

Foreign Bodies 2001

7 May - 6 July 2001



Foreign Bodies 2001

a site-specific exhibition by students from Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design

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Dates of Exhibition 7 May - 6 July 2001

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London WC1E 7HT

Image on front cover Simone Reis Tropical Sample II (1999 - 2001) *Found Object* 40 x 25 x 18 cm

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Central Saint Martins
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We would also like to thank the scientists, and researchers, the audio visual and photography department, building services and everyone from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine who have given their time and ideas and thus contributed to this exhibition. Special thanks go to Kelly Loughlin and Neil Chapman for their essays, Mike Smith, Bob Brooks, Dan Salaman, Chris Wainwright, Catherine Williams, Lynne Stackhouse, and everyone from LSHTM and CSM who have supported this project, shared their knowledge and helped the students to prepare for this project. And last, but not least the students for their committed response and inspiration.

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Tony Fletcher
Pam Skelton

Foreword

On behalf of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), I am very happy to welcome this exhibition, the second, of works of art by students of Central Saint Martins (CSM) here at the School. This collaboration started two years ago when the School decided it needed to enrich its environment and resolved to purchase some contemporary artists' work. As the one who suggested it, I was asked to coordinate this initiative and enlisted the help of others, led by Pam Skelton of CSM, to advise on potential commissions. This creative interaction sparked off other ideas and led to this programme of collaboration. We have called this programme "Cultures" and I am pleased that we have secured grants from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and The Wellcome Trust. Following this exhibition and in parallel with our commissioning programme, we are planning another exhibition and a programme of seminars, conceived to stimulate by developing interactions between School staff and artists. It would seem to be already happening, with the CSM students reaching into most corners of the School. I am very happy too, to have discovered in this process how many among the School staff are already passionate about the visual arts. I record my thanks to colleagues who have willingly co-operated in preparations for this exhibition.

'Sci-art' has become a bit of a buzzword over recent years, with for example, the recent exhibition 'Spectacular Bodies' at the Hayward Gallery, the Art & Medicine shows in the nearby 210 Gallery, and exhibitions and conference on this theme at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Medicine and physics seem to be the scientific disciplines that have been primarily drawn into 'science-art', and it is good to encourage an expansion of areas of enquiry, into for example public health. The essay by Kelly Loughlin from the School's history group and the range of works in this exhibition contributes to this broadening of the scope of inquiry. The second essay invited to complement the exhibition, by Neil Chapman, introduces a broader discussion of the concept of collaboration in contemporary art, reflecting its complex and often problematic nature. In exhibitions responding to scientific practice, the visual language of art can present or represent what we are about but it would be a missed opportunity if it stopped there, if the artists felt intimidated by, or in 'awe' of science. As well as stimulating, distracting and amusing us, I would want them to challenge us a bit too. I believe that the art in this exhibition and the essays in this catalogue has managed to achieve all these things.

Tony Fletcher
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Introduction

In November 2000, BA Fine Art students from Central Saint Martins were invited to submit a proposal to take part in the second site-specific exhibition at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. As one might imagine the most interesting proposals were concerned with ways that art practices could reflect or demonstrate an involvement in or with a particular scientific area. This was the starting point for *Foreign Bodies 2001* and the meetings which have been taking place since January between art students and scientists as well as many other people who work in the LSHTM. What gives this project its particular emphasis is the different levels of interactions that have been attempted by our students within the practices of art and science. Fourteen students have had the opportunity to delve into areas normally closed to them, on occasions sharing fascinating insights into the work undertaken in laboratories or in research groups. It has also been an interesting experience for myself and Anne Eggebert working closely with the students, watching their ideas develop and their work take shape. The value of projects such as this goes far beyond placing art in buildings merely to improve the décor. Much more importantly, the stimulation that it offers provokes new dialogues, discussion and debate, in this sense, art students and researchers can share common ground. As well as responding to the science the students have also been asked to respond to the buildings. Site-specific art in a scientific research institute cannot help but lend an additional context to the architectural features of Keppel Street (Arts and Crafts) and Bedford Square (Regency) which are distinct reminders of earlier periods in the history of medicine and health.

The ideas of research and collaboration have been the driving force behind this project, between artist and scientist, between student and researcher. Nevertheless, the work in this exhibition reflects the languages of contemporary visual art practices as much as it taps into the processes, procedures and practices of scientific disciplines. This is its strength. *Foreign Bodies* demonstrates that with some encouragement and a little support much can be done. Responding to other areas of knowledge can augment inspiring shifts in thinking, and most significantly it can certainly broaden horizons.

Pam Skelton
Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design

Locating health in the history of art and medicine

Kelly Loughlin

There is a long history of interchange between the now institutionally separate worlds of art and science; a history that is most evident in the case of art and medicine, as can be seen in the Hayward Gallery's recent exhibition - 'Spectacular Bodies: the art and science of the human body from Leonardo to now'. The depth and equity of such exchanges is a topic explored in Neil Chapman's piece on the nature of contemporary art 'collaborations' (this volume). Here however, I want to foreground the place of a highly specific though largely inconspicuous history of traffic between art and medicine - one associated with public health. For this purpose public health can be thought about as *the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organised efforts of society*: an epithet that conveys something distinct from the associations commonly evoked by the word medicine i.e. treating the ills and diseases of an individual patient. This description of public health and the distinctions it brings into play are by no means straightforward, and like all boundary exercises or professional demarcations they are subject to continuing negotiation and contest. It is not my intention to engage with the veracity or salience of these distinctions here. Rather, I want to explore the heuristic potential of what I see as a particular characteristic of public health, which has served to distinguish it from a more narrow conception of medicine. Namely, the imperative to communicate.

Thinking of public health and medicine as fields that are marked by different histories and cultures of communication draws attention to the way expert knowledge claims are circumscribed by rules of access and disclosure; legal, ethical, professional or public safety concerns. This aspect is rarely brought to the fore in contemporary discussion of the traffic between art and medicine. When the techniques and visual products of medical research and practice become a cultural resource for artists, the latter seek to generate new meanings and multiply interpretative possibilities. In contrast, medical communication, especially public health communication about risk for example, has traditionally sought to limit the proliferation of meanings. To my mind this fundamental difference has yet to receive sustained critical and creative reflection.

What I'm describing as public health's imperative to communicate is a development that can be located quite precisely in the early decades of the twentieth-century. In Britain, this development was signalled by the appearance of debates in the 1920s and 1930s on the need for public health propaganda. It seems that Britain's newly enfranchised urban citizens were suffering not so much from a want of sanitation as from a want of information. The Society of Medical Officers of Health, representing the practitioners responsible for public health at the time, spoke of publicity as a key to advancing health. A

growing investment in the benefits of public education in health underpinned the creation of the first central agency responsible for health education, organised by the Society in 1927. During this period public health education was increasingly anchored around the administrative and political structure of the local authority and the role of the local medical officer of health; although voluntary organisations like the British Social Hygiene Council were still very much involved in the field. Regardless of its source, health propaganda was framed by accepted didactic relations of authority, and enshrined in the conventions of the illustrated lecture, poster display, exhibition, slide show and instructional film. The apotheosis of locally based health publicity was Bermondsey Borough Council's Public Health Department in South London.¹

Bermondsey invested heavily in health propaganda, making its own films, converting disinfection vans into mobile 'cinema vans', maintaining a heavy schedule of lectures and demonstrations throughout the borough, including open air screenings in the interior courtyards of new housing schemes; such as the extant Tabard Gardens Estate. The novelty of the approach is captured in a contemporary press report: 'Surely Bermondsey must be the only place in England where you can hear a fervid minion of the medical officer declaiming the merits of the tooth brush down a back street, or where one man can be heard saying to another, "You go down the road, guvnor, you'll see a great big bug on a screen!"'² Like much of the health propaganda produced by the state or the largely conservative voluntary organisations in the 1920s and 1930s, the materials and the activities in Bermondsey carry authoritarian overtones. However, the socialist borough council initiated a period of self-proclaimed 'social revolution' in the 1920s, and the emergence of a distinct municipal culture can also be seen as opening up new social and political possibilities:

To-day, these Bermondsey films, recreated in video form circulate in South London's community halls, classrooms and libraries as part of oral history projects. In 1933 over a third of Bermondsey's population watched these films illustrating spoken lectures in the streets of its slums, its public parks and also the spaces of its relatively new municipal authority; the town hall, the clinic, the classroom, the public baths and the library. Videos are shown today in small internal spaces ... The street is gone and so the films have lost their central meaning, for the original films were in some significant sense about a collective re-appropriation of urban space: cleansing, opening up and collectivising it ... [creating] places of entertainment and political engagement.³

Locally based propaganda initiatives, such as Bermondsey, used affordable, available media and developed technical and creative skills on site. This 'do-it-yourself' approach contrasts with other 'big

picture' initiatives of the time. Key examples here would be the relationships between scientists and established documentary film makers, such as Paul Rotha. Along with John Grierson, Rotha was a central figure in British documentary film between the two world wars.⁴ Of particular importance here are films such as *Enough to Eat?* (1936), featuring the research of nutrition scientist John Boyd Orr on the relations between income, food and health. The theme of nutrition, food distribution and agriculture was continued in the more internationally focussed *World of Plenty* (1943) and *The World is Rich* (1947). These films presented a vision of post-war reconstruction, which extolled the virtue of science and social planning. Although Rotha's view of science is highly specific:

... by science I don't mean guys splitting atoms or even getting a fighter to fly at 400 instead of 399 mph. I mean the fact that the population is for the first time in history getting an adequate diet, that agriculture is being approached scientifically ... that free milk is being given to millions of kids ... that from now on science must be an integral part of society.⁵

Whether you interpret this vision as utopian or dystopian, the sophistication of the films cannot be denied, they were technically accomplished and visually innovative.

From a twenty-first century perspective these episodes of local and international health activism and the visual artefacts they generated may seem naive, anchored as they were around a particular view of science and of citizenship. However, given the resurgence of localism on the national public health agenda i.e. health action zones, and a more vigorous engagement with issues of global health governance, a development that finds its immediate antecedent in the international health movements of the inter-war period, the lessons of these earlier communication strategies may be worth revisiting. It goes without saying that today medicine and public health are dealing with a radically different context of communication, one marked by new possibilities and constraints.

Today images of the medicalised body - pathologised, probed, anaesthetised, the object of surgical interventions - have reached saturation point in the popular media. Similarly, encounters between patient and physician, and the inner spaces of the consulting room or operating theatre are a mainstay of television documentary and news footage. Broadly speaking, the recent intensity of traffic between medicine and visual culture is underpinned by a number of developments. Medicine's capacity to visualise the interior of the body through a range of imaging techniques continues to offer an imaginative resource for contemporary comment. X-rays, ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging, and footage acquired through more invasive techniques, such as endoscopy or coloscopy, have been taken up and used by

contemporary artists - Mona Hatoum's *Corps étranger* (1994).⁶ The cultural profile of scientific and medical images has also been raised by initiatives that seek to promote and sponsor a greater public understanding of science - with the attendant benefits to science of generating public acceptance and financial support for research programmes.⁷ Another not unrelated development is the way biomedicine has become a frame for science generally, at least in terms of the popular media representation of science.⁸

The 'medicalization of science news' thesis is particularly interesting, not least because it gives little indication where health and public health fit in the largely post-war shift towards biomedicine as the core of science news. Moreover, it suggests that medicine as such became news at a particular point in time. My own research on the history of medicine and the media in Britain supports this idea.⁹ The representation of medicine that climbed the post-war news agenda was shaped primarily by the introduction of the National Health Service and the nationalisation of the hospital system; medico-politics and hospital medicine therefore became issues of national news. These developments occurred simultaneously with the expansion of television broadcasting in the UK and the emergence of specialist health services correspondents and science/medical correspondents in the national press. In marked contrast to today, the representation of medicalised bodies and the internal spaces of the consulting room or operating theatre were strictly policed in the 1950s and beyond.

Media coverage of the first British operations to separate conjoined twins, which took place in 1953/4, and the first portrayal of heart surgery on television in 1958, provoked outrage amongst the medical profession, prompted parliamentary debates and the development of procedures to regulate the flow of information between hospitals and the media.¹⁰ Controversy about representations of medicine in the 1950s only surfaced in relation to depictions of heroic surgery and hospital medicine. Public health education, in contrast, was generally supported by the medical profession as a legitimate form of communication. However, the style of health education valorised at this time emphasised the regulated release of information that was uncontested within the medico-scientific community. Authoritative statements with agreed meanings were the order of the day. An image of actual medical practice, presented via the medium of television documentary, was relatively unstructured and therefore considered somehow dangerous - to the public and the profession. Unlike most medical drama on television, such as the 1957 series *Emergency Ward 10*, documentary was unscripted and revealed the precarious nature of diagnosis, treatment and outcome.

Despite these initial concerns, by the 1960s medical documentary had become an established genre; as the medical community woke-up to the public relations potential of series like *Your Life in Their*

Hands. What then became of the 'safe' arena of health communication and health education? The history of post-war health education is particularly interesting in regard to the visual artefacts it generated and the way its themes seem to have permeated most aspects of contemporary culture apart from the contemporary visual arts. This is a bold claim, and those more familiar with the history of post-war British art may well puncture such an assertion. Nevertheless, I would suggest that health communication has come to occupy a particular and often limiting cultural space. Whereas the 1960s witnessed an increasing domestication of hospital-based medicine - quite literally in the sense that television has brought it into our homes - health communication became the site of conjecture, dispute and earnest critique.

In a general sense this change can be related to a growing post-war hostility to propaganda, especially state propaganda, and by the rise of notions of relative risk and statistical association on the public health agenda. The role of propaganda in pre-war political regimes, and the experience of its use during wartime, were a palpable presence in the shaping of post-war information/communication policies i.e. debates about freedom of information and the relationship between the state and the media. Concerns of this sort echoed through debates on lifestyle and health, which gained publicity in the 1960s. Epidemiological evidence on the relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer, which gained widespread coverage through a 1961 Royal College of Physicians report, was framed by some pundits in terms of medical dictators and individual liberty. Arguments that statistical association was not cause and effect provided space for resistance and conjecture. Likewise, claims and counter-claims on the role of fat in heart disease prompted this editorial comment in the *Times*:

Health is 'news' and those who are professionally equipped to cure, and advise on it are more and more faced with decisions as to when to speak and when to keep silent ... but there does seem to be room for at least some modification of the present tendency to conduct discussion on medical matters affecting health in public."

Many believed the public were ill-equipped to assess the evidence and calculate the portfolio of risks that attended their lifestyle. Authoritative statements however ran their own risk - appearing as heavy-handed, dictatorial or even scare-mongering.

The emphasis on lifestyle within public health, such as the risks associated with alcohol or tobacco smoking brought with it a representational problem - to communicate probabilities accurately and effectively. In the 1970s the Health Education Council, working with Saatchi and Saatchi, played the advertisers at their own game with a series of high profile campaigns. Images like the poster depicting a naked, pregnant woman smoking a cigarette were considered shocking at the time. Health communication

had literally become a battle of images, with new controls on the advertising of tobacco and alcohol and an emphasis on high impact health advertising. As a communication strategy, an image such as this bypassed the problem of representing statistical risk, offering instead a mix of moral ambiguity and female nudity, calculated to generate comment and raise the issue on public, media and policy agendas. The health activism that came to the fore in the 1970s, especially in relation to smoking, was often censorious, and like other single issue campaigns of the time it was freighted with a sense of toeing the party-line and policing the consensus.

In circumstances where consensus breaks down or has yet to be achieved e.g. the emergence of a new disease like HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, representations and the meanings and actions they are seen to legitimate become fiercely contested.¹² New constituencies and alliances formed around HIV/AIDS. Clinicians joined forces with gay rights organisations and gay activists entered the policy arena. Health education and public information campaigns had to negotiate a range of concerns, such as whether advice should centre on risk groups (gay men) or risk activities (unprotected sex). Images produced at the time highlight the often inevitable ambiguity of health messages. Interview-based research revealed that an image in which the words two eyes, nose, mouth were arranged to represent the corresponding features of a human face, generated unpredictable interpretations.

TWO EYES
N
O
S
E
MOUTH

The image aimed to convey the message that a person with HIV could not be recognised, there was no typical person or group of people. However, some people interpreted the image as signalling the opposite, that a person with HIV could be identified because the virus was somehow imprinted on their faces, red eyes, sores around the mouth etc.¹³

By the 1990s health communication was seen by many as confusing, contradictory and increasingly as a source of humour. As early as the 1950s, the name Nosmo King was taken by an American comedian and *No Smoking* was the title of a radio sketch show in Britain. The prohibition and the statement were novel in the 1950s and humour has always provided space for resistance and challenging taboos. However, as the class and gender profile of activities like cigarette smoking changed

over the course of the twentieth century, the all too easy slippage between personal responsibility and victim blaming generated new associations. Comedy series like *The Fast Show*, *The Royle Family* and *Chewin' the Fat* present images of working class families whose lives are characterised by inactivity, poor diet and flagrant, almost celebratory, disregard for the dangers associated with smoking. Taboos are routinely exploded for shock value: pregnant women smoking, smoking in the presence of infants, or infants being given cigarettes by the mothers. These representations of women and smoking flout the moral and social codes, which helped to structure the 1970s poster campaign of the naked, pregnant woman smoking a cigarette.

Smoking and health has attracted some artistic comment, such as the recent Artworks/World Health Organisation show at the Whitechapel Gallery. Moreover, the contemporary ironic positioning of the 'health warning' in popular culture carries a cargo of equivocal associations and possibilities - patronising and thought provoking by turns. This is hardly surprising given that we seem to be caught in a state of permanent health scare, with public trust in science and the government machinery of expert committees still reeling from BSE. In this context the 'health warning' seems to have reached an iconic status, similar to the barcode - something to adorn T-shirts, CD covers, films and promotional flyers for clubs and bars. And, like the barcode as fashion statement, maybe one day the smoking mothers of British television comedy will sport a 'health warning' in the form of a discrete tattoo.

1 For an account of the activities in Bermondsey see, E. Lebas, "'When every street became a cinema". The film work of Bermondsey Borough Council's Public Health Department, 1923-1953', *History Workshop Journal*, 39, 1995, pp42-66. See also, D. M. Connan, *A History of the Public Health Department in Bermondsey*, London, Publisher Unknown, 1935.

2 Quoted in Lebas, op. cit., p.53.

3 Ibid., pp43-44.

4 I. Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement*, Routledge, London 1990.

5 Rotha quoted in T. Boon, "'A courageous, militant and disturbing film": an introduction to *The World is Rich*', paper presented at *Science, Medicine and Food Policy in the Twentieth Century*, Aberdeen 1999. See also, T. Boon, 'Agreement and disagreement in the making of *World of Plenty*', in D. Smith (ed.) *Nutrition in Britain: science, scientists and politics in the twentieth century*, Routledge, London 1997, pp166-189.

6 On the use of such techniques in contemporary art see, S. Brind (ed.) *Curious: artist's research within expert culture*, Visual Art Projects, Glasgow 1999. S. Ede (ed.) *Strange and Charmed: science and the contemporary visual arts*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, London 2000.

7 D. Nelkin, *Selling Science: how the press cover science and technology*, W. H. Freeman, New York 1995.

8 M. Bauer, 'The medicalization of science news - from the "rocket-scalpel" to the "gene-meteorite" complex', *Social Science Information*, 37, 1998, pp731-51.

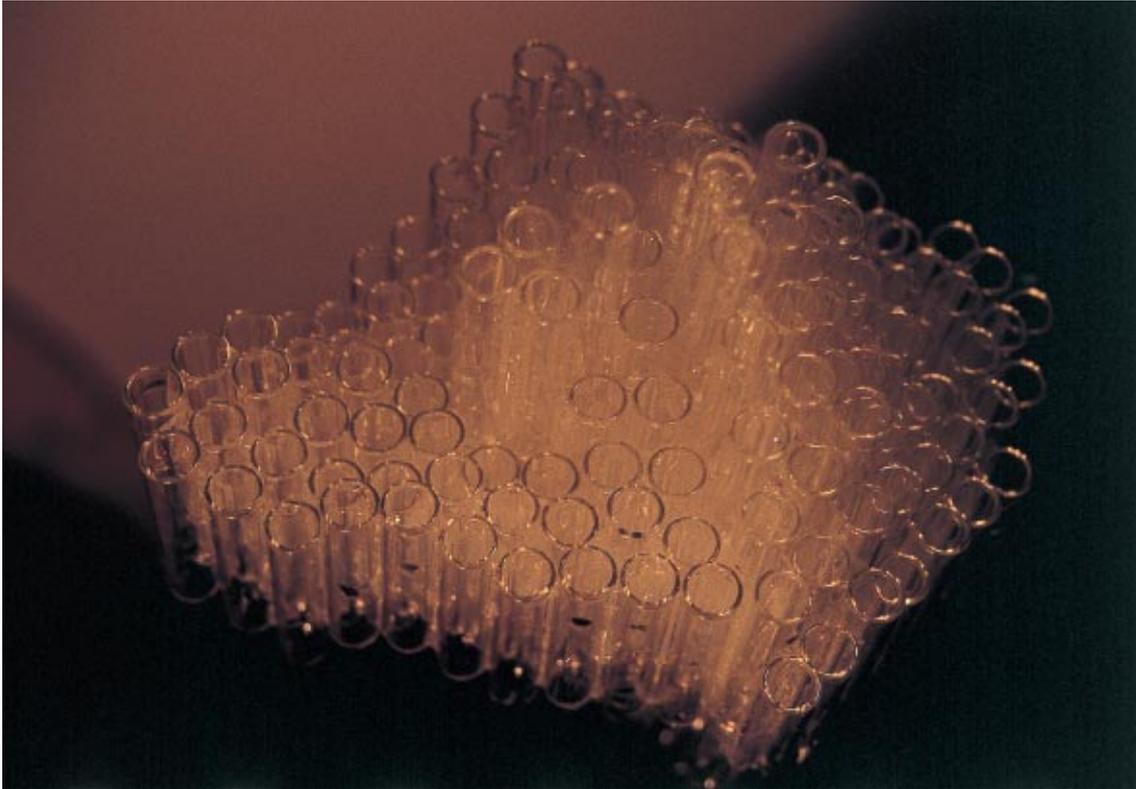
9 K. Loughlin, "'Your Life in Their Hands": the context of a medical-media controversy', *Media History*, 6, 2000, pp177-188.

10 K. Loughlin, op. cit., and K. Loughlin, 'Medical secrecy in 1950s Britain: sacrifice surgery under public scrutiny', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, forthcoming.

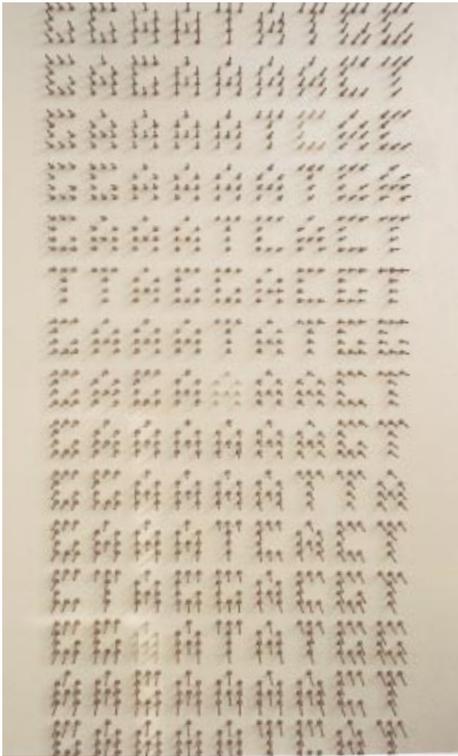
11 'Dilemma of Doctors', *The Times*, September 7th 1961, p.13 (italics added).

12 D. Miller, J. Kitzinger, K. Williams & P. Beharrell, *The Circuit of Mass Communication: media strategies, representations and audience reception in the AIDS crisis*, Sage, London 1998.

13 J. Kitzinger, 'Audience understanding of AIDS media messages: a discussion of methods', *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 12, 1990, pp319-336.



Bruno Parra Agopian AIDSberg
Glass, silicon, water



Eleonora Aguiari Hypothesis of a Sequence
Wood, nails, oil-based paint, glue 200 x 98 cm

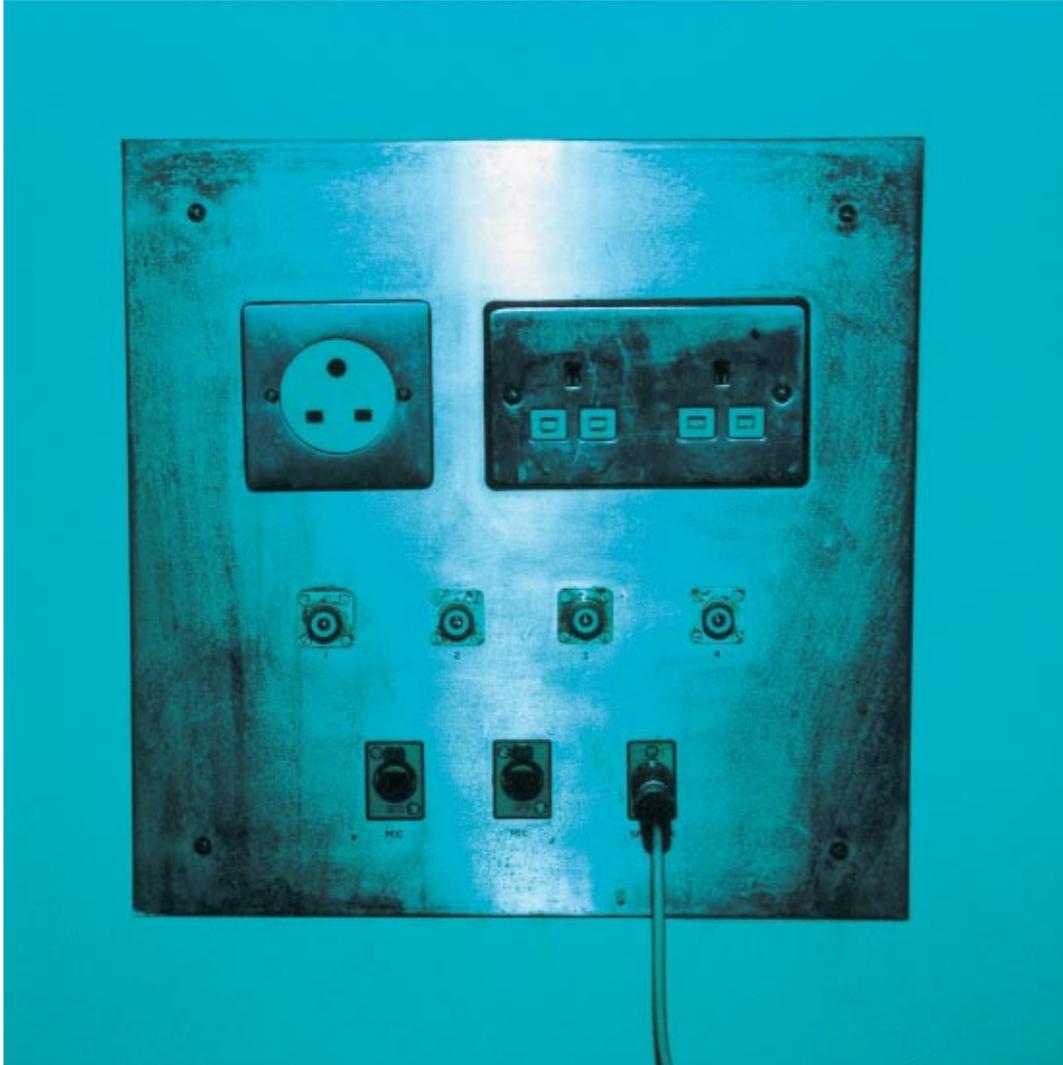


Carol Burt Untitled
Life size skeletal figure *transparent plastic*



Duna Carbonell Untitled

Bandage and lamb bones 54 x 34 cm

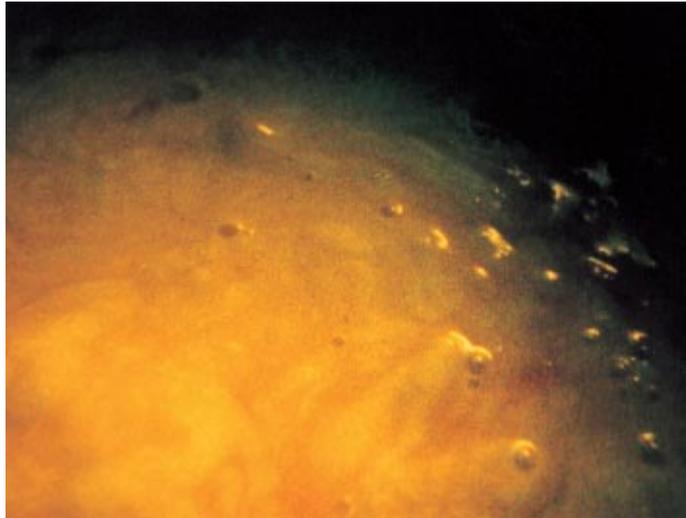


Tania Coates Power point
Photographic c-print 30 x 40 cm



Rebecca Evanson Host Infestation

Wax models 12 x 8 x 5 cm



Preparation for bechamel sauce

Endoscopic view of gastric ulcer



Haroulla Filakti

Photographic prints 12 x 8 x 5 cm



Seraina Mueller Dis-ease
Photograph of performance

Tel. No: 016 13 1

Address to where patient is being discharged to if different from

Main Carer (where applicable) Husband - P

Diagnosis: Left Mastectomy + axill

Condition:

Treatment received: Surgery as above.

Further relevant information: Bruising extensive
Small collection on posterior
Pressure dressing below axill
to renew daily
to see Mr Stokes on Fri
July in or
Inform

Patient's knowledge of illness

Relatives knowledge of patient's illness

Medication on discharge

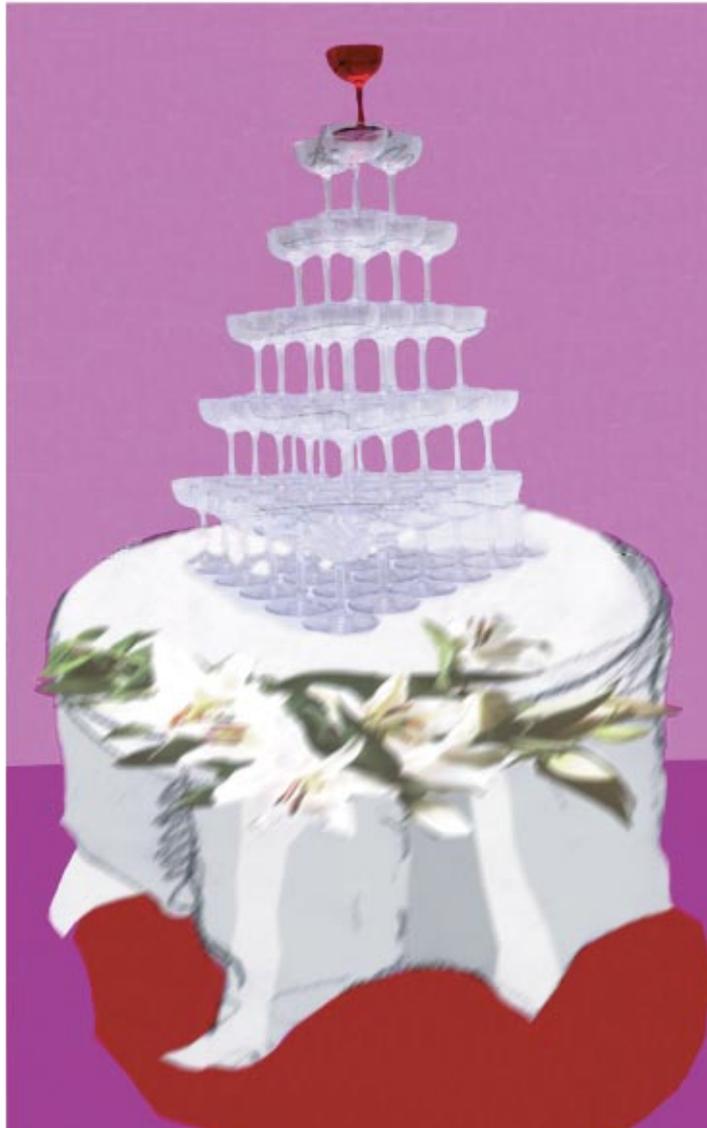
Drug Tramadol Dosage 100mg

Discharge YES/NO

Paraphody

Niamh Murray One Journey of Many

Video still



Alexandra Navratil Untitled

Design for installation/performance mixed media

NO MORE THAN THE VEHICLE FOR A VAGINA

A boardroom. A podium. Evening.

I am standing on a podium naked.

Darkness.

The click of a projector.

My abdomen is opened up. The wound is revealed in the words.

Silence.

Click of projector.

Silence.

Click.

Change pose.

Silence.

Click.

Repeat five more times.

I am writing the story myself. The story is written in the body
of woman.

Natalie Papamichael

Collaboration with Ornella Moscucci



Simone Reis Tropical Sample I
Oil and resin on acrylic cut 40 cm diameter



John Shea Out of the Garden Series, apples
Apples and gloss paint dimensions variable

Did you know?

6 out of every 10 people
suffer from
CHRONIC
ARTHATEORPHOBIA Virus

**The cure is
in these Syringes**



Do You Want To Know More?



all medical supplies have been provided by PAEN syringes and medical supplies PTE LTD

The following Schools
have kindly aided
in all forms of research
and funding

Central Saint Martins
College of Art and Design

THE LONDON INSTITUTE

1899



1999

contributing to health worldwide

Benny Soo Tho

SHUT UP AND LISTEN: Collaboration In Contemporary Visual Art

Neil Chapman

Amongst the artists chosen to represent London in the 1990s in Tate Modern's 'Century City' exhibition, a current of collaborative enterprise is apparent. **Bank**, with its faux-corporate name, effects a masking of the identities of those involved in the group's output. Liam Gillick and Henry Bond represent a more self-contained form of collaborative practice with their 'Document Series'¹ **Inventory**, a loose collective centred round the production of a journal of the same name, is also represented in 'Century City'. Again, the collective name in this case provides some kind of cover beneath which a flux of activities can be seen to be developing

The appearance of different types of collective activity within visual arts is not a new phenomenon. As one begins to list the collaborative practices which have been evident in Europe alone over the last forty years or so, the concept of collaboration, itself, opens out. The relatively contained double-acts, of which there are numerous examples, are the easiest to define as such. But 'movements' in art more generally, it might be argued, are also collaboration in so far as they produce a sharing of approach to the problems encountered in art production. And following on from this, a level of collaboration could be seen as a general feature of the development of international tendencies in art which pan out over much longer timescales.

But what I am interested in here, is a particular kind of explicit collaborative practice within the visual arts, which identifies itself as such in opposition to the more customary pattern of artist as individual voice, and of which the above examples are illustrations. It is important to test out the feasibility of a category such as this when it becomes apparent that these strategies employed by artists - presumably for the continued efficacy of their practices - are being mirrored in the creation of opportunities by funding bodies which promote collaborative projects. Opportunities appear for artists working with other individuals in the same field, but also for visual artists in partnership with scientists, architects and so on.

The dangers, when artists are being directed in the designing of their working practice to any extent by funding agencies, are not difficult to appreciate. The institution which proposes the opportunity has its own complex agenda and in this, the artist's continued, sustainable productivity does not necessarily feature as a priority.

Tate Modern, during the development of its Bankside site, funded a series of projects intended

as outreach to communities defined by them as 'local', and which were identified as subject to the impact of the development in perhaps adverse ways. A number of artists, were commissioned to produce events using Borough Market which would bring the institution of Tate Modern into contact with people living in the vicinity. These artists were chosen on the basis of previous work in which they have demonstrated a commitment to negotiation between diverse audiences and communities². Various levels of collaboration become apparent in projects such as these but above all, the circumstances are shaped by an exchange between the artist and the institution. Each have their own requirements. Each has a dependence on the other for the successful outcome of the project.

We should at this stage, be able to dispel any idea of collaboration as an uncomplicated exchange between parties in agreement. Collaboration can undoubtedly be productive as the diversity of strategies evident in visual art practices would seem to suggest. But to characterise collaboration as such from the outset is to bury the evidence of its precise nature. If this is in anyone's interests it is certainly not those of the artist. Neither should we be led into an assumption that the image of battle between conflicting parties is sufficient for our appreciation of what goes on when artists work with others. Collaborative method and the results of this which appear as completed work, is just as often shot through with a kind of exuberant generosity. This cannot be accounted for by the proposal of a balanced reciprocal relationship anymore than by an image of all out war.

Other attempts have been made towards a more focused analysis of the collaborative tendency within contemporary art practice. In April 2000 the Royal College Visual Arts Administration course produced 'Democracy'. The exhibition proposed to explore the current growth of collective activity, international networking and exchanges in visual art³. Amongst the artists represented in this exhibition, **Superflex**, a Danish team, exemplify the importance of this connection between collective activity and concern with art's effective social engagement. **Superflex** shift the focus of art production away from the encounter which exhibition space makes possible, preferring instead to design projects 'in the field' which involve the kind of direct engagement with pressing social issues we are more used to seeing tackled by aid agencies. When the opportunity to use gallery space does arise, it is treated by **Superflex** as a chance to publicise activities, to initiate a discussion and to generate the kind of public interest which is necessary when commercial backing is being sought for a project. This approach to the use of the gallery is a clear provocation to a viewing public conditioned to expect their encounter with art to be free from pedagogical intent⁴.

Inventory was also involved, to a lesser extent in 'Democracy', or in the debate which surrounded it, contributing to a panel discussion organised in conjunction with the show. In some ways

this marginal involvement seems more appropriate for the group. Their relationship with the conventions of art exhibiting is, like **Superflex's**, ambivalent. But in contrast, **Inventory** seems to retain, almost as a counter mechanism, a certain suspicion about how art space can constitute any kind of opportunity. Although coming together during their training in art history, its founding members - Damian Abbott, Paul Claydon and Adam Schrivener have worked for much of the journal's life, to problematise any hasty identification between *Inventory* (the journal) and the world of art, preferring instead to work towards a definition of *Inventory's* field of inquiry as, for instance, 'Fierce Sociology'⁵. In an explicit attempt to wreak havoc on any understanding of categories by which we might try to define their work, the members of **Inventory** propose themselves as 'Scientists of the Inexact'⁶ and 'Botanists of Asphalt'⁷.

In its notes to contributors, *Inventory* states its commitment to the development of the essay as a form. But another strand of the journal's remit develops an interest in the publishing of a particular kind of writing which finds an odd space between political potency and delirious rant. A collaborative technique is used to generate particular examples of this kind of text, presented frequently as the journal's editorial. This writing has precedents in the schizophrenic tirades of Antonin Artaud and the lunatic reasonings of Daniel Schreber⁸. *Inventory* also contains found texts, often with a similar character which represent a desire to question normative definitions of madness. So too, any efforts which we might make to see **Inventory's** aim as the communication of the results of a particular sociological investigation, is deflected. 'Ours', they have written, 'is a kind of contaminated analysis'⁹.

Even more so than with other groups discussed here, in terms of their collaborative practice, dialogue and the generating and disseminating of textual information takes a central place for **Inventory**. However, it is important to make distinctions about the different tasks which dialogue is given in the cases cited. For **Superflex**, the function of their dialogical interaction varies also across the project's different sites of operation. As suggested above, with its art audience, discussion initiated by the work operates as a kind of provocation to restrictive views around the usefulness of art and the experience of art in exhibition spaces. With its target group - families in Tanzania, inhabitants of a housing estate in Liverpool - the dialogue aims to find solutions to specific social issues connected to economic independence, housing etc. The problems which follow from this in the likely imposition of particular sets of cultural values - especially when **Superflex** is identifying a target group in the third world - are not missed by the artists. But rather than attempting to work towards an unassailable position, the problems are laid open in the work. This is, again, a provocation for their art audience and one which calls for a reassessment and for further debate around the ethics of first to third world relations.

In his essay, 'Into Africa'¹⁰, Dan Cameron discusses the **Superflex** 'Biogas' project. The group is

attempting to design and market a sustainable power source which will be of use to families in the developing world. Cameron comments on the slightly awkward earnestness which is betrayed by the team's sporting of matching khaki uniforms when working abroad. This element in their project becomes a self-effacing concession that the problems implied by a western organisation administering to the needs of individuals within a different culture can only be exposed as irresolvable. And if we are in any doubt about the artists' reasons for their donning of these uniforms, the flame logo - representing the methane power source which is the focus of the project - has a similar effect. Placed on the lower back of the shirt, it seems to allude to a certain brand of adolescent pyrotechnics. The seriousness of the issues which the work brings up, is effaced once more as we are made privy to the multiplicity of conflicting forces which is the dynamic hidden behind the name of **Superflex**.

Inventory is not shy, either, of producing a more focused (less 'contaminated', to use their own word) analysis of contemporary culture in terms of power relations. Although when this does happen, the texts in question tend to appear as diversions from the spirit of the journal¹¹. This is also true of their pursuit of the more conventional goals of artists. Unlike **Superflex**, **Inventory's** engagement with social issues, does not necessitate the same transgressing of educational class, or cultural boundary which define the readership of the journal.

All this creates a rather more complex picture of what happens in dialogical exchange. And this picture distinguishes itself in contrast to the institutional promise, too often implicit in the opportunities offered to practitioners working in partnership, that the collaborative dynamic ought to be understood as a happy balance of symbiotic exchange.

With a similar interest in fugitive attitudes towards the contemporary uses of exhibition space, and the uses of collaboration within art practice, the Whitechapel Gallery recently curated, 'Temporary Accommodation'¹². This show had as one of its main themes, the valorising of process over moments of completion in art. Part of the gallery was given over to an organisation called **BELT**. The word 'organisation' has to be qualified here because of the extent to which this very concept is problematised by the work produced and the practice being developed. **BELT** is the initiative largely of one artist/curator, Ella Gibbs and is a banner under which a diversity of collective work takes place. Established in 1996, **BELT** was initially more clearly a 'space' - an industrial/living unit in Bethnal Green, East London - in which events were held on a regular basis. One of the aims of the project, from its inception, has been to attempt a reformulating of the category of 'viewer' of art. **BELT** operated without financial support from any agency and without the kind of publicity on which arts initiative normally rely. The audience - or the list of those in attendance at the events - was not substantially greater than the list of participants. In this

respect **BELT** created something like a 'zone of indiscernibility' between performance and social gathering¹³.

The question of how this kind of work finds a larger audience is one which has been tackled directly with Ella Gibbs' agreement to have a project by **BELT** included in an exhibition in a major public gallery such as the Whitechapel. This project devised for 'Temporary Accommodation', entitled 'Programme', involved turning an upstairs room in the Whitechapel Gallery into a meeting place and headquarters for the production of a diverse array of activities carried out by previous contributors to **BELT** events and a selection of new participants. Much of the content of 'Programme' was not planned in advance but produced out of discussion during the course of the exhibition¹⁴.

Needless to say, this approach brought **BELT** into conflict with the gallery's administration which is used to having a clearer indication of how the exhibition space is going to be used before the show opens. The work produced by **BELT** also attracted media criticism¹⁵. The difficulties which might be encountered by an art critic, when trying to come to terms with a project like this, are not hard to imagine. The work demands an investment of time. This is a privilege not enjoyed by the average hack with a writing deadline. In this instance, the angry reviews which the work produced can be seen as a tribute to the work's success insofar as they further demonstrate the limits of the machinery around public exhibition space. The work, in its fundamental structure, was designed to do just this.

As has been suggested above, for **BELT**, like other groups working collaboratively in and around the field of art, dialogue and documentation becomes a crucial factor in the work. In her discussion of the history of **BELT** in an interview published to coincide with the opening of 'Temporary Accommodation', Ella Gibbs testifies to the inevitable problems which appear between the spontaneous productions which **BELT** makes possible and the need to make art visible for another level of audience less implicated in the work¹⁶. Around the projects, an archive of documentary material develops. In so far as Ella Gibbs intends to make a criticism of conventional uses of exhibition space, documentation becomes difficult material to deal with. The re-presentation of this threatens to be a direct contradiction of the point which 'Programme' makes about audience involvement; an encounter between the viewer and the 'things' placed in exhibition space is so normalised as the conditions for art, the argument seems to go, that the productivity of the encounter in most instances is reduced to near zero. But without documentation of the meeting/live event which **BELT** seeks to develop as its form, the audience, in terms of size, remains severely restricted. This is a problem which appears specifically when the kind of practice proposed by **BELT** is captured by the larger institution. One solution is to encourage writing and speaking about the work through which it can be made visible. If this requires the project's extension beyond the date given

by the gallery for the work's completion, then this is another necessary concession which is demanded. But there is a problem here. As the need for a climate of dialogue surrounding the work is identified and sought, the definition of what constitutes dialogical exchange is, again, idealised manipulatively. Ella Gibbs states;

I see my work as a catalyst for bringing people together; people from different backgrounds and ages and not just people from the art world. What I do is obviously about working with people, about communication, but a painting in a gallery is also clearly about people and communication...¹⁷

These comments do a number of things. First of all they prescribe a desired endpoint for art; this endpoint seems to be the achievement of something proposed as 'true meeting' through communication. 'People from different backgrounds' are sought for engagement in dialogue. The work requires this to the extent that the climate of dialogue is its medium. A new level of audience therefore have to be persuaded that there is something to be gained from this.

The problem here is similar to the one which appears for **Superflex** (and for charities and aid agencies) as they come with remedial solutions for those identified as being in some kind of need; that which is presumably of value in the offer, is bound up with a bunch of cultural norms which would be imposed, inevitably, at the same time as the gift is given.

And again, the mistake is immanent when an idealised concept of collaboration is proposed by the larger and more established funding agency as a pattern which artists might like to adopt. The rhetoric creates an expectation of equitable exchange when the actual dynamics of collaboration within or across the thresholds of the visual arts involves something quite different. **Inventory** demonstrate this successfully. The journal's remit, developed through its editorials is a model for the collective dynamics. Just as the text seems to be on the point of pulling itself apart due to internal stresses, so the group's collaborative practice is perhaps at its most productive when exchanges operate far from equilibrium.

Help in picturing the dynamics of collective activity can be found again in the writings of Deleuze & Guattari. In 1987, after several years of joint work on the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Deleuze & Guattari published a second volume which opens with a candid account of their collaborative process. From the opening sentences, one becomes aware of an awkward polyvocal quality which the text maintains, both through the quantity of references made use of in the writing, and the erratic, unresolved contradictions which remain in the text. These are perhaps a defining

feature of dialogue. Deleuze & Guattari observe,

The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd... We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognisable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel and think...To reach, not the point where no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own...¹⁸

The book is full of images which can be seen as describing the dynamics and the productive potential of collaboration. For instance, the writers ask us to imagine a puppet on strings. But before we assume that its erratic movements are the results of decisions made by a God-like operator out of sight behind some screen, Deleuze & Guattari propose that the production in collaborative process is understood better by imagining this puppet connected to another puppet existing in 'other dimensions'¹⁹. The strings are connected and so are the movements of each puppet. But the narrative developed by each has a relation with the other which is 'aparallel'. In other words, each is intimately dependent on the other for its production, but crossed-purpose is the natural condition of their interaction.

A definition of communication which is predicated on a notion of equilibrium in exchange, and which is proposed as the condition of collaboration, is not simply a benign inaccuracy. It is an understanding which would threaten to remove the effective potential of strategies devised by artists in creative practice. The simplified picture of dialogue produced by institutions and funding agencies, many of which have education and regeneration on their agendas, is ironically counter-productive. This is due in large part to the tie which so much of current collective activity has, with concerns over social engagement in art.

The institutions with which artists collaborate in the production of their work are answering to higher authorities. These authorities also have, imperatives which are their own. But of course, in this inquiry our understanding of institutions has to be wide enough to include any named centre of production - any artist or group of artists - with which we might engage collaboratively. Before a balanced resolution is achieved, before any end point is arrived at in the form of complete work, our own tendency is more likely to be the attempt of some outrageous imposition, or the wild and gratuitous sacrifice of everything that we thought we cared about. Our experience of the ground in between these extremes, if we are true to the desire for a productive working method, will be rather fleeting.

1. Liam Gillick and Henry Bond 'Document Series' 1992 - 93.
2. See Anna Best 'The Wedding Project' <http://www.bbc.co.uk/artzone/artfor networks/>
3. <http://www.rca.ac.uk/show2000/vaa/frame.html>
4. For information concerning *Superflex's* contribution to 'Democracy' see <http://www.superchannel.org>
5. Inventory, 'Fierce Sociology', *Inventory Vol.2 No.3*, London 1997, pp5-8.
6. Inventory, 'Without Intent', *Inventory Vol.3 No.3*, London 1999, p.4.
7. Paul Claydon, 'Botanizing On The Asphalt', *Inventory, Vol.1 No.2*, London 1996 pp36-65.
8. See Daniel Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, New York Review Of Books, New York 2000.
9. Inventory, 'Do You Feel Crushed?', *Inventory, Vol.3 No.1*, London 1998, p.6.
10. Dan Cameron, 'Into Africa', *Afterall*, Pilot Issue, Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, London 1998/99, pp61-65.
11. For an example of this kind of writing in *Inventory*, see Adam Schrivener, 'Open Yet Excluded', *Inventory Vol.3 No.3*, London 2000, p.78.
12. 'Temporary Accommodation', Whitechapel Gallery, London, 12th January - 4th March 2001.
13. For an account of this concept see Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, 'What Is A Concept', *What Is Philosophy*, Verso, London 1994, pp15-34.
14. For more information on Programme and its continued development see, <http://www.whitechapel.org>
15. Notably Adrian Searle's review in the Guardian 16th January 2001, pp14-15.
16. <http://www.whitechapel.org/temporaryaccommodation/belt/belt-interview.html>
17. Ibid.
18. G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, 'Introduction: Rhizome', *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism And Schizophrenia*, The Althone Press, London 1988, p.3.
19. Ibid., p.8.

Biographical notes

Neil Chapman is an artist, writer and lecturer at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design. He has recently shown sculpture, video and installation at Greengrassi and Hoxton Distillery, London. His current work draws on research into evolutionary theory and explores the generative potential of error in the production of art.

Tony Fletcher is an epidemiologist in the Environmental Epidemiology Unit at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. He is currently researching into the health effects of air pollution and contaminated drinking water. He is the co-ordinator of the School's Contemporary Arts Fund.

Kelly Loughlin is a medical historian with an interest in the public understanding of medicine. She has written on the history of medicine and the mass media and is currently researching the history of health education in post-war Britain.

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Foreign Bodies 2001

a site-specific exhibition by students from
Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design

Bruno Parra Agopian

Carol Burt

Tania Coates

Haroulla Filakti

Niamh Murray

Natalie Papamichael

John Shea

Eleonora Aguiari

Duna Carbonell

Rebecca Evanson

Seraina Mueller

Alexandra Navratil

Simone Reis

Benny Soo Tho