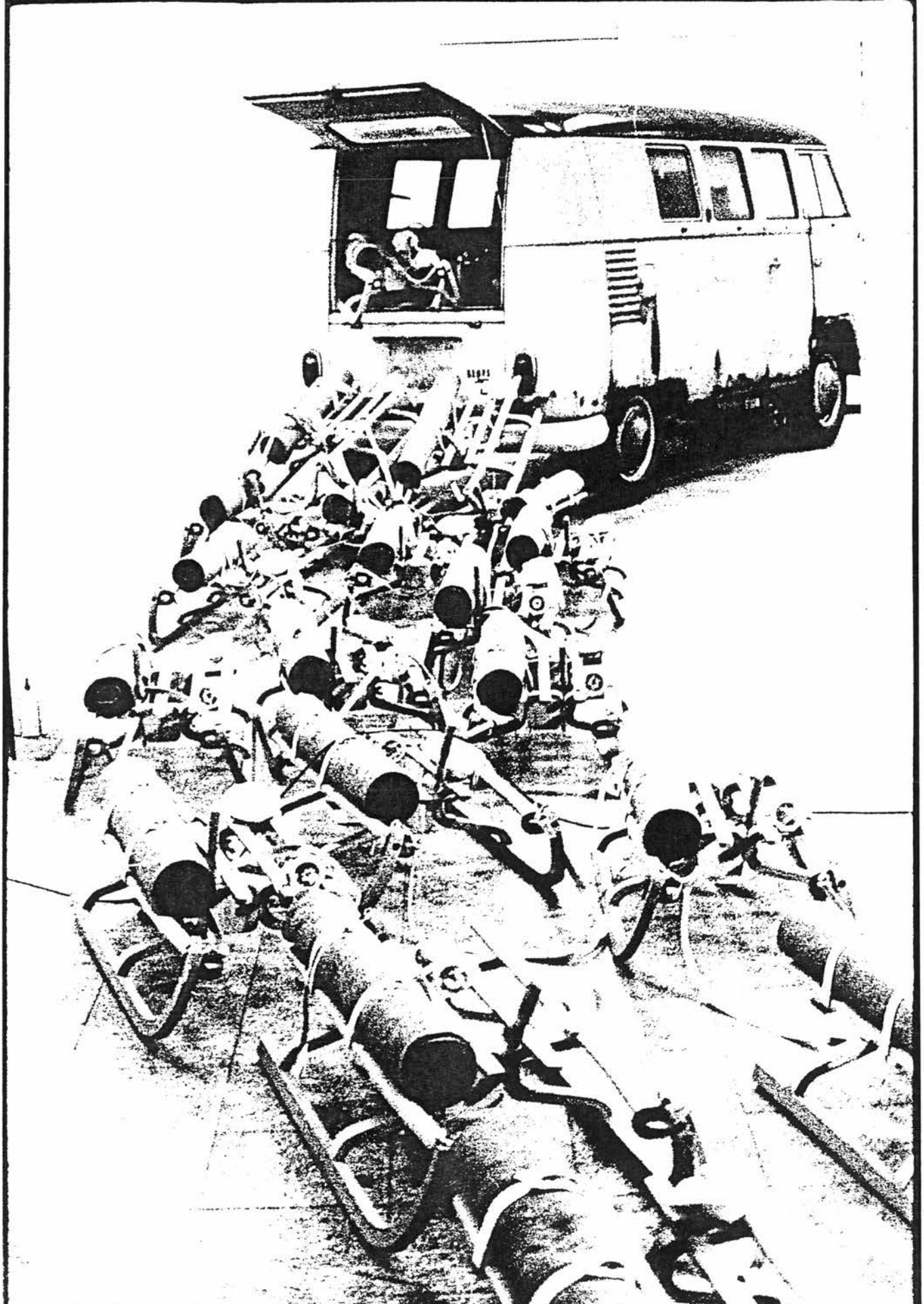


Fig. 38. Joseph Beuys, *The Pack (das Rudel)*, 1969, Volkswagen van and 20 sledges with felt roll, fat and torch, Staatliche Museen, Kassel, Neue Galerie. This piece was re-exhibited by Beuys in Edinburgh, as part of *Stategy Get Arts* at the Art College, Lauriston Place, Edinburgh.

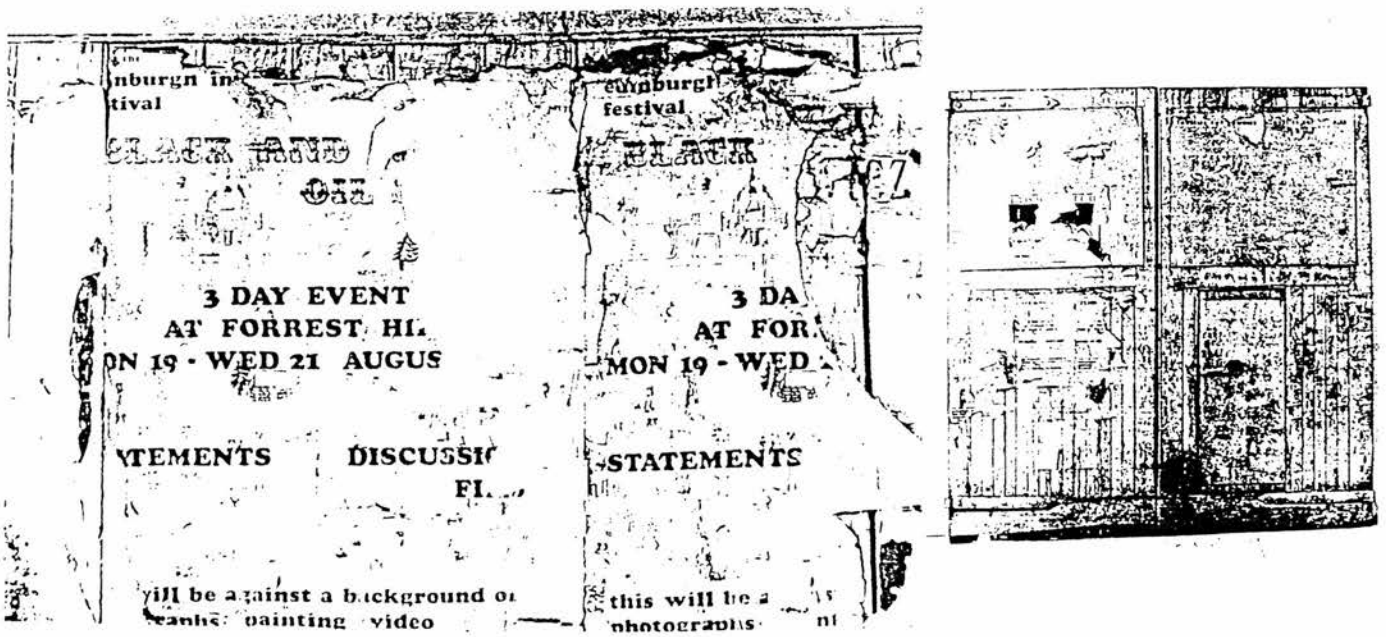


Fig. 39. Joseph Beuys, *Poorhouse Doors*, Edinburgh, 1982 and detail.

Fig. 40. Richard Demarco, illustration to commemorate leaving 8 Melville Crescent, 10 March 1973, taken from Richard Demarco *A Life in Pictures*.

Fig. 41. The Boyle Family, study from the White Cliff Series, 1988, painted fibreglass, 335.2 x 182.8cm.

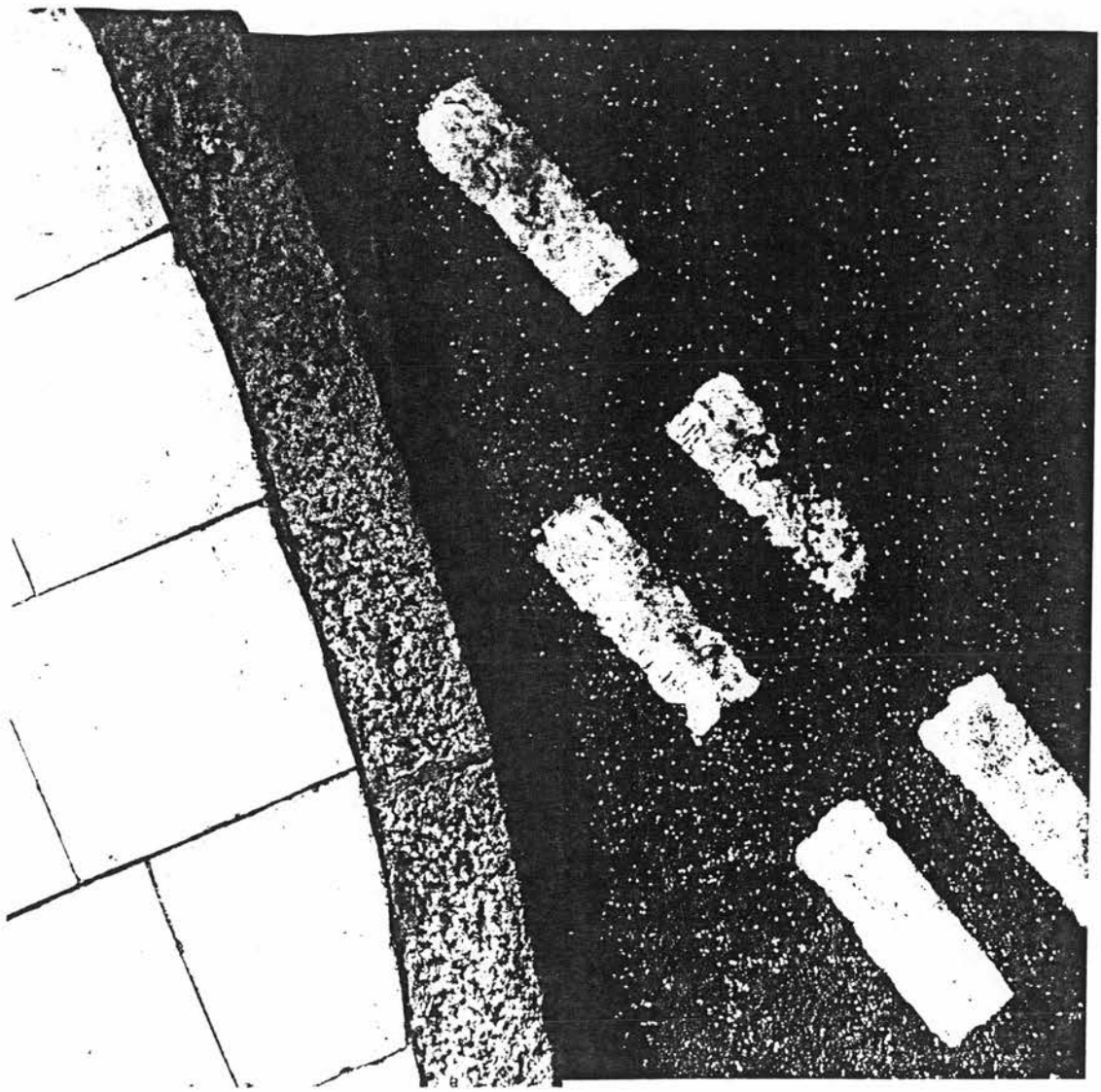


Fig. 42. Mark Boyle, *Pavement Piece*, 1968, painted fibreglass.

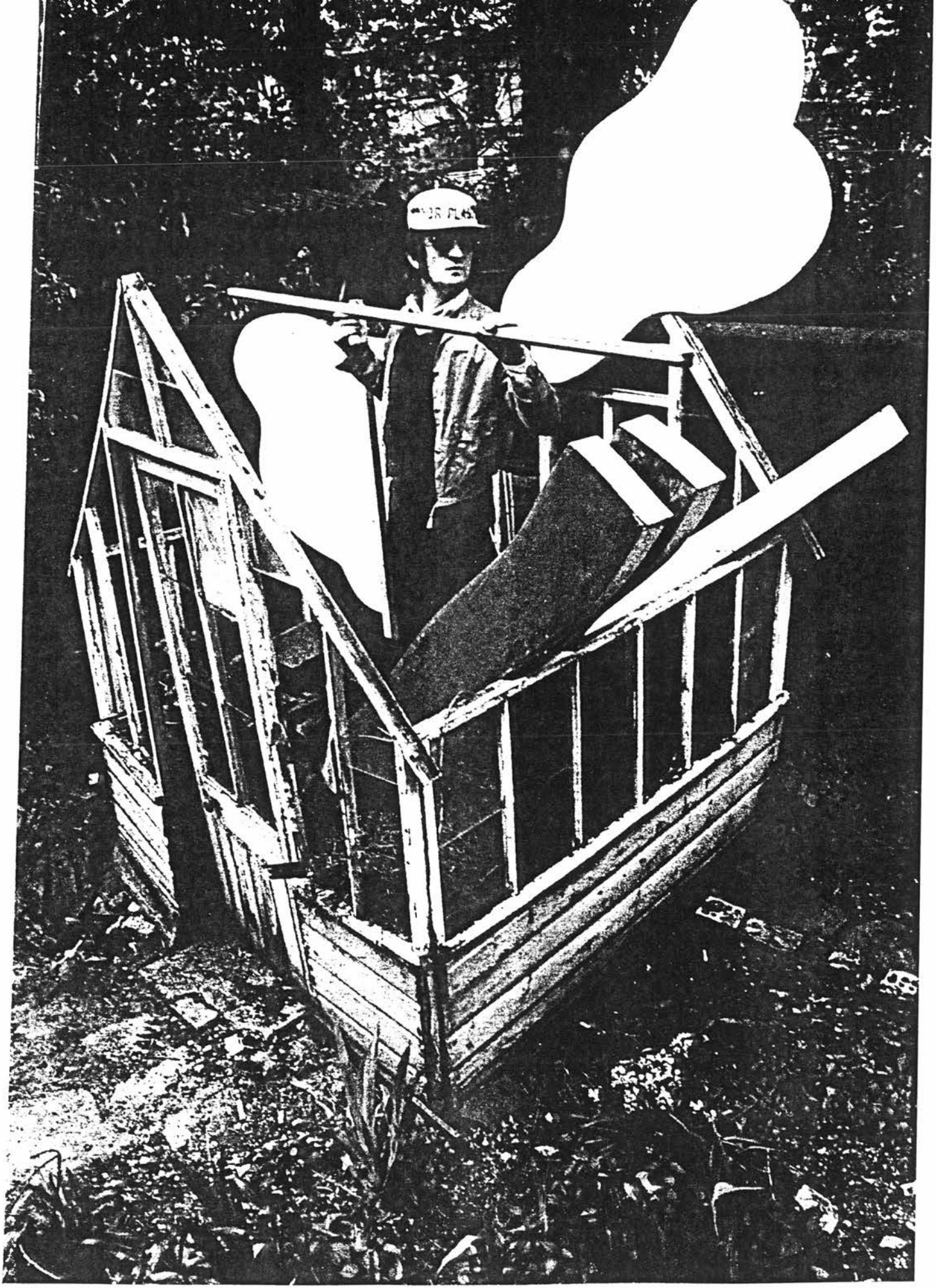
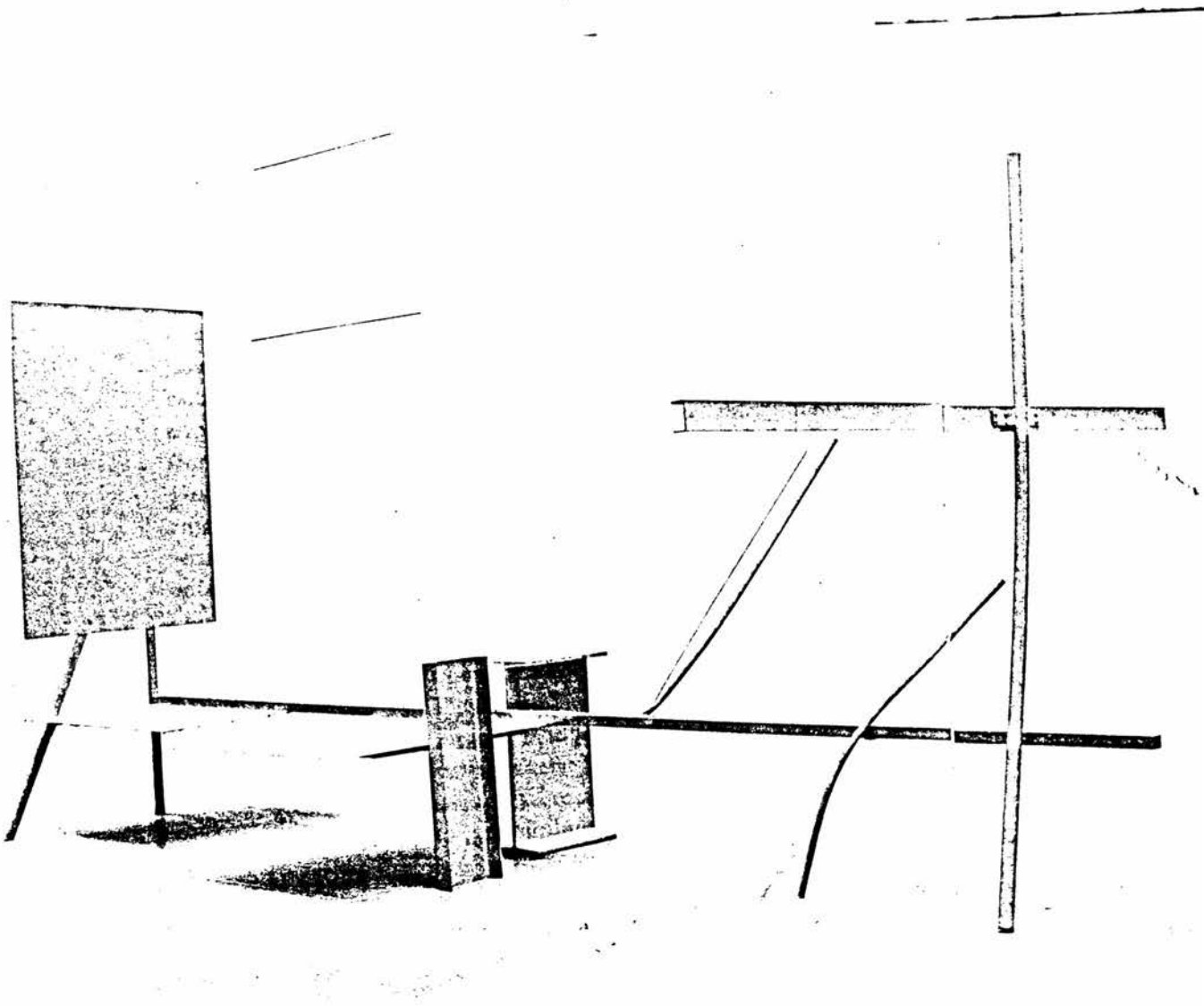


Fig. 43. Bruce McLean, *People Who Make Art in Glass Houses*, 1969. Photowork to accompany *Not Even Crimble Crumble* (originally published in *Studio International*, October 1970), photograph Dirk Ruwalda.



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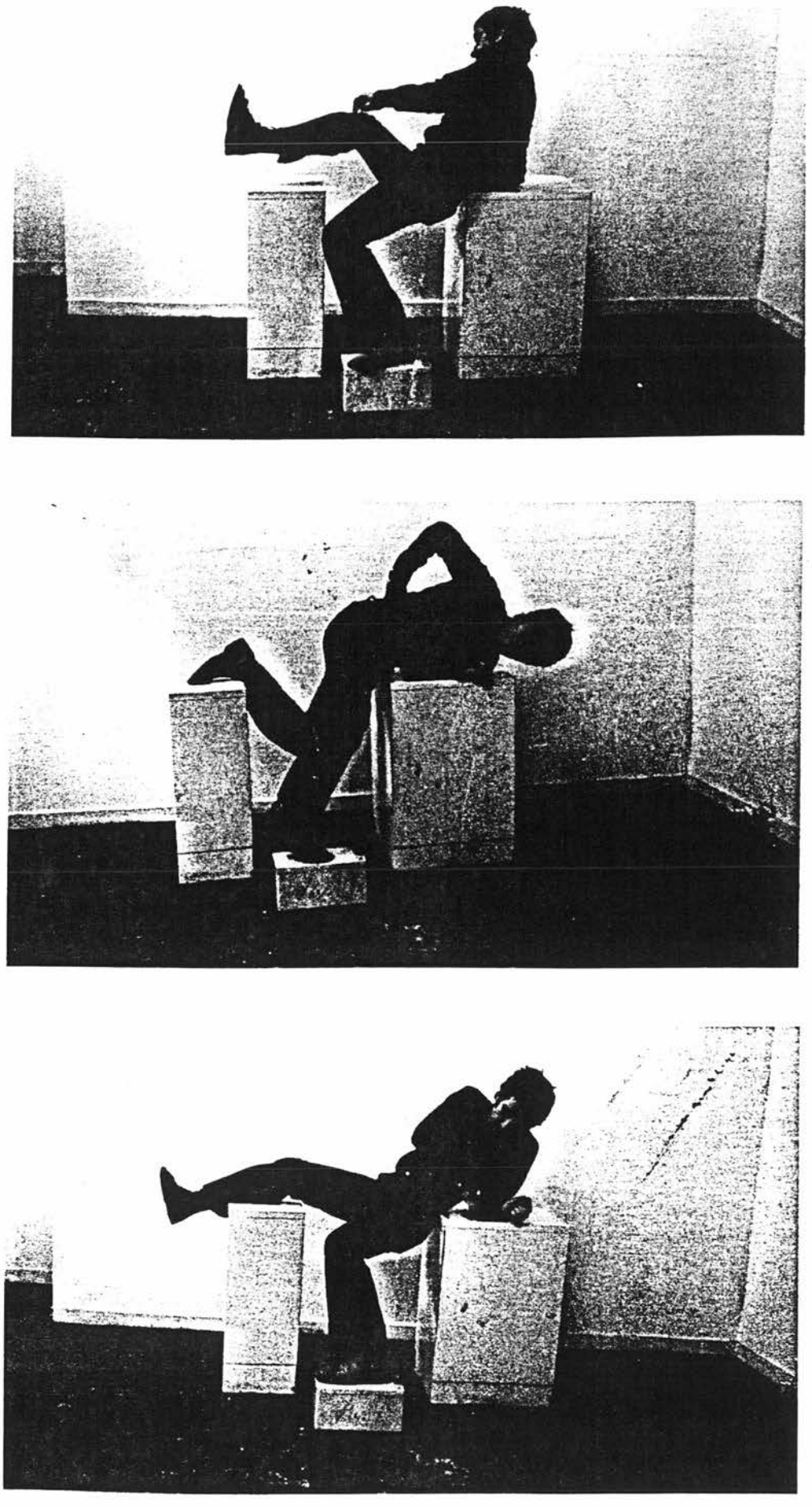

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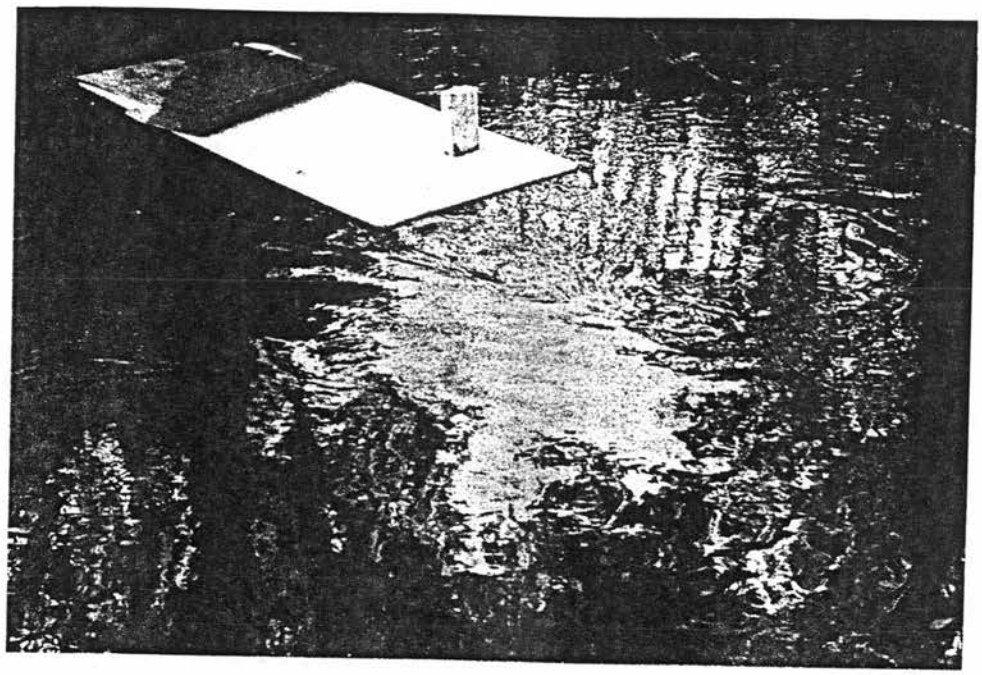

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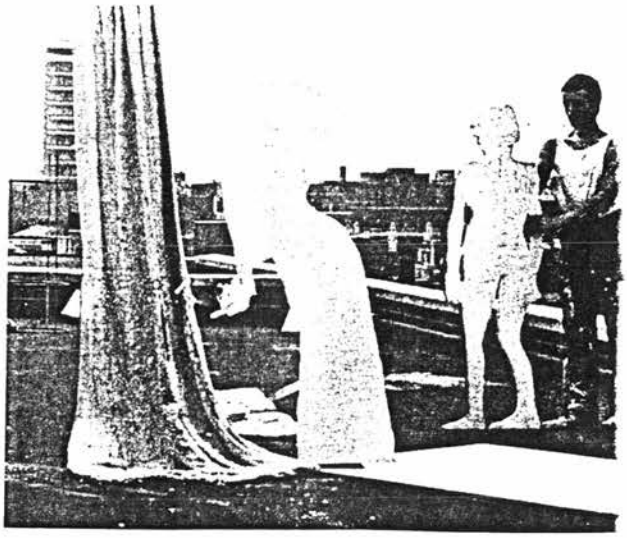

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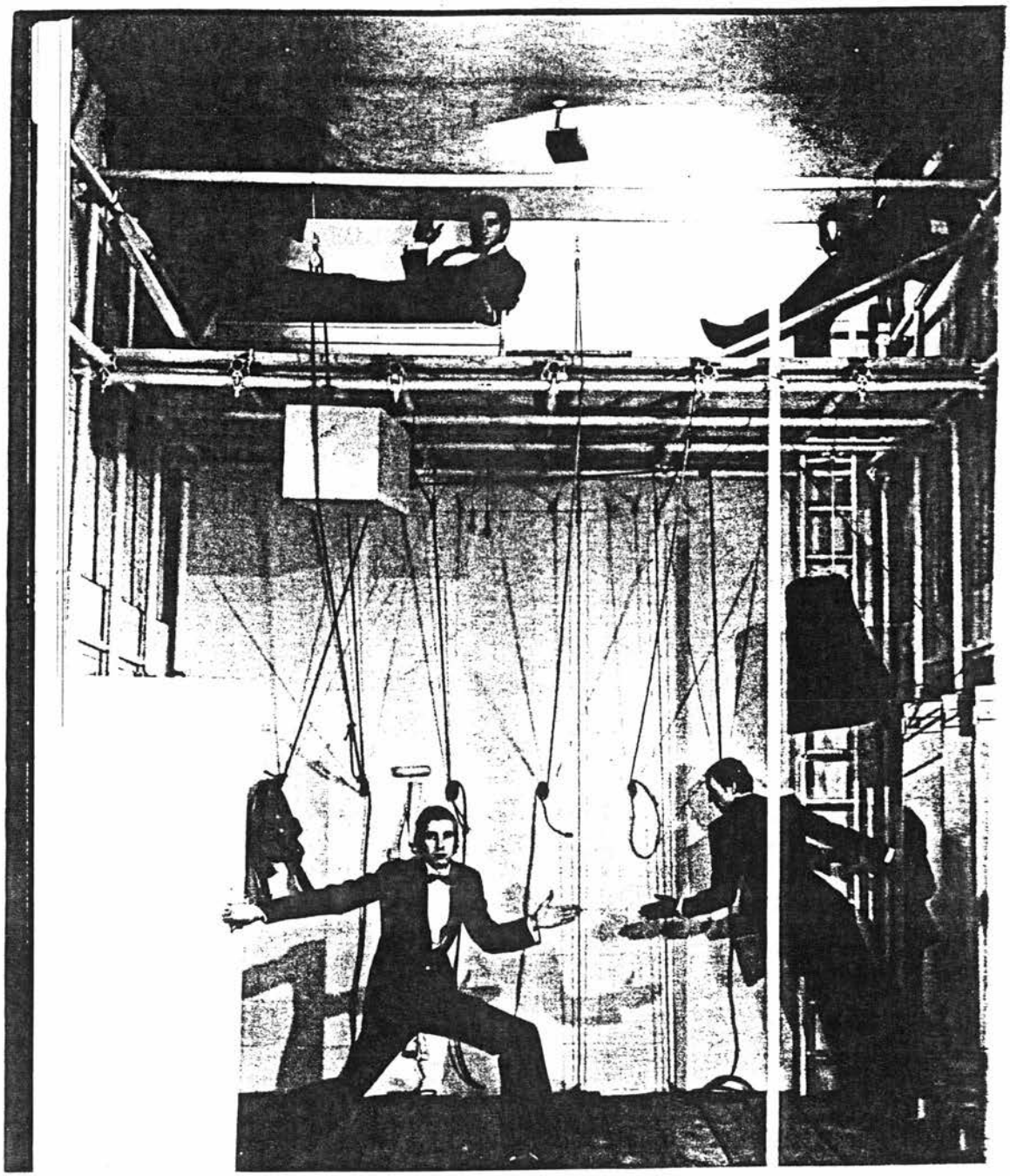

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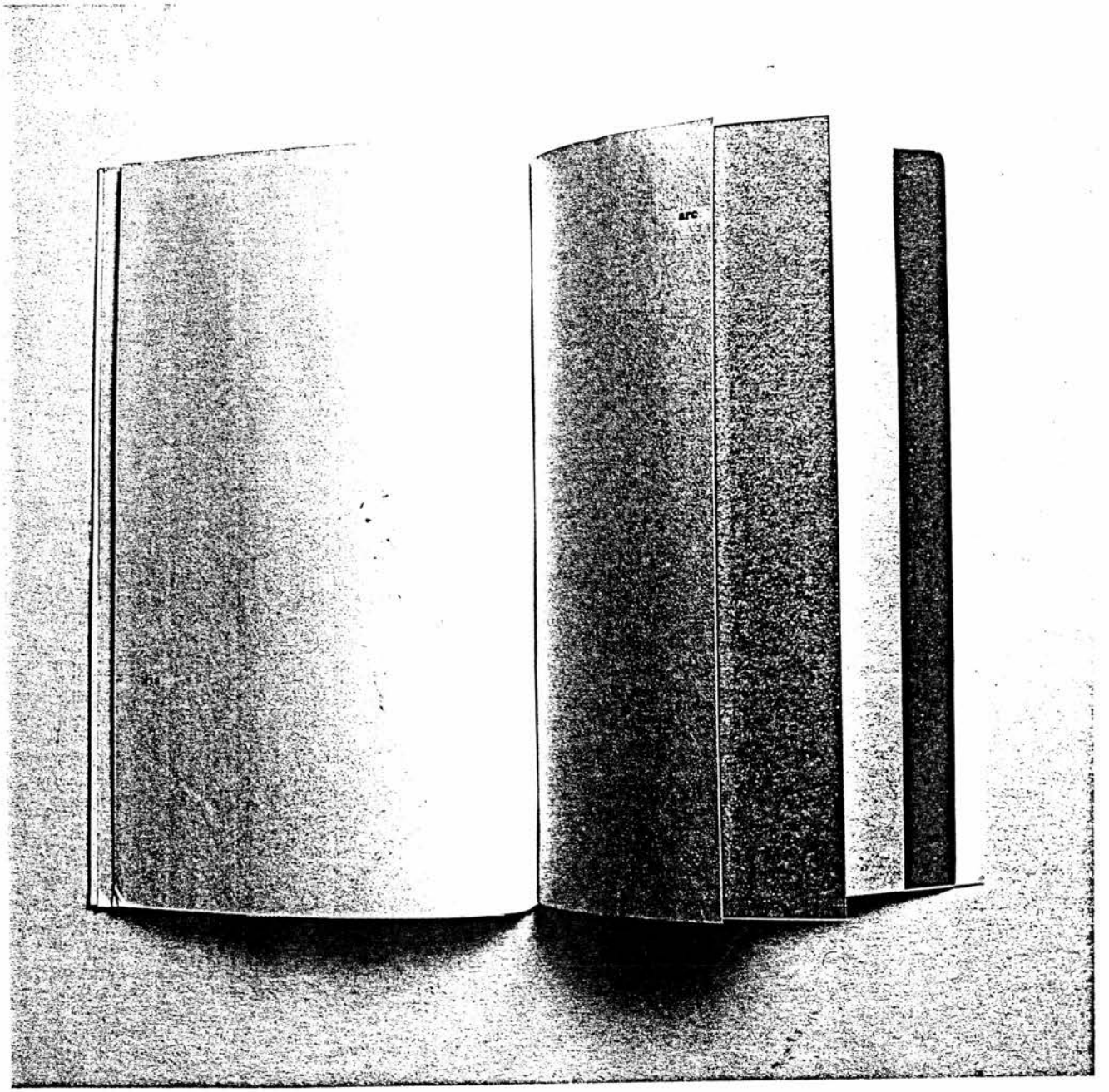

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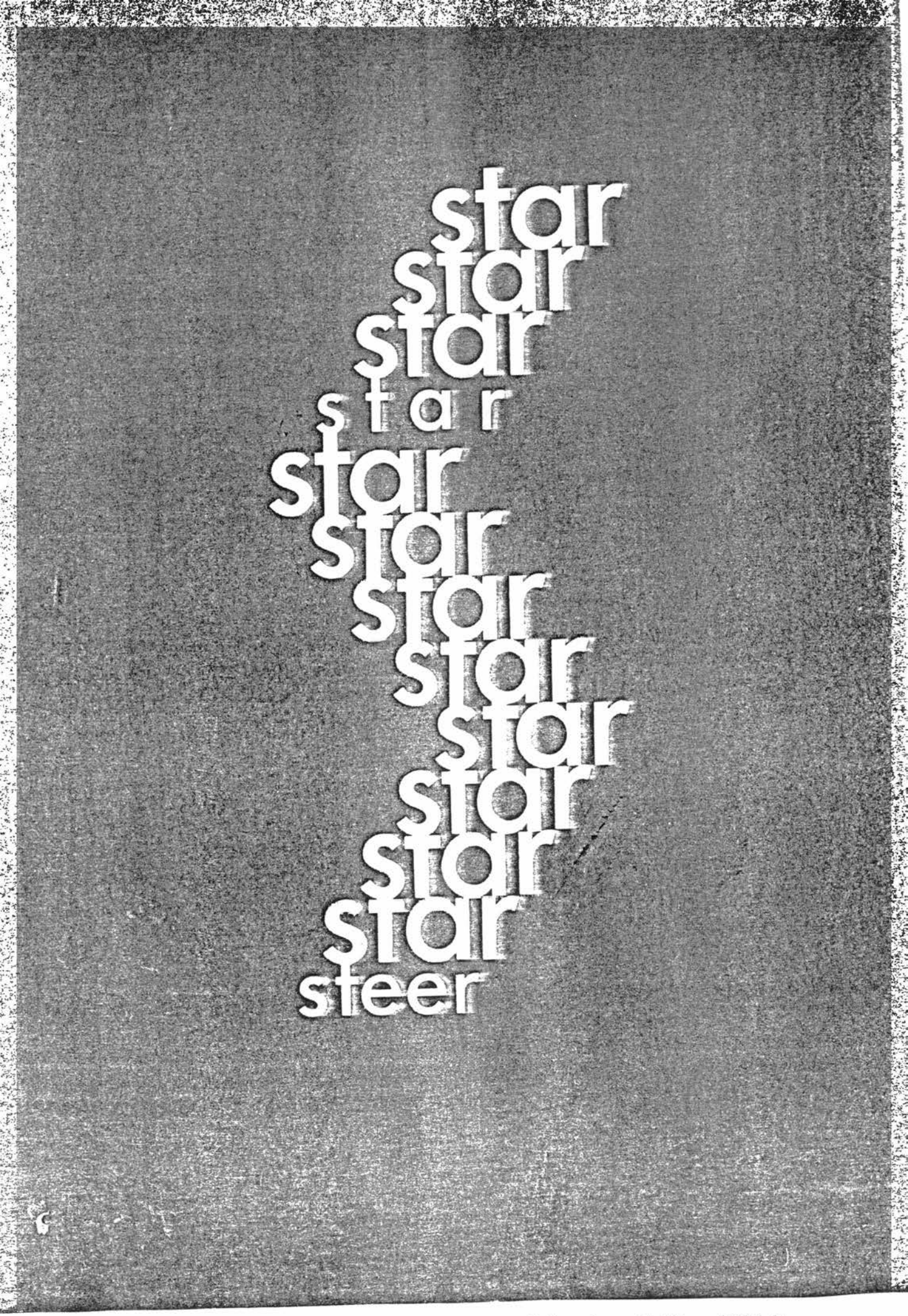

Fig. 51 Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Star Steer*, 1966, in collaboration with Edward Wright.