



Review: Joining up the Dots

Reviewed Work(s):

Performance Art: Into the 90s by Nicola Hodges

Audio Arts: Discourse and Practice in Contemporary Art by William Furlong

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JOINING UP THE DOTS

Claire MacDonald

BOOKS REVIEWED—*Performance Art: Into the 90s* (special issue of *Art & Design Magazine*, No. 38). Edited by Nicola Hodges. London: Academy Editions, 1994. *Audio Arts: Discourse and Practice in Contemporary Art*. Edited by William Furlong. London: Academy Editions, 1994.

Art & Design encounters performance art at an opportune cultural moment. In recent years the interest in performance and the performative (in its broadest sense) has touched many different disciplines and practices, resulting in a significant transformation in the metaphors we use to describe the world. Stuart Hall, in his introduction to *Carnival, Hysteria and Writing*, the recent collection of essays commemorating the work of the literary critic Allon White, draws attention to this change and to White's use of Bakhtin's notion of carnival in his analysis of literary culture. Bakhtin, whose highly performative notion of "dialogism" has been especially influential for recent work on self and culture is a central figure in the change Hall delineates. He cites the work of Allon White and others as evidence of a move away from dramatic simplifications and binary reversals in cultural criticism, into a complex, shifting, dialogic landscape,

in which artists and critics struggle to find ways of thinking and speaking which articulate the dynamics of our current condition more clearly.

As a metaphor, the performative seems currently to grip our imagination, allowing us to articulate cultural processes in new terms. There is a renewed interest in the carnivalesque, in questions of the relationship of oral and written texts, in process and composition across the arts, in sound as art, in scores and documentation, and in the relationship of performance art to poetry and music. Performance art has benefited from this renewed interest. The thin trickle of English-language books which profile British and European performance art has now turned into a steady stream: steady enough, that is, for the questions which constellate around the continued mutations of performance to emerge.

Both *Performance Art: Into the 90s* and *Audio Arts: Discourse and Practice in Contemporary Art* discuss contemporary live work in an international context, though the emphasis in both is on Britain and Europe. Each also addresses the histories and critical contexts in which live, often ephemeral art, takes place and both raise questions about the direction of art today. *Performance Art: Into the 90s* is, in fact, an issue of *Art & Design*, a substantial magazine in book format; it addresses current work across the field of performance and its appearance in 1994 is an indication that performance art is once again enjoying a rising profile in the art world, a profile it has not had for some time.

Each of *Art & Design's* bi-monthly magazine editions focuses on a current art world topic. Each is an eclectic mix of the serious, the new, the fashionable and the talked about. The magazine exemplifies the best and worst of art world publishing. The package is luxurious, thick glossy pages in large format with dozens of color pictures, but each issue can also seem carelessly selected and under-edited. Contributions are largely culled from other publications and are often reproduced with an astonishing lack of care. It's a kind of hit and run approach held together by strong design and production values, and the performance issue sits square within this frame.

On the whole it works; and the reason it works is simple, the photographs. Simon Herbert's twenty-page lead article is accompanied by thirty-two full color reproductions, seven full page. A six-page interview with Rachel Rosenthal is accompanied by twenty color illustrations. From Rosenthal's two-page head

rising from sand to the full page picture of a bare-breasted Marina Abramovic, arms wound with snakes, the photographs are sumptuous and sometimes remarkable. *Art & Design* has chosen to showcase performance art in a big, loud, glamorous way at a time when funding cutbacks and critical invisibility make artists feel creatively and politically marginalized. In contrast, this magazine looks good and is distributed widely, especially important since many of the artists in it are not well known outside Britain and northern Europe.

The visual quality and lay-out of the magazine give it the feel of a good catalogue. Catalogues are one of the significant ways in which the performing and visual arts are distinguished. Visual art has catalogues: theatre, music, and dance all have flimsy programs; and performance art has very little of either. The production of independently produced visual catalogues to accompany exhibitions, with good photographic reproductions, imaginative design, and pertinent critical texts is a primary way in which the art world speaks to and documents itself. *Art & Design's* issue brings performance art into catalogue culture.

The issue follows *Art & Design's* familiar format: an extensive profile section containing interviews and articles is preceded by loosely-related review articles on exhibitions, books, and videos. The profile section contains material on Marina Abramovic, Bill T. Jones, Rachel Rosenthal, Rose Garrard, Annie Sprinkle, Tomas Rüller, and ensemble theatre company Forced Entertainment, with contextual pieces on the history and state of performance. Much of the material is reproduced from recent books

and magazines. Editor Nicola Hodges has chosen essays and interviews by writers who cross critical and artistic boundaries and whose scope is wide.

The long lead essay is by Simon Herbert, one of Britain's most talented and unorthodox artist curators. Co-founder with John Bewley of the maverick Projects UK, which documented and latterly commissioned performance art in Britain for over ten years, his energy and acuity have been important in introducing international work to British audiences. The artist Rose Garrard writes about her own work in an eloquent analysis of the state of current performance, drawing a feminist thread through the history. Rachel Rosenthal is interviewed by Nicholas Zurbrugg, whose new book on postmodernism has just been published by Routledge and is reviewed in the same issue. A survey of the particular flavor of British live work is by Nick Kaye, a critic with an interest in performance art history and a book out on postmodern performance who recently edited an edition of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on British Live Art, from which his essay is taken. The selection generates the sense of an ongoing conversation around current interests which gives the magazine a throughline as cross-currents begin to emerge.

The issue is framed, front cover and three pages in the back, by multi-image photographic collages from Forced Entertainment's 1993 installation *The Red Room*, which combined performance, photography, and narrative. The company's long-term collaborator, photographer Hugo Glendinning, recorded fragments of their performances in urban sites, tower blocks, stairwells, phone

booths, patches of waste ground. Using the collection as raw material the company then drew on what they call "a range of everyday urban practices; the personal mythologisation of space, the chance observations of strangers and the finding of discarded letters and photographs."

The Red Room investigated investigation itself, using detective fiction and forensics as metaphors for the way in which personal meanings are filched from the urban melee's mix of chance and destiny. The installation articulated Forced Entertainment's interest in the conjunction of contemporary narratives and images and extended their work beyond the theatre space. The viewer negotiated a chaotic and fragmentary collection of images in a darkened space with the aid of a torch, drawn towards a faint spill of red light from a second, hidden room. On entering this room a performer could be seen at work, developing and cropping images and recording notes. The images shown in *Art & Design* are accompanied by a brief text by the company's director and writer Tim Etchells, who describes the work and its intentions, but it is the photographs which compel. They are markedly different from those in the rest of the issue since they alone investigate the significance and meaning of the performance photograph.

In one picture, a man turns away from the camera, the image dotted with drips of dark fluid, beneath; on a piece of torn paper with a paper clip attached, some words are typed: "there are stains on the page which i believe are her tears." The images are set against a scratched, dark-gray background, shadowy and dirty. These photographs

continue the work of art, they do not seek to represent it in anything other than a partial way and as such intervene in and question the process of making performance photographs, much as Forced Entertainment's theatre work questions the ownership of words and images and their relationship to persona and character. The photography is both downbeat and glamorous, very much like the work, sitting as it does on the boundary between glamor and sadness.

After ten years Forced Entertainment have virtual cult status in Britain, investigating the way we live now with a kind of intellectual rigor and compulsion that also embraces the romance of urban decay. With shows like *200 % and Bloody Thirsty*, *Marina and Lee*, *Club of No Regrets*, and their last show *Hidden J* they have developed a vocabulary which allows them to trawl popular culture, art, and history like a migrant tribe, returning with worn out and discarded fragments and constructing a new world with them. They use theatre form as resource, dressing up and taking off, mixing let's pretend with physical intensity and relentless intelligence. As they have moved into installation over the past two years their energy remains remarkable; but in a way theatre has now all but given them up. In a 1995 *Guardian* review of their recent installation *Ground Plans for Paradise* critic Robin Black formally welcomed them to the art world, referring to their ability to side-step definitions, "aggravating the clean-cut expectations of traditional theatre audiences . . . they have succeeded in spellbinding the rest of us with their twilight world of bewildering narratives."

They are now one of the few groups in Britain working at the boundaries of theatre, performance art, and popular culture, but not for long. The Arts Council of England recently declined to award them funding for their next project, feeling that their work has not developed sufficiently. It's a familiar story and one which has focused unpleasant attention once more on the way funding decisions are made and the lack of a critical context within which new work can be read. Many of the country's maverick performance and dance companies have been denied funding since their work seems to sit outside the artistic categories in which they are assessed. "Not dance" and "not theatre" have become all too familiar tags attached to new work, often meaning that mature and significant artists suddenly find themselves without support at critical points in their development. While funders have been trying for years to break free of outdated boundaries between theatre, dance, and visual art, setting up new funds for collaborations across art forms, for instance, the restrictive definitions under which they still work mean that innovation often outstrips the funding briefs.

Performance Art: Into the 90s doesn't take on the definitions debate but, in general, focuses on performance by visual artists. Work by Rebecca Horn, Ron Haselden, Brian Catling, and Nadim Karam is included in the review section. All are visual artists with a relationship to performance which spans installation, sculpture, costume, and poetry. Outside the context of visual performance the inclusion of other pieces is harder to understand. A piece on dancer/choreographer Bill T. Jones seems out of place without further con-

textualization, an excellent piece on London's annual Notting Hill carnival has no references, no information about its context and nothing about the writer, Dein Jones. As the first piece in the magazine its inclusion seems to imply the start of a conversation about the wider meanings and histories of performance, but it is a conversation not taken up elsewhere. The magazine is on safer ground when it stays within the art world, presenting artists who may have a tangential relationship to performance, like Rebecca Horn, but are recognizably within the concerns of contemporary, international visual art.

Definitions are slippery at the best of times but it would have been interesting to have addressed one of the more potent issues in contemporary practice: it is not so much that art is now interdisciplinary but that artists are increasingly so. Artists themselves cross lines and redefine territory: addressing visual concerns within one piece, narrative within another, moving between forms in ways which show a facility with many artistic vocabularies. Take, for instance, the example of visual theatre director Jan Fabre showing at the visual art festival Documenta, and this year making an installation in Frankfurt as part of a project in which visual artists are invited to develop works for theatre. No one need pretend that the work is a blurring of disciplines; it's more that contemporary artists are able to move between fields, to operate as poets and sculptors, theatre practitioners and visual artists. What is significant is not the artist's training or background but whom and what they seek to address in each work.

The work of Brian Catling, one of the most notable and mature performance artists in Britain, includes installation, sculpture, poetry, and video and is briefly written up in the review section of this issue. As a sculptor and a poet he draws attention to physical presence, the act of composition and the rigors of space. Seeing him recently perform at a reading in the old synagogue on Princelet Street in London's Brick Lane, I watched while he silently lit ancient candelabra and left them swinging, marking his own presence and lighting the way for other readers. His work challenges artistic definitions through his attention to words, objects, and spaces: seeming to give weight and solidity to words; attending to the presence of objects in time and marking their relationship to language; articulating the relationship of the fictional and the real and bringing them into presence in performance.

Two contextual essays book-end the profile section like debating orators. The two work well together, opposed in style but resonating with similar themes. Nick Kaye's end piece is discerning, peeling back definitions in order to reveal the many layers of performance art in Britain since the 1970s. Simon Herbert's opener, by contrast, is an anarchic, showy, overlong outcry but underlines Nick Kaye's points beautifully. Kaye's article is a significant piece and deserves better presentation than it receives. Here it is reprinted in a badly edited version of his *CTR* text. There is no proper reference to the publication from which his essay comes, or a publication date and, since the original article prefaces his own *CTR* issue, it also refers throughout to the set of articles which he commissioned and which are of course absent from this context. In



Brian Catling in his five-hour solo performance *Blind Encounter*, 1993.
Melk Fabrik, Den Bosch, Holland. Photo: Marc Atkins.



Forced Entertainment's *Club of No Regrets*, 1993.
Sheffield, U.K. Photo: Hugh Glendinning.

the introduction to his article Kaye discusses the lack of a critical context for performance and the under-theorizing of the field, comments which are wide ranging and important enough to preface the whole profile section of the magazine; instead they appear at the back. However, his argument is an important one and the work which he has done on retracing the history of British performance art is significant.

Kaye argues that the particular concurrence of politics, art, and popular culture in Britain has given rise to uniquely hybrid forms of performance. British live art has been characterized by a fusion of forms which first found expression in the art school culture of the sixties and which has since spawned bands, magazines, alternative lifestyles, political protest, performance art, poets, and designers. He argues that performance art, as it emerged, was able to draw from the same well of resources in popular tradition as political and fringe theatre and alternative comedy, giving rise to comic and visual ensembles like IOU and The People Show, The Kipper Kids and Forkbeard Fantasy which played “visual imagery and poetic and comic text across each other.” It is a view which echoes Stuart Hall’s points about the metaphorical significance of the carnivalesque and which also draws attention to the contested histories of performance art.

For Kaye British live art arises from a genuine fusion of practices which are historically located and, while they have important international associations, are also specific to the experience of British cultures. In *CTR* this view is made clear through his choice of articles and artists, which range from the comic visual

poetry of Forkbeard Fantasy to analysis of the politics of place and culture in the work of Welsh-language company Brith Gof and new mavericks like the Scottish performance ensemble Clan-jamfrie. His view resonates with Gunter Berghaus’s analysis of happenings in Britain and Europe earlier in the magazine’s review section. Unfortunately his contribution also suffers from poor editing.

Art & Design has included only the summary of his sixty-page article from the recently published *Happenings and Other Acts*, edited by Mariellen Sandford, with an incorrect title and none of the notes referred to in his text. In the full essay Berghaus points out that in Britain happenings formed part of a “carnavalesque celebration of oppositional values” as opposed to the more transgressive and violent actions of continental European artists. It is this tradition which Kaye picks up when he argues that the emergence of a distinctively hybrid live art in the eighties, a term inclusive of live work from visual theatre and visual art traditions, is in part due to this earlier cross-fertilization of influences.

Kaye’s definition of current practice is one shared by a number of critics and funders in Britain. It is, for instance, clearly demonstrated in the Arts Council’s recent document *Live Art in Schools*, researched and written by performance artist Richard Layzell. Layzell includes a brief history of live art which articulates very clearly the view that contemporary live art draws from many sources, including traditions of story-telling, carnival, dance, and theatre as well as performance art. For him live art represents “innovative performance in its

widest sense.” It is a *mélange* which continually opens itself up to new possibilities and new definitions. More than this Layzell argues cogently that the practices of performance artists and the ways in which live art encourages the viewer to engage with and question wider cultural issues can be brought into education. The document challenges the purely fine art definition of performance, not by denying it but by widening it to include a broader constellation of oral and live practices.

The point is extended further in a new book published by the ICA and edited by Catherine Ugwu, *Lets Get It On: The Politics of Black Performance in Britain*. Identifying how live art’s resistance to categorization makes it available for black artists to express complex ideas about identity, Ugwu writes, “Subverting tradition and defying convention, live art invokes different ways of seeing, thinking and doing. With no fixed form, materials or genre, this area of practice offers artists the opportunity to select from traditional and contemporary cultural influences, references and icons—from carnival to disco, from past to present.” The references in her book are not to one history of performance but to the disparate voices and practices which have contributed to new practices as informed by new technologies and non-western performance forms and by the concerns of western fine art practice.

This is not a definition favored by Simon Herbert in his history of performance art in Britain, “Bread and Circuses.” Herbert defends the fine art origins of performance art and rages at the assimilation of performance art into other discourses, reserving his deepest

invective for the practice of introducing performance artists into schools. For him performance art cannot be assimilated since it is essentially the art of rage and transgression. His is a complex approach, at one and the same time democratically political and yet narrowly purist. His concept of the essentially transgressive nature of the act of performance encourages the idea of the lone artist as hero, the spiritual and political maverick able to risk all for the sake of the unrepeatably moment. It is a quintessentially male view exemplified in his comments on Chris Burden, “The classic 20th-century pieta of automobile and artist—Chris Burden crucified on the roof of a Volkswagen—is as recognisable as the little Vietnamese girl covered in napalm, running naked down a road away from her village.”

Yet his own history shows that British performance has rarely had the desperation and extremity either of European actions and happenings or of American identity politics. British work has tended to be more idiosyncratic. The violence and return of the repressed which was expressed in the performance art of the late sixties and seventies in France, Austria, and Germany certainly never happened in Britain, where, if artistic transgression has often had a sense of the absurd, so has its political culture. Perhaps eccentricity, so greatly prized in British life, allows the edge to be taken off the angry gesture, and encourages the genuinely transgressive to become the merely quirky. Perhaps we have allowed a certain kind of performance art to be eccentric, while the job of serious transgression has been carried on elsewhere.

However, it may be significant that one of the senior artists Herbert discusses is Alistair McLennan, who has lived and worked in Belfast for the past twenty years. In Amsterdam last summer I watched him make one of a series of performance actions; he simply and painstakingly painted an old blackboard, dividing it down the middle and giving one side a newer, cleaner shade of black while the other remained chalk marked, matt, used. It seemed almost absurdly understated but I think of his eloquent gesture now that we are nine months into a kind of peace in Britain and as we remember older conflicts. His action has resonated as I have watched news footage and heard savage debate from Northern Ireland, where the issue of who sets foot where, who marks and divides territory has been so keenly and so bitterly expressed. We often say that new work exists on the cutting edge; in my mind's eye that edge is on some epic, wind-blown border. Then I think of Alistair McLennan's small paintbrush quietly dividing two pieces of dirty blackboard. Maybe we can't hope for big things any more, only small changes.

Herbert's essay takes for granted that performance art engages with political and cultural change, albeit within a questionably narrow definition of performance art. For him its possible obsolescence lies in the pointlessness of any gesture in the complex world we now inhabit. Half ironically he recalls past times, "The seventies were to performance art what the forties were to comic books. A Golden age, an era of supermen." His narrative lurches like a bar-room drunk, pushy, anxious, funny, addressing all within hearing and setting the world to rights; but between

the lines of his discourse lurk the big questions. How do we make art in strange and ugly times? How do we in Britain, in this offshore island between the Atlantic and the North Sea, live now? How does the art we make speak to the Europe which is now being conjured into being?

A sense of migrancy, urgency, ephemerality seems to characterize our culture now, at its crux. It is exemplified by the stories and rumors which grow stranger daily. On TV we watch Bulgarian sailors moored off the Shetland islands, abandoned by their government, their ship sold to the highest bidder, without pay for two years, kept alive by islanders who bring them food and clothing. Or the Somalian refugees I saw encamped at Moscow airport in 1993. They have been there several years now, permanently in transit. In mainland Britain we are divided by a margin of water from a continent in constant flux, where only five states have had stable borders in the last hundred years and twelve new countries have emerged in the last five. In this context what does it mean to say "I" or "you" anymore? What does it mean to speak in English? What are we doing here? It is this sense of urgency about the cultural predicament within which artists now work that Herbert addresses. His is an "I was there and I wonder what the hell it all means" history, rich in anecdote. "Performance art anthologies are littered with images of nice young men with sideburns and flares whom we never see again." Witty, engaged, and passionate, Herbert attends to performances both forgotten and celebrated in "Bread and Circuses." They act as beacons in his reminiscence: all those young men in flares.

Rose Garrard traces a different history of performance, a feminist one. Garrard has worked in time-based media, installation, and sculpture for many years, and her approach to performance is highly focused and fine art based. She traces the history of a form which, for women artists in Britain in the 1970s, offered a space free from expectation and ideology, a space which allowed new aesthetic and political questions to emerge and be explored. Her essay speaks of her own work and that of other women artists, reminding us of the psychological risks which many women artists took in placing their work within a feminist framework, and pointing out the significant projects and exhibitions which arose through feminist questioning. Her twenty-five years of art practice were recently marked by a major retrospective exhibition and accompanying book jointly commissioned by the Cornerhouse and South London galleries, *Archiving My Own History: Documentation of Works 1969–94*. Both book and exhibition addressed the politics of representation in analyzing the relationship between viewer, artist, and art work.

Garrard's performance work has become increasingly responsive to the intervention of the viewer, inviting responses and stories during the process which are woven into the fabric of the work as it is made and become part of the work once it is exhibited. In the book she addressed the dilemma performance artists often face in documenting their own work by including personal anecdotes, memories, reviews, process photographs, and critical responses; re-configuring the history of her work as an archive, literally a site containing records whose purpose is to

read the past. Her work is precise, engaging, and articulate, and while her essay is all of these things she also sounds a note of pessimism: "Perhaps the need for cultural responsibility has become so urgent, the task so vast in a world where our self-destruction, not creativity, increasingly tops the agenda, that the small rituals of Performance Art, subsumed in the systems they once sought to change, have lost their perspective and energy, becoming merely the tune of the fiddler while Rome burns. Perhaps I'm wrong and artists have already left the Performance Art spotlight for less identifiable pastures in the real-time world. As time itself is running out, I hope so."

Her statement is an invitation to respond to the issue of the social responsibility of artists at the end of the twentieth century. This bleaker conversation is implicit in many of the other articles; it certainly underlies Simon Herbert's history, Gunter Berghaus's attention to the meaning of transgression and cultural change, and Nick Kaye's history taking. It seems implicit in the nature of the art form. It is not so much that performance art is at the cutting edge of practice, rather that it cannot help but mine the boundary between the symbolic and the lived, the imaginary and the real, the possible, the hoped for, and the actual. That is its nature, that is what it means when the artist performs the work in the same space as the viewer. Performance acts as witness to the political and cultural temper of our times, drawing attention to our presence as witnesses, participants, listeners, and readers, all making up our version of reality. As Tim Etchells says of *The Red Room*: "We're all first on the scene

of the crime here, making stories. We're all scattered in the pieces, all joining up the dots."

William Furlong's pertinent essay on sound in art extends notions of text, documentation, and performance into another dimension. His is a precise and attentive piece which gives a history to the production of sound works in Britain over the past twenty years. Furlong draws attention to the fact that the use of sound in art has never become "sound art" in the way in which other art categories have become closely defined. Sound occupies a huge range of functions and roles in the work of artists and writers and the lack of a distinct category has enabled the use of sound to avoid both restriction and marginalization. There is no territory to bargain for in sound, no way in which the definition of sound art is under the same competing and divisive pressure that performance art is, for instance. The essay is reproduced from Furlong's own recent book on the work of Audio Arts, which is a producing organization for sound art. Like *Performance Art: Into the 90s*, Furlong's is a large format, lavishly illustrated book. Meticulously indexed and with a complete catalogue of Audio Arts publications, the book is a selection from the Audio Arts archive, edited and compiled by Furlong himself, and explores issues in the relationship between discourse and practice in contemporary art.

Audio Arts also publishes an audio cassette magazine which, since 1973, has presented artists' readings, art works in sound, critical debate on art issues, and artists' interviews. Furlong was its co-founder, with Barry Barker, and as Mel Gooding says in his excellent introduc-

tory article, once conceived, the notion of a magazine on tape seemed immediately obvious. Audio Arts is twenty-two years old and now constitutes an extensive and significant archive. Since Barker left it to become a curator, Furlong has worked closely with a number of other artists and critics, most notably Michael Archer, but it is he who is the driving force behind Audio Arts and it is his acumen and persistence which have ensured its success. The organization's unique quality stems from the way in which Furlong and Barker quickly realized the conceptual possibilities of the sound medium. Audio Arts has not only documented and reproduced the work of others and contributed to the dissemination of critical dialogue, but it has also generated sound projects and has always worked with the presence of the spoken voice as a medium of performance, enabling the magazine to become, in Mel Gooding's words, a "component of the creative network as well as an enabling medium of critical transmission."

Furlong's new book is a critical record of twenty-two years of production and attempts to continue in book form the creative diversity of the sound magazine. It is divided into sections which give a selection of material from the archive. Furlong has indexed artists who engage with the interview, artists who use the medium of speech in their work, recordings arising from debates and Audio Arts own art projects, interleaved with three articles about the work—Mel Gooding's introduction, Michael Archers' essay on Audio Arts' projects, and Furlong's essay on sound in recent art.

The flexibility of the field has enabled Furlong to take a radically diverse approach to the notion of working with sound. He has included in the magazine art and artists, curators and thinkers, all of whom jostle in sound space beside one another; figures as varied as Wyndham Lewis, Susan Hiller, Edna O'Brian, James Joyce, and Andy Warhol. The selection represented in book form indicates how a series of interweaving conversations emerge through the archive, sound spaces in which voices introduce and play with ideas, chase concerns and strategies. Interview styles are unconventional and space is allowed for multi-voiced conversations amongst those present at an event.

Audio Arts not only includes artists, it has had a commitment to giving aural space to thinkers (Buckminster Fuller and Noam Chomsky are both included in the book) as well as working with radio, making sound installations, and documenting pertinent critical issues relevant to art practice. The magazine has also mapped and recorded the overlap between electronic music, concrete poetry, and sound art, including work by figures such as composers Cornelius Cardew, Michael Nyman, and Gavin Bryars, and artists Laurie Anderson and Vito Acconci.

It is clear from Furlong's editing style that he sees no hierarchical division between critical discourse and art practice. Introducing the book he makes it clear that he sees it as a continuation of the Audio Arts project, an extension of art into discourse in much the same way as the magazine itself crosses and extends artistic boundaries. Both he and Michael Archer have contributed to Audio Arts projects as artists as well as

editing the work of others and writing critical pieces. Within the book the three critical essays draw attention to the means Audio Arts has used to allow ideas, issues, and voices from many different artistic and critical disciplines to sit alongside one another in sound space. The strategy is in part a simple conceptual book-keeping operation analyzed in Michael Archer's essay "Public and Private." In the early project *Objects and Spaces* Furlong and Archer sent tapes to people around the world asking them to record, in a space they commonly used, a brief description of the space and an object in it. In the same project they also recorded local sounds from Brixton in south London and discussions by prison inmates about their thoughts of the outside world from their confinement, finally presenting the work in a gallery. Other works have used radio. *Radio Garden*, commissioned for the Tyne International "A New Necessity" exhibition, recorded and transmitted sounds received by radio aerials positioned in the locale of the exhibition and programmed to receive material from around the world.

Works for Telephone and *Accent for a Start* recorded responses to places and questions. Neither complicated nor specific, the questions allowed for responses which explore the relationship of voice to place, accent to locale. Talking of a later piece made in the area around London's Liverpool Street station Archer says, "the wish, as ever, was not to visit a place and pronounce upon it, but to forge an imaginative and complementary connection with its particularities." Themes are not staged by Audio Arts but emerge through the collecting of material. As Gooding says, Audio Arts practice has been unpolemical, its

interest lies in its inventiveness, the ability to pursue meaningful serendipity, what Amitav Ghosh calls “the logic of these coincidences.” The strategy follows the story of what happens to be in space at the same time and engage with the world on its own terms, using the technology that Archer calls “the ultra convenient demotic format,” the cassette tape.

The book brings the work to a wider public and offers a space for reflection and analysis. In conceptual terms the opportunity to use visual material adds a new dimension to the work and in some senses seems to stand for the demotic eclecticism of the original. Throughout the book drawings and photographs are inserted into the interviews as marginalia; reproduced letters, scribbles and pictures of Furlong in various states of unshavenness interviewing tired artists in foreign cities provide a nice sense of process and passing time. Here is Roy Strong making the first call in the telephone project; a letter from Wyndham Lewis says uncertainly that he is not sure if he quite understands William Furlong’s queries;

a photograph shows a tape recorder in the Stasi headquarters, standing on top of a formica table.

It is a book packed with material and is an essential guide to the production of many sound works throughout the last twenty years. The critical essays are excellent and the format and selection ask pertinent questions about the relationship between sound and image, process and product. To consider sound so deeply and in so varied a way is endlessly intriguing: collecting sound seems to have few of the intrusive associations of photography. To give voice, to offer space, to record seems to open the world out, to make it larger, not to intrude on it or commodify it. It is perhaps why radio is the metaphor used by Salman Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children*, as the narrator listens to the cross currents of voices which come through the radio receiver of the mind. Rushdie calls his book “a love song to our mongrel selves.” So *Audio Arts* embraces hybridity, discontinuity, and diversity without dissolving into structurelessness and so the book, like all the best books, leaves us wanting more.

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