

ART

Contemporary British **ART**
with a Social or Political Purpose

FOR SOCIETY



**WHITECHAPEL
ART GALLERY**

DIRECTOR'S COPY


10 May — 18 June 1978

**Contemporary British Art
with a Social or Political Purpose**

ART FOR SOCIETY

● *Art for Society* was organised and selected by a committee comprising Richard Cook, John Gorman, Charles Gosford, Ian Jeffrey, David Logan, Toni del Renzio, Margaret Richards, Ken Sprague and Caroline Tisdall, together with Nicholas Serota and Martin Rewcastle of the Whitechapel Art Gallery. The original proposal by Margaret Richards was to present a survey exhibition of art with social or political purpose. An organising committee was formed with the idea of reflecting a wide range of opinions in the final exhibition. They decided not to rely solely on their existing knowledge, by choosing an exhibition through invitation, but to advertise the exhibition and to request

submissions. The final selection was made from the slides, photographs and proposals submitted by more than 300 artists. During the selection process it became evident that there was so much contemporary work deserving of exhibition that there would not be room, in the limited space available at the Whitechapel, to show historical material. Further research is required in an area that has been neglected by exhibition organisers and researchers, but from our enquiries it is clear that there are several exhibitions which urgently need to be made on socially radical art in Britain, from Blake to the present day.



WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY

High Street, London E1

Richard Cork is Editor of *Studio International* and author of *Vorticism*

John Gorman is a silk-screen printer. He is author of *Banner Bright* and organised the exhibition of Trade Union Banners at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1973, and *Remember 1926*, an exhibition on the General Strike in Covent Garden in 1976.

Charles Gosford is a practising artist and studied at the Royal Academy Schools. His jobs have included warehouseman, driver, switch-board operator, and library assistant. He was a member of Artists Now, publishers of *Patronage of the Creative Artist*, 1974, and a member of the visual arts panel of the Greater London Arts Association in 1976. He is currently Chairman of the Artists Union.

Ian Jeffrey is Senior Lecturer in History of Art at Goldsmith's College, and is a critic with an interest in photography. He is the organiser of the Arts Council exhibitions *The Real Thing* (1974) and *Cityspace* (1977).

David Logan works for Youthaid, a charity specialising in promoting the employment, leisure and educational interests of young workers and unemployed. He was formerly an East London teacher, subsequently on the staff of the Trades Union Congress, working on education and arts policy. In particular he was secretary to a Working Party on the Arts, the report of which formed the basis of a revival of TUC interest and activity in the Arts.

Toni del Renzio has been associated with avant-garde art movements since the thirties. He has written and lectured extensively in this country, France, Italy and the US from the point of view of the history, theory and criticism of art. Living in Italy during the sixties and early seventies, he became more and more

involved in Marxist studies of art and ideology as allied to political practice. Since 1975 has been principal lecturer in charge of the Department of History of Art/Design and Complementary Studies at Canterbury College of Art.

Martin Rewcastle is the Education and Community Officer at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Margaret Richards has been an arts reviewer for *Tribune* for 10 years. She has no formal training, but 20 years voluntary involvement in promoting professional and amateur arts activity, particularly at local levels.

Nicholas Serota is Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Ken Sprague is intensely concerned in the business of making things and in the creative potential of every man, woman and child. The BBC film on his work and ideas 'Posterman' brought more letters from interested viewers than any other film in the 'Omnibus' series and led to the making of another film 'Everyone a Special Kind of Artist'. In 1971, after thirty years of work as a graphic artist (much of it for the Trade Union, Labour and humanitarian movements like Christian Action), he bought a farm on Exmoor, where he runs arts and sculpture workshops, which attract people from all over the world. He has exhibited throughout Britain, mainly in public libraries, town halls and trades union clubs and his work is currently on show in the foyer of the TUC at Congress House.

Caroline Tisdall is art critic for *The Guardian* has recently published a study of the Futurist movement. She has organised the film programme of *Art for Society* in collaboration with Hilary Thompson of the BFI and Simon Hartog of the IFA.

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THE PASSEMORE EDWARD LIBRARY

UNDERGROUND

WHITECHAPEL ARCH UPPER GALLERY

THE EASTERN - TRAVEL SERVICES

PT BAR

THE EASTERN

Preface

There is in Britain a view amounting almost to dogma that art does not mix well with politics or commitment to social change. This exhibition challenges that view by presenting a wide range of art which seeks, by its subject and manner, to locate itself directly within the social fabric of our society.

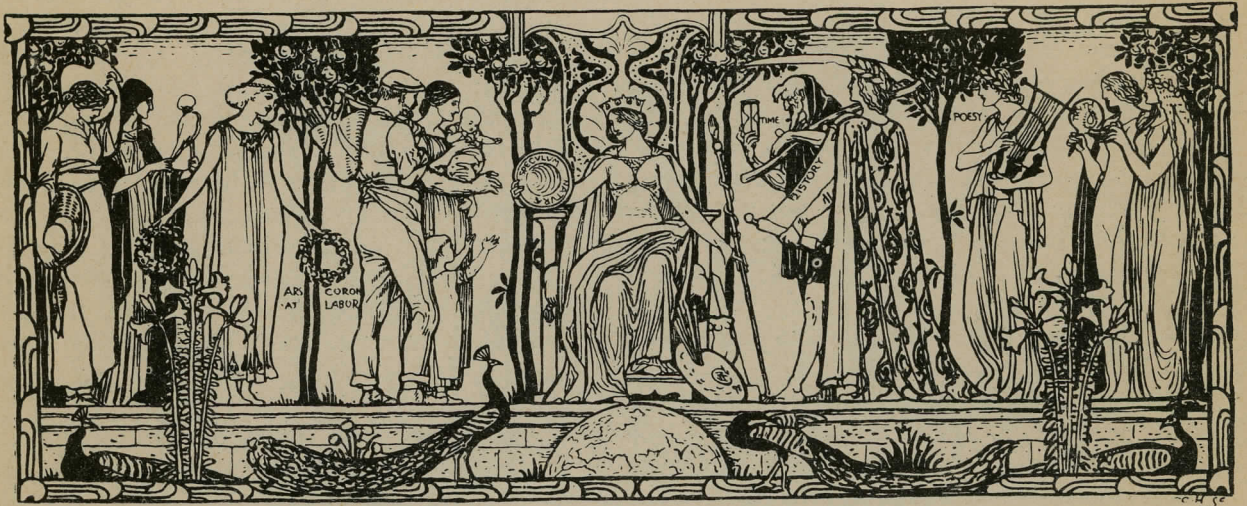
How can the artist engage the interest and attention of a wide cross section of the population? I believe that some answers are suggested by this exhibition. They are found in the images of class and racial conflict; they are found in pictures of people at work and photographs of people facing the problems of contemporary urban life, such as the sense of isolation which often overwhelms the unemployed, the old, the single, the infirm and women with young families.

The work in this exhibition is motivated by a belief in the need to change the social and political framework and, in some cases, the generally accepted role of artists in our society. The means employed by different artists varies from apparently straightforward documentation of a social ill to sardonic comment on the perpetuation of the class structure or forceful political statement in support of a particular group. By 'political' I mean something much wider than 'party' politics for, on most current social issues, such as the place of women,

minority groups, and the nature of work, the sides no longer divide along traditional 'party' lines.

One question constantly asked during the organisation of this exhibition has been: How can such art be 'effective' in political and social terms by being exhibited at the Whitechapel with its limited audience representing only a 'small and untypical proportion' of the population. Of course, the audience for any exhibition is small in comparison with the audience for even the least popular television or radio programme. However, more than fifty per cent of the Whitechapel's visitors live or work in the City or Tower Hamlets. They are certainly not an untypical section of the population. This exhibition will succeed if this part of our audience leaves the gallery with a sense that contemporary art might play a larger role in shaping their daily lives. It will also succeed if it provokes discussion about the role and purpose of art amongst that 'small, untypical proportion' which comprises the community of artists, critics and followers of contemporary art. This exhibition is only the second survey in London since the war of contemporary socially committed art. It is certainly incomplete but it is our hope that it encourage further research, discussion and exhibition of art which is both socially and aesthetically relevant.

Nicholas Serota



Walter Crane:
Design for mosaic for
the facade of the
Whitechapel Art Gallery
1899

ART AND THE SOCIAL PURPOSE OF THE WHITECHAPEL GALLERY

In 1938, the Artists International Association approached the director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery with a request to rent the Gallery for a major exhibition. The director agreed, the rental fee was set at £40 for four weeks, and the exhibition prepared. Its purpose, as described on the invitation card, was to present 'a cross section of every form of contemporary art in Great Britain, exhibited as a demonstration of the Unity of Artists for Peace, Democracy and Cultural Progress.' Two seminars were held: *They know what they like*, an opportunity for the public to criticise the exhibition, chaired by Quentin Bell; and *THE ARTIST — What he does do — what he could do — what he can't do*, chaired by Robert Medley. The exhibition was to be officially opened by a passing 'man in the street'. Later records show that between 30,000 and 40,000 people attended the exhibition, not quite double the attendance for any exhibition put on by the Gallery in 1977, and a high figure for those days.

In July 1939, the painter Julian Trevelyan wrote to the Gallery on behalf of the AIA to propose an exhibition of work 'by working class artists, chiefly pictures from all over the world by unprofessional painters that Mr. Tom Harrison▷ and myself collected together. The aims of the exhibition are roughly: 1) To make contact with other working class painters; 2) To encourage the formation of groups of such painters as at Ashington▷; 3) To influence the public; 4) To influence painters.'

An internal gallery memorandum records one reaction to the proposal: 'So many of these bodies are political, that we really must exercise considerable care in ensuring that we do not allow our Gallery to be used for propaganda by any political or semi political artistic organisation.' The advisory council of the AIA at the time included such figures as Vanessa Bell, Henry Moore, Eric Gill, Paul Nash, Duncan Grant, Augustus John, Muirhead Bone and Lucien Pissarro, difficult enough to see in one group from the contemporary point of view, let alone in a group that could even remotely be described as a 'political or semi political artistic organisation'. The exhibition was rejected.

Undeterred, the AIA wrote back proposing yet another exhibition, of American art done under the Works Project Administra-

▷ Editor of *Picture Post* weekly

▷ A group of miners who formed a painting community

The exhibition will be opened by THE MAN IN THE STREET
A cross-section of every form of contemporary art in Great Britain
exhibited as a demonstration of the Unity of Artists for Peace,
Democracy and Cultural Progress.

1939 EXHIBITION

An exhibition of work by members of the ARTISTS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION. Advisory Council: James Bateman, A.R.A., Vanessa Bell, Misha Black, Sir Muirhead Bone, LL.D., D.Litt., Eric Gill, Duncan Grant, Augustus John, E. McKnight Kauffer, Hon. R.D.I., Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Lucien Pissarro.

February 9th to March 7th

12 noon-9 p.m. Daily 2 p.m.-9 p.m. Sunday Admission Free

WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY, HIGH STREET, E.1.
Adjoins East Underground Station adjacent the Gallery

LOOKING FORWARD

An Exhibition of Realist Pictures
by Contemporary British Artists
at the

WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY
September 23rd - November 2nd, 1952

tion, never before seen in England but already enjoying a high reputation among artists for its social commitment, and because it was the first example of major government funding for artists. Unfortunately, the Second World War intervened; it took another generation to introduce this work piecemeal in Britain.

In 1952, John Berger proposed and organised an exhibition of realist painting for the Whitechapel, called *Looking Forward*. It combined the work of established and younger artists 'because it may hearten those who realise the futility of art being separated from the beliefs and problems of society "looking forward" to the time when artists will again be able to communicate with their unselected neighbours' and not simply among themselves. Again, one finds the emphasis placed squarely upon the necessity for the artist to communicate about life and social conditions with a wide public. The work of the artists in the exhibition 'avoids the sterility of over self-consciousness or over-specialisation because it gains its vitality from the artists' convictions about life rather than art'. It would be difficult to find a more succinct statement about the social purpose of art; and, furthermore, one so set against the orthodox view of art. In 1951 Herbert Read wrote: 'We must guard against interpreting "social conditions" in a sense narrowly economic or political. The artist's awareness of these conditions rarely assumes a politically conscious form, and certainly there is no correlation to be made between such consciousness in the artist and his degree of originality. Courbet, Pissarro, William Morris—these are the politically conscious artists and they have an important place in the history of modern art. But a more important place is taken by artists like Cezanne, Gauguin and Matisse, where awareness of the social context of their work was never expressed in a political formula.'* To Read, and to orthodox art history, social conditions and context are of necessity secondary to originality in art, not equal to it. This was the crux of the battle twenty-six years ago and remains so today.

So, in 1978, forty years after the AIA exhibition and twenty-six after *Looking Forward* the Whitechapel Art Gallery presents a third exhibition. The origins of the exhibition and the methods by which it was put together are described elsewhere in this catalogue, but it is impor-


tant to emphasize that the exhibition — if it is to be successful at all — will be seen for what it is: a survey exhibition with no pretension to show the complete story about art engaged with the society we live in. There are contradictions embodied within it which need more exploration; there may even be whole areas of work which the committee did not know about or did not reach through its advertising.

Indeed, if the exhibition is successful it will cause at least three things to come about: that reaction to the exhibition will be so strong as to cause other exhibitions to focus more precisely on aspects of social practice in the arts; that a much stronger body of contemporary and historical research will become available which will recognise that artists — at least from the time of Blake — have seen their responsibility to society as an integral part of their art, and finally that museums and galleries, arts funding bodies and others not only will recognise the contribution being made by artists in this way, but will support them and their work. This is crucial in a society where the visual arts are viewed with suspicion by so many of the public. Public support will not come overnight. We are still at the stage of 'looking forward', and, until the visual arts engage more strongly the interests of a wider public and society in general, such institutional support will remain necessary.

Part of that structure of support is to be found in galleries like the Whitechapel. How can such galleries help? In the first place by presenting with conviction a range of exhibitions, events and performances, offering diverse experiences. In the past most public galleries have shunned, or been unaware of art with social purpose. This exhibition and the recent *Art for Whom* at the Serpentine Gallery, suggest that attitudes are changing. At the Whitechapel we shall in future present a programme which includes both 'socially relevant' art and art which takes no obvious account of, or contrasts strongly with, social conditions in East London, where the gallery is situated. Our experience, confirmed by attendance figures, is that the people of East London are interested in many forms of art and not only in those which grow directly from their environment. Strong art often challenges conventional assumptions about the nature of art, as well as our way of looking at objects or regarding society itself. In Britain there is a persistent tendency even

among the so-called art community, to regard painting, of a certain type, as a synonym for art, rather than simply as one branch of the practice. By provoking debate about the realm and experience of art the gallery can extend our perception of ourselves, our environment and perhaps suggest ways in which social change is desirable or can be effected.

Public galleries may also help artists find a more secure place in their local community. More than 600 artists live or work within two miles of the gallery. The Whitechapel has presented an open exhibition of work by local artists in most years since 1932. In 1977 this exhibition was extended in scope to include performance, photographs and work outside the Gallery. Slides were made of each of the works in the exhibition and subsequently these have been shown in local schools. Some artists are interested in developing new ways of structuring their activity. The Gallery is about to begin a series of pilot projects with artists working in local schools for varying periods. It is also exploring the possibility of artist involvement in some of the major redevelopments which are taking place in Tower Hamlets, in the area to the north of the Gallery and in the Docklands. Finally, the operation of the Gallery itself will be transformed during the course of the next year by the acquisition of a small Victorian school alongside the present building. This should allow for the development of the social and educational framework which has often been absent from the Gallery's programme in the past.



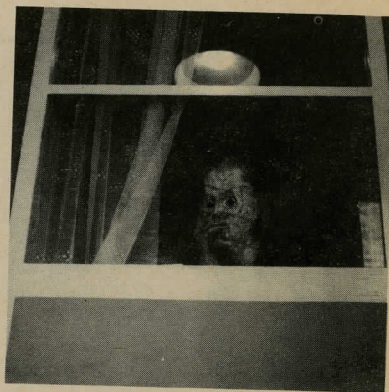
Margaret Richards:
GALLERY-GOER

I go to exhibitions and look at street murals both to enjoy visual stimulation for its own sake and to stretch my awareness of reality. The form the art takes, like its content, is part of that stretching process, and the layers of meaning in good art need not be immediately clear. While I would certainly defend an artist's right to express his personal obsessions in his own way, I find a lot of modern art over-personal and private, remote and difficult to relate to. I'd hate to be deprived of atmospheric landscapes or expressionist abstracts, but I would like to see more art that fuses the personal and public consciousness of physical, economic and psychological problems that confront our society and the world as a whole.

As social beings we need visual as well as verbal references to our own and other people's working life and living conditions, to violence, materialism, human rights, racism, sexism, class, the nuclear threat, as problems that imply a need for change. Artists can't cut themselves off from these problems any more than the rest of us, and since they are by nature more imaginatively inventive, they can project something we can't always fully absorb from reading newspapers or watching television. I'm not expecting them to teach or preach, but to express their own feelings and sense of social purpose, letting us pick up what's there.

Good socio-political art reverses the illustration process, because the imagery hits us first and the verbal interpretations are supportive. As in any art, the work must have enough inner strength to avoid looking boringly obvious, and enough visual impact to set up vibrations of response. There are as many approaches as there are artists: they can range from bitter irony to poetic identification, from horrified recognition to cool observation, from angry symbolism to objective respect. One of the main reasons for looking at socio-political art is to explore, share or reject the artist's vision, and to do that we need clues we can recognise in the work, to ponder over or argue about. The only question we needn't ask is 'Is it a good buy?'. Investment foresight damages perceptive insight, and is totally irrelevant to art as communication.

Modern dramatists, film-makers, novelists and poets express

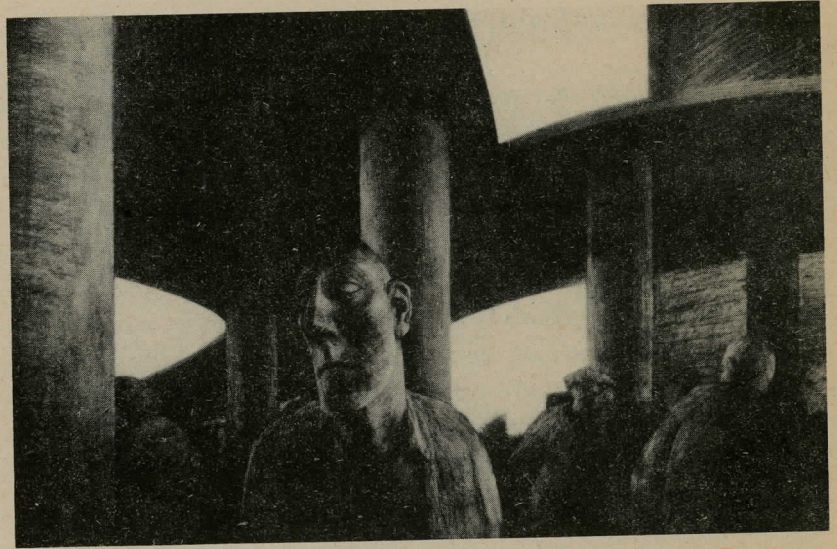


Linda Ayres:
Old Woman at Window
papier mache and
wood construction,
1975

socio-political ideas through their art without debasing it, and some visual artists do too. Quality matters of course, especially since this kind of subject-matter is out of fashion and there is no large body of contemporary socio-political painting and sculpture within which to make judgments. Too often it is ignored solely because of what it's about. Words like 'didactic', 'propagandist', even 'documentary', are used to denigrate, instead of simply to define an approach. Yet a whole range of great artists from the past make nonsense of this unreflective reaction — Goya, Léger, Grosz, Ben Shahn among them.

It is important to accept that no artist has to be committed all the time. Reg Butler's sculptured *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner*, Henry Moore's coal-mining and tube-shelter graphics, are quite untypical of their usual subject-matter, but are recognisably significant works; and everyone will think back to Picasso's *Guernica*.

Paul Butler:
Flyover,
1977

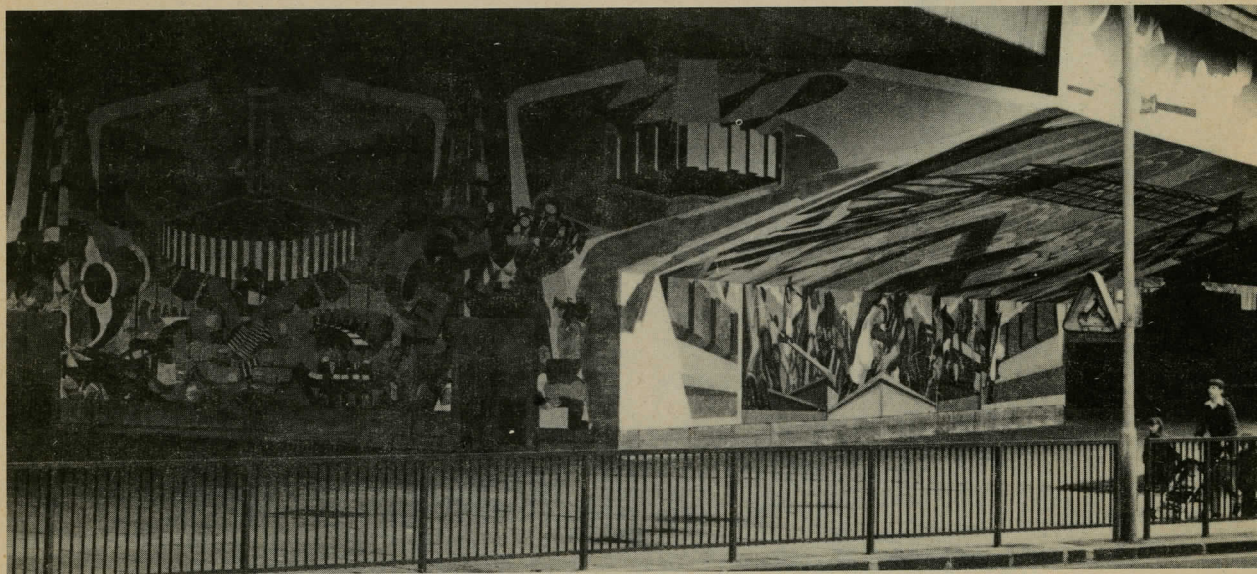


As in all art, insiders express what they know, outsiders what they observe and feel, and the two often overlap. Paul Butler's unsentimental drawings of isolated, ugly old men, Lynda Ayres' papier mache figures of senile old women in a home, expose a state of being with strong social implications. Both artists are young, and their observation reaches me ethically as well as aesthetically, though with no explicit message. Some artists, like Rita Brown, Margaret Harrison, Mary Kelly, on the other hand, are deliberately making forceful statements, in their case about women's experience in a male-dominated world — what it's like to be taken for granted as a cheap source of labour despite

all the legislation, or as a home-bound child-minding ironer of shirts, or alternatively as a sex-object. I find these more shockingly effective than Women's Lib slogans. The black artist-photographer, Colin Jones, transmits both objective observation and sensitive identification in near life-size photographs of 'The Black House', giving visual and emotional substance to statistics and surveys about black people.

A naive or a sophisticated form can both work well so long as sincerity and imagination show. For example, there are some patchwork panels now touring Britain, made of scraps of cloth picked off factory floors by Chilean women, most of whom are relatives of missing persons. Decorative and child-like in style, but self-evidently adult in experience, they convey a vivid sense of what goes on under Pinochet's military dictatorship. At the other stylistic extreme, the experience of living in strife-torn Northern Ireland comes across with equal conviction from Conrad Atkinson's far more demanding and highly professional arrangements of words, photographs and quotations that confirm or contradict what we thought we knew.

David Binnington and
Desmond Rochfort:
Royal Oak mural

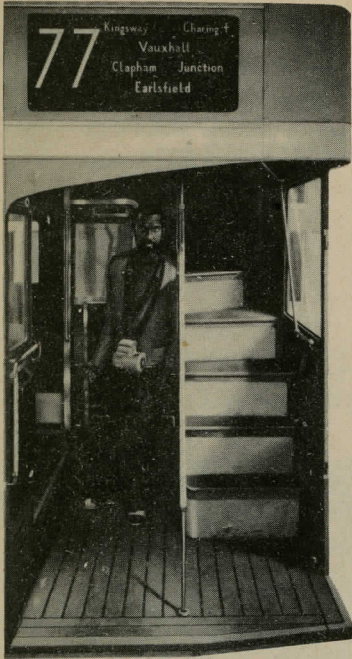


Art with obvious academic roots need not look conventional either. Desmond Rochfort's section of the Royal Oak mural is covered with elongated, heroic-looking building workers on scaffolding, manoeuvring steel girders into place. The left-wing attitude is clear, but it erupts from the strength of the imagery, which is not just illustrating a message: energy and effort are emphasised by the distortions and exag-

gerated perspectives needed to fit the angles and curves of the concrete supporting the motorway overhead. David Redfern's more static, thought-inducing figures are set in stage-like shaped canvases that simulate work situations, such as an assembly line, and their meticulous academic clarity cancels out emotion and generalises each specific working experience into a near-symbolic idea.

In my view, social realism is not always easy to enjoy, even when it is easy to understand. This is sometimes because the message is over-emphatic, and sometimes because the life seen in the art is ugly or painful. But when social realist art is resilient in feeling and naturalistic in imagery, it is a tonic to the spirits. Jack Crabtree's South Wales miners bounce down a ramp from pit-head to baths, dirty and joking; Paul Waplington's blurred and bulky Silver Band blow as they march in a Gala event; Dan Jones's naively painted crowds, carrying banners in a demo or waving scarves at a football match, are full of energy. All three artists communicate a sense of comradeship with no trace of paternalism. Such work brings the vigour of the mainstream of life into the gallery.

How we respond is conditioned partly by our own social and political assumptions, and partly by our view of art. Our sensory and critical evaluation must not be tied to our sympathy for an artist's attitude, or inhibited because we disagree with it. Nor should we, as gallery-goers, seek out only that kind of art that we have been educated to love.



David Redfern:
Dedicated to the 77
painting 1975

John Gorman:

ART AND LABOUR

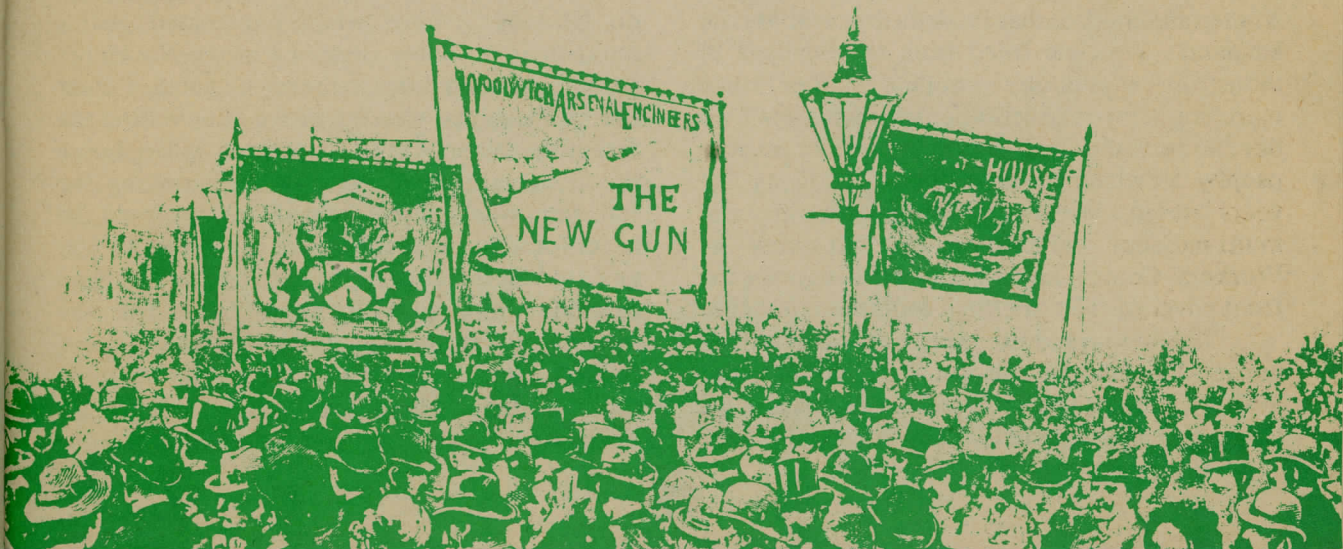
From every corner of the city they came, the Amalgamated Society of Sailmakers from the Port of London, their banner painted on a huge sail, gas stokers whose banner depicted men working in the heat of the retort house, engineers from Woolwich Arsenal on whose banner had been painted a 'new gun' firing an eight hours shot in the direction of Parliament, the Dockers' Union, proudly bearing the original banner of the great 1889 strike, their colour still spattered with the mud of a hundred dock gate meetings, Spitalfields market porters, Umbrella Makers, Stick and Cane Dressers, Navvies, Portmanteau and Trunk Makers, East End Ropemakers, Barge Builders, Skinners, Curriers and Tanners, Coal Porters, Box Makers, Hebrew Cabinet Makers, Bakers and Printers. They and countless other societies and unions marched for the solidarity of labour and the eight hour day and every contingent bore a painted silken banner.

It was May 1890 and the occasion of the first international labour May Day. The dull grey cobbles of the London streets were warmed by the reflected hues of bright shimmering silk and the faces of the men who bore the banners mirrored the pride of the heraldry they displayed. Held aloft by

strong arms the vast sails of popular art swayed in a light May breeze and rippled steadily towards the square. If step and dress were ragged it was no rabble but a confident and proud army of working men that held the streets that day. Their confidence had grown from the victories of the strikes of gas workers, match girls and dockers and the resulting awakening of the so-called unskilled. There was no shame in the images they carried for they proclaimed the truth of man and work.

Up to sixteen feet by twelve feet in size, elaborately woven and painted in oils, the banners made a mobile gallery and presented a public exhibition of tribute to man's labour. Their pictures showed the physical dangers of industrial toil, depicted craft skills and proudly illustrated the tools of the trades, and the artefacts they made. Above all, they vividly painted the future of the co-operative commonwealth and emblazoned labour as 'the hope of the world'.

Some of the older banners of the craft unions were based on the intricate designs of the lithographed emblems of union membership, created by worker artists like William Hughes of the Boilermakers and James Sharples of the Blacksmiths. In parade, the giant emblems became edifices of



labour, likened by Professor Gwyn Williams to mediaeval cathedrals, 'they had the same eye for realistic detail and symbolic meaning as a stained glass window, a sculpted west door or a reredos. What these men were making was a *cathedral*. The banners had come to proclaim *homo faber*, Man the Maker. On these banners were raised cathedrals to labour'.

Indeed, the emerging unions plagiarised the symbolism of religion, of bible and Bunyan as well as Friendly Societies and Freemasonry as they sought to reinforce their presence and add unreal establishment to their recent being. Now, amid sharpening class consciousness and fiercer struggles against a consolidated capitalism came artists to shape the imagery of labour and give visual expression and pictorial vision to the eager hope of 'justice for the toilers'.

Walter Crane, socialist, painter, decorative artist and illustrator commemorated that first historic May Day with a wood engraving entitled *The Triumph of Labour* which was to help mould the imagery of trades unionism and British socialism for decades to come. Dedicated by Crane to 'the wage workers of all countries' it was romantic and rural in style, skilfully combining the socialism of Morris and Marx. With such freedom and strength did Crane capture the essential spirit of the cause that the image became a standard for labour. Crane entwined the political slogans of Kropotkin, Marx and Owen, 'The land for the people', 'Wage workers of all countries unite' and 'Labour is the source of wealth' in a bucolic procession of men, women and children that exuded a dream of 'Merrie England', a people freed from the bondage of industrial capitalism, strolling rather than marching in joyous celebration of the workers' own day. So aptly did Crane interpret the political philosophy to which he subscribed that eighty-five years later in a world of electronic technology and multi-national corporations the Institute of Workers' Control made use of his design for the front cover of their Sheffield conference bulletin.

This was no sudden rediscovery of the hidden merits of a Victorian socialist artist, for the art of Walter Crane has never faded. So graphically did Crane give artistic form to the cry for social change

that his work was to become a ready reference for the iconography of the Labour movement well into the twentieth century. Using his cartoons from *Justice*, *Clarion*, *Commonweal* and *Labour Leader* the trades unions freely adopted their compelling lines and in a torrent of colour *The Triumph of Labour*, *A Garland for May Day*, *Solidarity of labour* and the *Workers Maypole* were elevated from paper page to shining silk to ornament the regimental colours of the working classes. His work was revolutionary in context; his design for the 'Solidarity of labour' exemplified this, depicting workers of all lands, of all colours, linked hand in hand encircling the globe at a time when most of it was stained the blood red of British Empire.

Influenced in his early career by the Chartist engraver, W.J.Linton, Crane had come to socialism after reading William Morris on Art and Socialism, though in his own words he had been an 'unconscious socialist' long before. He completed his conversion by the study of the works of Hyndman on *The Historic Basis of Socialism*, *The Co-operative Commonwealth* by Grunland and Marx's 'Capital'. A ready disciple of Morris, Crane joined him in campaigning in and out of season, lecturing, demonstrating and using his art for socialism, first with the Democratic Federation (later, the Social Democratic Federation) and then with the Socialist League and the Fabians. Crane and Morris were involved artists, their campaigning socialism strengthening their art and their art strengthening the ideas and strategy of socialism. As committed artists, they were in Trafalgar Square on 'Bloody Sunday' when red coated guards men, their bayonets glistening in the November gloom gave silent force to the reading of the riot act before the brutal clearing of the people from the assembly. When Alfred Linnell was killed during the police suppression of another meeting the following week, Crane immediately designed the cover for a Death Chant written by William Morris and sold on the streets during Linnell's East End funeral to raise money for Linnell's orphans. The picture of Liberty and Justice defending poor Linnell from the vicious attack of the mounted police manifested the angry shock felt by Crane for his fellow.

Walter Crane:
below, in 1900;
right, his banner for
the Social Democratic
Federation



the system of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest and sought to rid society of the exploitation of man for profit. Romantic and revolutionists they may have been but practising socialists and practical men they certainly were. They sought not to destroy the machines of industrial capitalism but to divert their use. 'We shall be in possession of the machines once used for the mere profit grinding but now used for saving human labour . . . it is not this or that tangible steel and brass machine we want to get rid of, but the great intangible machine of commercial tyranny which oppresses the lives of us all' (Morris).

The tyranny which Morris condemned is with us still and if for many the physical toil is lighter, the pace is faster. After a century of technological development and ever increasing production the worker still works eight hours a day, selling his labour to another, and for the most part producing articles that are neither necessary nor beautiful.

Of course life has changed; the worst conditions of nineteenth century capitalism have been ameliorated and the worker has a larger share of a larger gross national product. However, the capitalist ethic of production for profit rather than community considered need remains unchanged. Motor vehicle manufacturers are not concerned with the need for a co-ordinated transport policy and office block developers do not trouble themselves with the blight caused to inner city areas. The welfare state which emerged from the second world war may have lessened the social degradation of the dole queues but at this time a million and a half of our fellows are unemployed. The worst excesses of sweated labour may have been eradicated but our present second class citizens, those born black and those born female, provide much of the cheap labour for the tasks of drudgery. Our society remains divided, though the dividing lines are often hidden in the maze of merchandise produced in our consumer orientated society. The baubles of mass production have supplanted religion as the 'opium of the people'.

An old trade union axiom is that 'it is better to fight for a principle than a penny'. In the scramble for the pennies needed to put in the slot machine of consumer capitalism, principles are frequently rele-

gated to second place. People are persuaded that a shorter working day, better conditions at the place of work, one hundred per cent trade unionism, earlier retirement, a share in the industry to which you will give a lifetime of work, are demands which will upset the machinery of mass production and reduce the flow of products on which our society is dependant. Conversely, the panacea to all our problems is increased purchasing power linked to increased production. You must work harder and faster to earn more to buy more. 'Sheer enjoyment' may be purchased for cash and 'happiness' comes in a king size pack. To sell the consumer dream, *capitalism employs more artists than at any time in history*. The message is seduction and the labour movement is beguiled by the seducer.

The result of this corruption is the erosion of the dream of socialism. No wonder there is disillusionment and cynicism when the ideals of cooperative commonwealth are sacrificed for the consolation prizes of capitalism. Such lack of faith is self destructive. The challenge to the socio-political artist is to provide visual inspiration that will be seen as a reaffirmation of faith, to restate the principles and to combat the artful advance of colour supplement consumerism.

How can the committed artist make the best of his talent? Certainly not by working in isolation, for his commitment is to improving the lot of his fellows. To do that, he must be part of the movement pledged to social change. Only the organised working class have the power to challenge the values of capitalism and the artist must be as committed to political action as to his art. The artist as a casual observer of working class life may put his interpretations on society, he will not change it.

What of the problems of the artist who feels moved to dedicate his work to the cause? That he will not be welcomed by the Bond Street galleries is understandable, for multi-national art dealers selling to the rich have a commitment to the capitalist ethic. Walter Crane was cold shouldered by the owner of the Grosvenor Gallery, Sir Coutts Lindsay, after exhibiting his painting of 'Freedom' there in 1885. Crane records 'from giving me prominent places in his gallery, gradually shelved my



BRIANT COLOUR PRINTING
Demand... release of the Pentonville Five
PRINT CHAPELS WORKIN

CLYDE SHIPBUILDERS
SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE
UNION
SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE



ASSOCIATION OF ENGINEERS
PORT OF LONDON
SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE
UNITY
LENGTH

ELECTRICAL TRADES UNION

T&GWU
No 3
INILL
MEAT PORTERS
REGION No 1
1208

T&GWU
REGION No 1
R.T.C.
ROAD TRANSPORT
DIVISION
RESERVE TROOPS

BUILDING WORKERS
CHARTER



T&G.W.U.
FRUIT MARKET
PORTERS

SWLITHO

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY
OF
OPERATIVE PRINTERS
AND ASSISTANTS
WATFORD BRANCH

SOUTHAMPTON
DOCKS
SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE

ROYAL GROUP OF DOCKS
SHOP STEWARDS
COMMITTEE
ARISE YE WORKERS

WANTED
to be
OUT

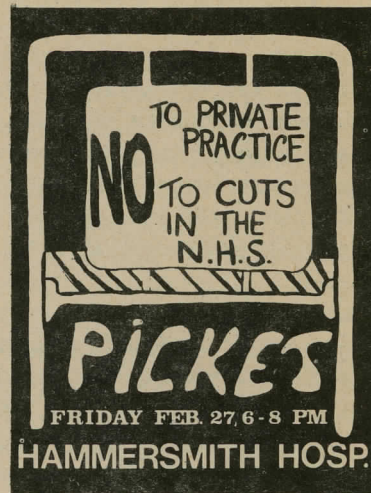
works'. The artist must expect to be black listed as were the union organisers of past years, for he too is challenging the existing system. Such artists are deserving of the sympathy and support of organised labour.

Sadly, trades unions are just as capable of giving the same cold shoulder to artists whom they often regard as eccentric and somewhat embarrassing allies. This attitude extends not only to artists from outside the movement who present themselves with the conviction that their art will revitalise the membership but is encountered by artists who have given years of solid service to the movement. They are only grudgingly accepted in their role as artists and designers and face prejudice and scepticism in their efforts to use their talents for the movement to which they belong. It is true also, that on many occasions when work is commissioned by trades unions, the principle of 'the rate for the job' does not apply and is justified by the inner belief that art is not proper work. Officials who would not dream of employing carpenters or painters at a cheap rate to decorate head office can be incredibly parsimonious when paying sculptors or painters, who are also exploited workers.

The failure to make better use of the enormous artistic talent that resides within the labour movement is a tragedy comparable to throwing away weapons in the face of the enemy. It is to be hoped that the exhibition of socio-political art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery will make a substantial contribution to the awareness of the extent of the loss and persuade some of the need for a new attitude to art and labour.

The era of the rich pageantry of labour may belong to the past but the Whitechapel exhibition shows clearly the need of the movement today for artists. The paintings of Dan Jones commemorating the great demonstration in support of the five dockers imprisoned in Pentonville under the Tory Industrial Relations Act and the historic picketing of the Grunwick factory will surely find a permanent place in the soul and heart of the unions. Ken Sprague's images demonstrating the exploitation of working people, black and white and their power to overcome reflect his lifetime of commitment as an artist dedicated to humanity and socialism.

The use of silk screen printing as a twentieth century medium of propaganda by groups like Paddington Print Shop are in the finest tradition of radical printing. Can anyone who has seen the posters and images of the Atelier Populaire produced in the Paris student battles of 1968 doubt the importance and power of this form of popular visual propaganda.



Paddington
Print
Shop:
poster

It is wrong to single out names of artists in the exhibition. When viewed collectively the power of protest against the wickedness of the age affords so much hope of the future of man the artist, man the worker, and man the craftsman. When a shipyard worker can come home after work, wearied by infernal din and arduous toil, and then sit and carve his tribute to work, there is hope yet for the cause of labour.

The hope was never better expressed than in the words of William Morris — 'If these hours be dark, as, indeed in many ways they are, at least do not let us sit deedless, like fools and fine gentlemen, thinking the common toil not good enough for us, and beaten by the muddle; but rather let us work like good fellows trying by some dim candle-light to set our workshop ready against tomorrow's day-light, that tomorrow, when the civilised world, no longer greedy, strifeful and destructive, shall have a new art, made by the people and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user'.

Toni del Renzio:

ART IS MODERN, BOURGEOIS, CONCEPTUAL, AND MARGINAL

It is too often ignored, if indeed it were ever recognised, that the concept of art which dominates the structures of the arts system is modern. It reached a definite formulation in the latter half of the nineteenth century, though the main elements had become current during the eighteenth, while scarcely into the early years of this century Duchamp revealed its conceptual nature with the first ready-made.

Aesthetics, the philosophy of art, Art with a capital 'A', the dominance and the definition of the concepts of taste, sentiment, genius, originality and creative imagination, the grouping together of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry, all that is today taken for granted, in fact dates from the Enlightenment and was further refined during the nineteenth century. From Kant onwards, it has been assumed and, in the historic sense, never questioned that this area of human consciousness and activity is somehow to be distinguished from the crafts, the sciences, the liberal arts, from all other human experience. More importantly still, these assumptions are accepted as eternal and unchanging. Projected back into the past where they have scarce relevance, they cloud the issues, and applied to other cultures and civilisations their particular Eurocentric conceptualisation distorts the significance of those products and activities. One thinks of the ICA's founding exhibition, *40,000 Years of Modern Art*, or, let us say, *500,000 Years of Abstract Art* at some trendy American museum, or *One Million Years of Art* in *The Sunday Times Magazine* (Ten tear-out parts and a thousand memorable images!), or the self-deceit and mystification consequent upon the proposal for *A Million Years of Art & Language*.

It is the history of art that determines its nature and not its nature that determines its history;

but the determination is not unique, since, in the final analysis, both the history and the nature are in turn determined by the productive forces in and under the established relations within the process of production. This gives art a location in the social context from which it derives its meaning and in which it can have meaning as a form of production. Meaning in this instance is not simple. To pursue it requires an historical perspective, that is a complex inter-connecting history not merely of the objects and activities and values gathered into the category of art now, but also of the word and the concept of 'Art', along with some examination of all the other objects and activities formerly brought within the references of the term. It is a history of aesthetic permission which is a social function, and in this sense art is more the product of its audience than of its producer, more the product of the social formation in which it survives than in which it originated. There are, then, two aspects to a work's relations to the process of production, the one which explains its structure and the other which explains its acceptance into the category of art. It is this latter which determines its function as art in society.

At a precise moment in history, when society had no more demands to make upon the artist, the latter, as self-appointed 'genius', invented his own myth, the myth of 'Art' with a capital 'A'. This myth, however, is based upon developments far less the concern of the practitioner, who has often failed to comprehend what the discussion was about, then of the 'amateur', in the eighteenth century sense of art-fancier, with his need of history, criticism and connoisseurship. Central to the developments were the concept of the affinity of the arts and the definition of the fine arts, *beaux arts*, primarily based upon the enjoyment and appreciation of them, and much less apparent, there-

fore, from the point of interest of the producer. In this conflict lies much of the unease and the hostility felt by practitioners towards the critics and the historians. This has been exacerbated by the fact that to be art, an object or an activity still depends far less upon the intentions of the author and much more upon the judgment of the audience — more specifically the critics, historians, members of the appropriate cultural apparatuses, universities, academies, art schools, museums and galleries, foundations and national and regional bodies who claim to speak for society on these matters.

The various arts have histories of various lengths, and futures, too, of lesser or greater problematicity. Some are as old as civilisation and some as old as yesterday. Some are already moribund and some show signs of incredible renewal. Their status varies and they change not only as to their style and significance but as to their relations to each other and to culture generally. Other times and other places associate and divide them differently, assign them different importance and different roles. There have been periods and locations where the novel, instrumental music, easel painting, sculpture in the round, did not exist, while the sonnet, epic poetry, stained glass, mosaic, fresco, manuscript illumination, vase painting, tapestry, bas relief, pottery, gardening and cooking have all been major arts in a way they no longer are in the modern Eurocentric cultural hegemony. At the same time we have seen the rise of new technical means and their appropriate modes of expression which question the aesthetic categories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Open any glossy magazine and you will see merchandise as a fetish. The product of the machine has become the cult image of our society. Where, then, should we expect to find the artist in our society? Where he was before, where the myths are made, and there he is, in the advertising agencies, in the dream factories of the consumer society.

The artist has in a sense retained his old function in industrial society, but we have continued to call some quite other person artist who no longer fulfills the traditional role. The modern self-

conscious and self-styled artist does not accept this analysis and has plunged himself into a quite different set of relations with society. The modern artist lives in accordance with the myths he has created, the myth of the autonomy of art. The myth of the work of art as unique and as the wholly personal creation of a unique individual; the myth that this has always been so. Ever since the nineteenth century the artist has occupied a self-conscious position outside the framework of organised society, a position socially imposed but consciously and proudly accepted. The doctrine of art for art's sake which has experienced a recent reformulation in the criticism of Clement Greenberg and his more and less talented epigones, reflects the two aspects of the artist's position: the ghetto mentality which makes a virtue of necessity and heroism of impotence; and the modern myth of the freedom and the uniqueness of the individual, of the right of the individual to do in freedom what he pleases. Despising those who sell their gifts and their personality to the demands of commercialism, even sometimes those who show in the galleries of the merchants, the 'independent' artist fools himself about his own part in the game. He, too, is only a tool in that greater social machinery that owns and controls him.

As an exclusive value, Art was the invention of the aristocracy at the time of attack by the revolutionary bourgeoisie, and it was a distinguishing mark of the superiority of the aristocratic form of life. The bourgeoisie appropriated the concept as part of its aspiration to be the ruling class and, when victorious used it to identify itself as the ruling class and in turn, oblivious to the contradiction, to establish its superiority in the class conflict it had then generated. One need not dwell upon the further contradictions that arise from the *uncritical* claim of art as a weapon in the class struggle of the proletariat.

Two developments, not unrelated, are the establishment of science as the category of specific disciplines for the pursuit of knowledge, and the rise of the capitalist mode of production, which released art from the necessity to be a form of knowledge or even a direct means of obtaining



If cream sherry drinkers are happy, it's because they've found Harveys Bristol Cream.

knowledge, thus identifying it with a particular relation of theory and practice which was not to be tested other than experientially. Art was charged with the contradictory demands of irreconcilable needs: that it be a craft product to be bought and sold on the open market, and that it be removed from market values and be the repository of the values of ownership.

In the attempt to strip art of its commodity character, the bourgeoisie has been unable to give it a use-value, only a fancier's value. From the middle of the last century, art has been art because it is collected in public and private galleries and museums; and art history has ratified its authenticity. The artist as craftsman persisted within the capitalist social formation, where it has become an out-moded means of production. The fundamental changes consequent upon capitalism and upon industrialisation meant commodities were made and offered for sale but the old relations of customer to craftsman have been replaced by a new social function, the shopkeeper. Taste has come to be dominant in the selection of goods. This applies to the artist's products no less. Along with this, the artist was *déclassé*, living in the ghettos of

Bohemia. In this situation, art for art's sake, *l'art pour l'art*, was invented, reflecting the bourgeois dilemma and the failure to give art a use-value. Consequently it turned in upon itself and characteristic of the ghetto mentality made necessity a virtue. This was the key to what we call modernism, and it is clearly over-determined.

Photography hastened the process and took away from art many of its subsidiary functions. Art tended to move into fields where it thought not be followed by photography. At first it sought the exploitation of colour in ways photography could not imitate and then it looked for formal invention. The process has continued until we have arrived at the *reductio ad absurdum*, conceptual art. We must not, however, dismiss this development since, in the present social formation, it is recognised, by some of the specialists exercising the cultural proxies of the dominant class as a part of art. Though it may express the contradiction of bourgeois conceptualisation, it leaves it unscathed, and often professes the basic individualism of bourgeois ideology: as summed up in the statement that 'This is art because I say so and I am an artist'. The reality is almost the reverse of this: art is what is exhibited

by recognised galleries.

There is a risk in all these ambiguities, a risk that is akin to that of the more unusual satisfactions of the sexual impulse, fetishism or exhibitionism; where the ambiguity of stimulus and response are linked by an ever more tenuous affinity that threatens final rupture. Abstract art, for instance, may be seen in just such a light—a structure, lyrical and painterly, or hard-edge, or systemic, or optical, that we appreciate as akin to the deep unconscious structure of our relations, both real and imagined, with reality. There may be many reasons why bourgeois society has required such an art, and one of them might well be dissatisfaction with social reality and the need to evade it.

Art in capitalist society has evolved as a component of the ideological apparatuses of the state, in particular of what we might term the cultural-industrial conglomerate within which artists, writers and intellectuals are *de facto* operatives, even if this be disguised by the way they receive patronage and by the archaic mode of their production. The cultural industries represent one of the forms within which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be realised since it is there that the practice of ideology is most acutely pursued. Consequently, it is there that the dominant ideology must necessarily be confronted. The apparently liberal nature of the cultural apparatus must not be allowed to obscure its more repressive aspects. Nevertheless, the freedom to be won in it is real if limited. This is one of the reasons we have to take part in defending it from attack and attempts at censorship.

The relations between art and ideology are not simple but complex and uneven in the distribution of their interactions; and the rather primitive conceptualisation of base and superstructure makes it difficult to analyse them and their further relations with reality that determine them in the last instance. Art does not give us *knowledge* of the world, of reality, but something which possesses a specific relationship with reality and therefore with knowledge. These relationships are mediated by something we are made to see or to feel through art: ideology, but not ideology in general which is abstract, on the contrary the particular ideology

whence a work springs and detaches itself, and to which, in its turn, the work alludes. Art is, then, an allusion to an allusion, a reflection of a reflection. It is a reflection of ideology which is a reflection of reality. Art deals with the lived experience of ideology in its relationship to reality, so that it would be improper to propose for art a reality which belongs to it alone. A separate domain in contradistinction to the domain of science. The distinction between art and science rests in the distinction of relations with reality and with ideology in its specific forms. Art and Science may give us the same object, the difference between them is seeing and feeling, on the one hand, and knowing, on the other. Art may *show* us the practice of ideology as a lived human experience, and so offer us a basis of understanding. It cannot give us the understanding. This knowledge may yield us with its theoretical models, with its penetration of the mechanisms, social or otherwise, of its object.

I am introducing here the notion that knowledge is theoretical, and that enquiry passes from one problematic to another, in which it is superseded, passing from the descriptive to the theoretical phase and becoming the production of a systematic conceptualisation defining the object of investigation. It is the practice of theory. In relation to this notion, I am offering a critique of the history and the criticism of art as it has been practised hitherto, lacking as it does, specific knowledge and remaining within a terminology, at best descriptive and at worst mystificatory. This terminology is not the better for being recommended by the adherence to it of all the artists, collectors, curators and art-lovers, for appearing to be natural and spontaneous. It revolves around the idea of creation which, in this context, is opposed to production and to human labour. There is little need to cite all the curious ideas of value which flow from this.

Spontaneous language of this kind is ideological. It is the vehicle of a particular ideology which in this instance, is a particular ideology of art and of the activities which produce aesthetic effects. Knowledge demands a preliminary rupture with the language of ideological spontaneity, and the constitution of a corpus of concepts in the strictly scientific sense. The knowledge of art, then, must

demand the rupture with the language of creation which is nothing other than the prolongation into the practice of criticism, theory and history of art, of the ideology of art as dominated by the ideology of the bourgeoisie. The language of creation always calls up the sanctity of the individual, stresses his sole responsibility for what he does and posits his intention as supreme. Yet the *practice* of the bourgeoisie in its class interests always proposes limits upon the individual and his acts, censorship and other repressive laws.

A knowledge of art calls for an investigation into the specificity and historicity of art, and into the mechanisms, social, technical, cultural, psycho-biological or whatever, that produce aesthetic effects. We need to discover how the activities that produce aesthetic effects stand in the relations of production and to the productive forces, and how the various ideologies contribute to the determining of that instance. Art is susceptible to neither easy definition, ready description nor sure prescription. As a form of production it is surely more than the production of commodities for the market, though the attempts of the bourgeoisie's ideologues to assert this are raddled with blatant contradiction. Unable to give art a use-value, the bourgeoisie finally confers upon art a 'collector's value' which is simply a mystifying and distorting application of exchange-value.

As a means of transmitting the practice of ideology art is a tool of that ideology, be it current production or be it the surviving production of the past. But art, particularly, is a site of ideological conflict. The bourgeois ideology of art in particular, and bourgeois ideologies in general as a result of the interdetermination of the different ideologies, are under constant stress in the practices of art, even in the technical innovations of that art apparently

conforming to the prescriptions, and subscribing to the illusions and mystifications of bourgeois ideology.

However, as Marcuse at his best and Walter Benjamin have each, in their different ways, pointed out, the bourgeois ideological and productive apparatuses can absorb any number of 'revolutionary' themes and motifs and even assist their propagation without ever putting at risk their own existence and the interests of the class that possesses them. To move from the spontaneous vocabulary of creation, requires more than revolutionary themes and motifs. The use of these is nothing but their exploitation to amuse the public and to recover the art where they appear for the dominant ideology. What is wanted is the prolonged and deliberate attempt to alienate the apparatuses from the ruling class and its agents, and this can only be achieved by the technical transformation of those apparatuses. You cannot sell socialism like soap with posters of Che Guevara. To change an apparatus of production means breaking down the barriers and surmounting the contradictions that confine intellectual production within the constraints prescribed by the bourgeoisie. There is a further point to make: the artist's experience of solidarity with the working class is the true key to his revolutionary position. No matter how revolutionary a work may appear, either politically or technically, or both, it actually operates in a way that might be even counter-revolutionary, if the artist does not identify more than by sentiment or intellectual conviction with the proletarian struggle. That is, he must thoroughly understand his own struggle within the ideological and productive apparatuses, as an operative, as a producer, and then to identify with the proletariat in the struggle which will have become the same for both.

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In addition to these texts to which the above essay is specifically indebted, I have also drawn freely upon the ideas and arguments of Roland Barthes, Pierre Macherey, Herbert Marcuse, Galvano Della Volpe and Raymond Williams as well as much current debate in France and Italy on Marx and Gramsci. ○ T del R

Ken Sprague:

SAID AND DONE

Art and ideas are inseparable.

I believe that art is an expression of human experience.

For me, it all began with the Spanish Civil War. I was eleven when I witnessed the effects of it on my family. There was outrage and sorrow at the mortal attack on working people. The dread of such an attack had been brewing for years but the devastation of Guernica brought it into focus and made it real.

It was the first time that a civilian population had been subjected to an attack from the air on that scale. It frightened us because we knew that bombs on Guernica could lead to bombs on London.

Whereas my parents were able to collect milk for babies and organise support in my father's trade union, what could I do to express what I felt? The only thing that was possible and familiar to me was to make a lino cut and print it on my Mum's mangle. I needed to say what I felt about what was happening and to put it down on paper. This drawing or printing on paper had a continuity to it, that is, I could look at it again and again. I could communicate my ideas to other people by showing it to them, and they in turn could respond to me by commenting on what was or was not down on that piece of paper. I liked that.

As my experience broadened, I continued to make visual statements about what I saw. What I saw was often different from what I heard or read. For example, I heard the phrase 'It's a free country'; what I actually saw were hundreds of my friends tied for life to a factory bench or an office block. I saw that they would measure their own place on the social ladder by such mundane objects as a time clock. People living in the same street were divided amongst themselves as to whether they entered work at 7.30 by the works gate or at 8.30 through the staff entrance.

On a visit to London, I passed a building that looked like an ancient temple. Above the door I read the inscription: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.' The building, in fact, had been the stock exchange where gentlemen manipulated that fullness. Crops were being bought, sold and dumped, prices fixed,

farmers ruined, all in the pursuit of profit.

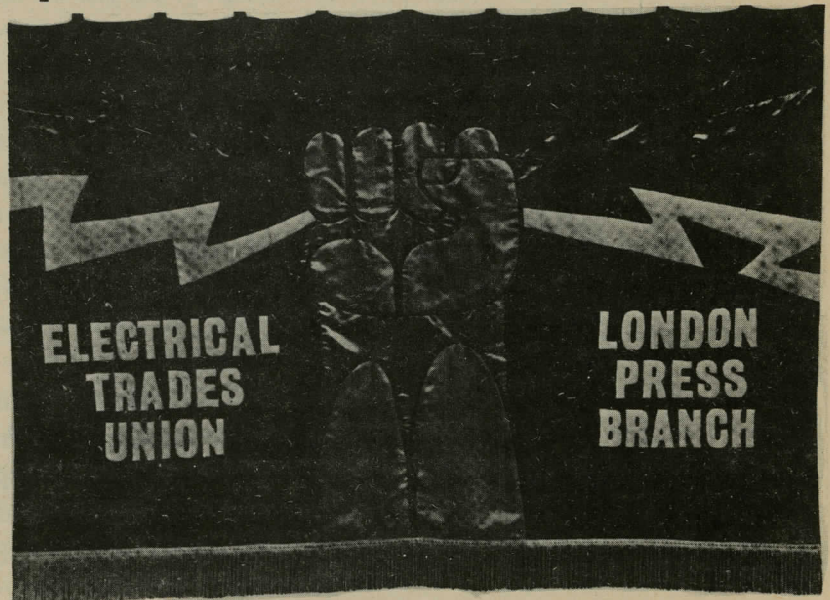
We have since learned that some of the effects of their avarice — land erosion and industrial pollution, now endangers the earth's very existence.

Very early in my life therefore, I was attracted to the kind of art that attempted to reveal the underlying truth of what was happening. I didn't want to make pretty pictures to put on a wall but I did want to reflect the opinions of a mass audience who felt like me but lacked a voice or a vehicle for expressing themselves.

This led me to newspaper cartooning, poster design and finally to the idea of creating a universal visual language for universal feelings. Some of my posters, for example, have been understood by people whose national language I am unable to speak but who understand visual symbols making a bridge between them and me. It begins a dialogue about humanity — our words and ideas may be different but our needs are very similar.

Through the years my clients included trade union organisers or labour leaders who were working to effect social change. Often I agreed with them and began to take on political work myself. Here was an immense amount of everyday material to be translated into direct visual statement. The two became one; everyday experience became my art and my art became everyday experience.

Ken Sprague:
Banner for ETU



Through this, I understand the need for art in daily life. Without it, life can be endless drudgery and meaningless routine. Struggles for better conditions or wages can become ends in themselves. One begins to believe that happiness is just one more material acquisition, one more 'goodie'. It isn't.

Art, which often reveals profound truths, reminds us that human creativity and love are essential for that happiness. They are essential if our visions of a grand society are ever to become reality.

As a kid working in a bakery and later in the printing trade I absorbed a respect for workmanlike attitudes and for craftsmanship. By workmanlike attitudes I mean the commonsense orderliness with which working men and women arrange their tools and their time, or at least did in my youth.

Craftsmanship is something different. It involves the marriage of learned skills and personal intuition so that the maker receives a deep satisfaction from the actual making. The thing made becomes good in itself because it is made with love.

Certainly, an artist who seeks to effect social change must reflect his or her own caring about what they are making and about their own environment, its weaknesses and its strengths. They must be able to feel the pulse of their own time and have a vision of what they would like the future to be.

To actually effect some change is an exciting challenge for an artist but a hard one to measure. Change is ongoing and all around us. Perhaps most dramatic of all is the incredible speed of change; at times the change is way ahead of our understanding, leaving us feeling cynical and even impotent. It is at this point that people can be prey to anti-human ideas and organisations.

In the 1930s groups of people with inhuman views managed to convince large numbers that the Jews were to blame for social evils and the Jew then became the scapegoat of that period.

Today a new generation of mischief-makers are seeking publicity and political power by creating a new scapegoat — the black immigrant.

Their story is that you are inferior if born black but superior if you are that amalgam of grey and pink that people call white. A little girl of West Indian descent, living near us, looked in a mirror and asked her mother, 'Are my bones white?'. Sad

comment that a child should feel pressure to be white in this country, home to a mosaic of different nationalities that have mixed and merged for generations. May it continue to do so.

The crudities of race hatred are being exposed every day. But currently, more respectable voices are suggesting that those with dark skins within our community pose a threat to our culture. Where is the threat? I believe it exists only in the minds of those who gain from division among people. Many of our political leaders fall into that category.

Art and culture do not belong to one group or one nation even if they are the product of that group or nation.

The very essence of art is the continual rediscovery of ageless forms, ideas and truths. The cultural ways of one nation often directly enhance the culture of another. I am not threatened by a Jamaican steel band, for example. On the contrary, I am happier and more fit for my work having heard them.

In Birmingham, recently, I heard a remark hurled at a young black that, 'You are just out of the jungle.' Looking around at the mess of motorways, hard and soft sell advertisements, scurrying people and racist slogans scrawled on grey concrete, it appeared to me that the young man in question, far from having just left the jungle may well have just entered it.

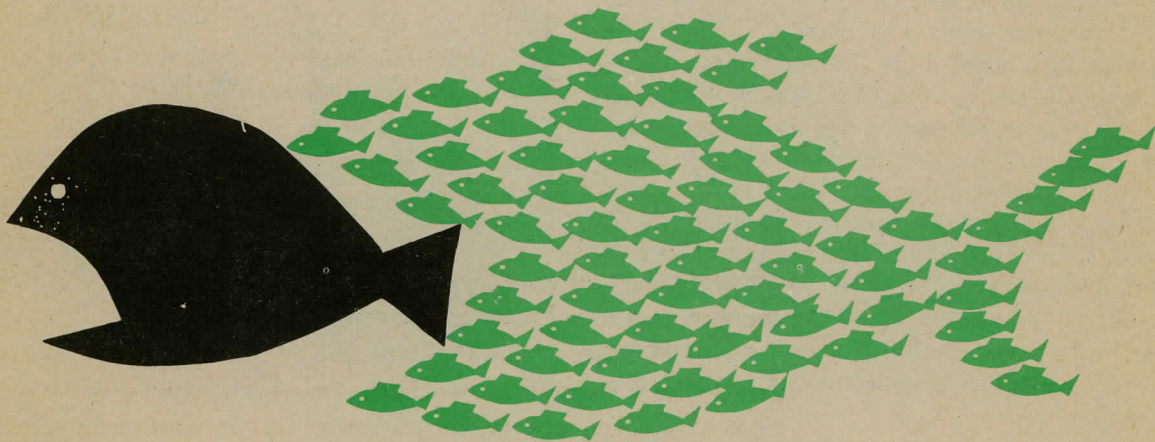
The increasingly robotic behaviour patterns that led to the My Lai massacre and the way we have become accustomed to atomic, hydrogen, plutonium and other bomb madness does not help men and women to shape their destiny. It puts it out of their control.

Here is an underlying truth about our society that art could help to make clear. This is a good reason for making art that aims to change attitudes and structures of society. Few of us see what we are doing in life, as we are doing it, and it is up to the artist, the creator, to reflect man to himself.

This then is the moment, when those who are already privileged to be creative workers can help to dispel the feeling of powerlessness. Artists, by their own example, can encourage everyone to use their own special creativity.

What project could be more exciting than to help write large the message that **'It is not a question of every artist being a special kind of man but of every man, woman and child being a special kind of artist.'**

Ken Sprague:
Fish
Silkscreen print
1967



David Logan:

ART, POLITICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Contemporary Art with a political purpose or a strong social comment will always be viewed with unease and suspicion. This is in part understandable because such works necessarily invite the public to consider, in addition to artistic quality, matters of a wider and a greater significance. The controversial issues of the day are invariably prominent in such work and they are matters on which most people have strong views. So a committed statement of view in a piece of art work is an uninvited challenge to our wider beliefs and convictions which we instinctively reject. This is most easily done by claiming that what is seen is not art but propaganda; which is generally understood to be nasty, pretty low grade stuff, and much of it is, but not all of it. Indeed some artistic activity and some propaganda have in common the aim of exposing us to ideas which might radically change the way we think and live. Any music, drama, literature and painting that achieves such an effect is paradoxically often designated as great Art precisely because it has such power, and changing individuals is an integral part of changing society. The works exhibited at the Whitechapel in the current exhibition are honest attempts to influence our social and political understanding by visual means. This practice has long been accepted in drama and literature but it is less well established in the visual arts. We often forget that much of what is now hanging in our national galleries was in its day vilified and even suppressed as unacceptable and 'propagandist'.

In our response to art which has political and social purposes it is important to distinguish between the aesthetic, and social or political judgments; both judgments stretch the imagination, both need to be made, but they are different in character. We license artists to extend our imagination generally and it would be thoroughly

irrational not to allow them to attempt to extend our political and social imaginations, particularly since most people are aware of the need to take a more imaginative approach to our social and political problems. Politics, simply defined, is the process whereby societies solve their many and various social, economic and moral problems. If that process is to thrive and be creative, then it needs as wide an input of ideas as possible, and artists not



only have a right to make a contribution to society's political life; they have a responsibility to do so. When viewing socio-political art one may not agree with what is said but we must all welcome the fact that some artists at least have taken our social and political life seriously enough to make a contribution in their own distinctive and important way.

In addition to dismissing socio-political art as propaganda, there is also a tendency to think of it as being of marginal importance in the political process. This is a serious mistake; for if 'committed' art work is of no consequence in promoting social change, why is it that in authoritarian societies the art which challenges the social or political status

quo is forcibly suppressed? The answer is simple; one powerful visual image can communicate the case for change to ordinary people far more effectively than a hundred turgid polemics. For this reason artists with an active social conscience find themselves inevitably drawn into the vanguard of struggles for social progress. This process is recognised and understood when we see it happening in Chile, Eastern Europe and South Africa, but it is carefully ignored when it happens at home. Artists, writers and musicians who have been persecuted in other countries for campaigning by their work for political and social reform are welcome here; but the land of Hogarth and Doré neglects its own socio-

Andrew Turner:
Black Friday
mural painting
1975



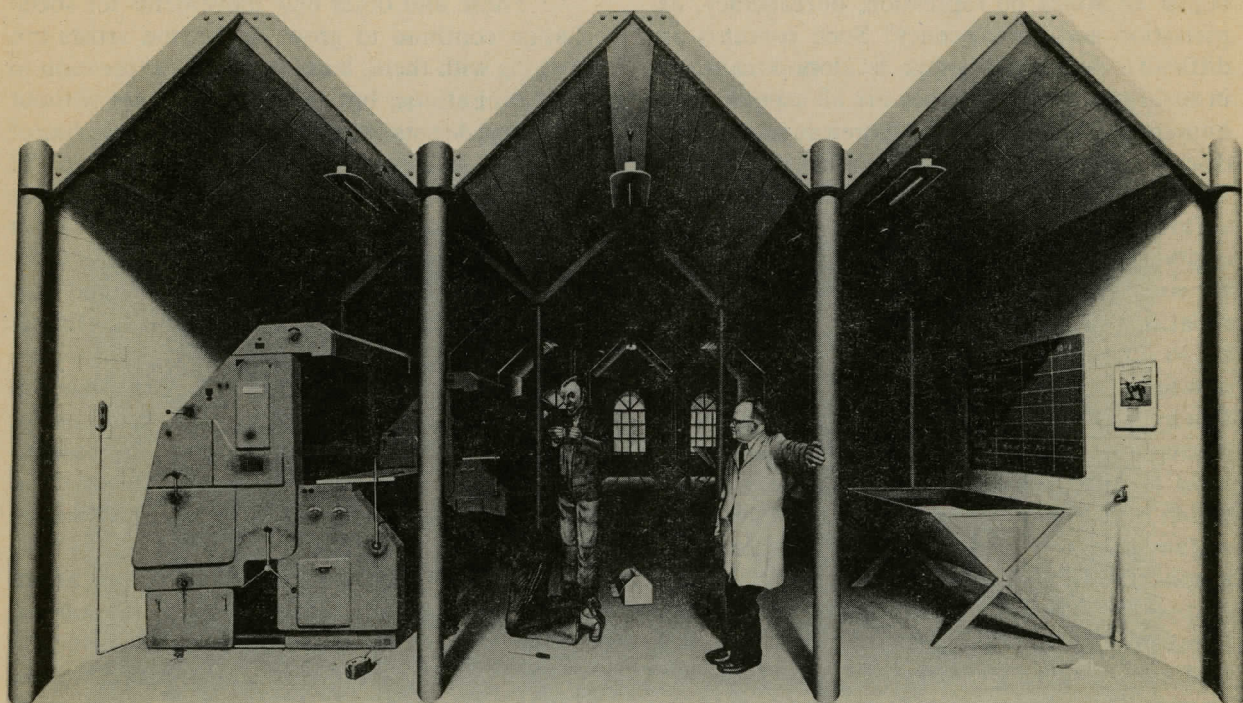
political artists. The answer to that apparent paradox lies in understanding the limited social experience of the British.

The experience of years of political stability, success in war and slow but sustained industrial and economic growth have, particularly since 1945, with the introduction of Keynesian economics and the welfare state, has led the British to a sublime and unchallengeable belief in their ability to govern their affairs fairly and successfully. Consequently politicians, civil servants, business and trade union leaders, the media and the professions help propagate the easy belief that politics is best left to those who know about it, and the serious questioning of social beliefs, and of political and economic policies has no place in the normal run of business life, science, education, religion and art. While it cannot be completely excluded from working, school and community life, no one in our social hierarchy who values his promotion prospects will seek to encourage it. The national elite has got far too much to lose, because a wide-ranging and critical appraisal of the policies which they have pursued in so many spheres of national life since the war would raise serious doubts on the abilities and good faith of those in power who conceived and implemented them. Moreover they have almost nothing to offer in the form of a vision for the future; the reality of economic life in Britain is one of sharp decline in the face of expanding competitors. The United Kingdom is breaking up and the British identity is disappearing, while racial conflict and rising unemployment are creating serious tensions in cities blighted by age and planners, where an ever-increasing horde of frustrated professionals try to minister to the educational, cultural and social needs of a working population under increasing economic stress. The post war years of complacent consumerism are coming to an end. History is catching up on the British and all their skill, patience and powers of imagination will be needed to meet its challenge. Artists have their part to play in shaping the social and political ideas and vision that are a vital part of the continuous debate about how we shall live.

The artists chosen for exhibition at the Whitechapel have various motivations and political

views. They identify a wide range of social issues in their work, but they all have a commitment at some point in their careers to making a statement through their art work about our social and political life. Many of the artists in the exhibition are not exclusively concerned with social and political issues. They often produce art work for its own sake, something to be bought and sold in the art market. After all, not many of the art-buying public will spend money on radical, committed art; and artists need to make a living. At the same time it is worth noting the many examples of artists of established reputation who have from time to time been drawn to making social and political statements in their art, usually because a particular set of political or social conditions led them to feel it was important to do so. Picasso and Henry Moore are well-known examples. However, there are other artists whose whole creative effort consistently expresses their need to record, praise or promote social change through their work. These artists often have an acute dilemma about how to spend their time; how much shall go to practising their art and how much on directly participating in community, social or political action. Moreover, since there is a restricted market for their work and — more to the point — many would want their work to go to community groups or trades unions who usually don't have the money to buy it, even at cost price, socio-political artists very often do an ordinary job to earn a living. In some cases this is a source of inspiration for their work. Furthermore, many community artists have stepped right out of the art world in order to share their skills, developed at society's expense through higher education, with some of the most deprived communities. They are seeking to develop a new relationship between the artist and society where the artist links his practice to the development of other people's creative and artistic capacities. Such an approach immediately involves the artist in community politics and lets art directly serve the people individually and collectively in a very wide range of social and political activities.

The alternative path for artists, which the overwhelming majority takes, is to use their talents to illuminate and extol the virtues of the social and economic status quo. Where would our society be



without those creative photographers, graphic designers and creative artists who package and project the products of consumer capitalism? They fill our lives daily with powerful and seductive images of how life ought to be and suggest to us most persuasively that it would be unbearable without even more conspicuous consumption. But why should consumer capitalism have all the good visual images?

The artists in the Whitechapel Gallery are fighting back vigorously and creating counter images which are capable of making people stop and think critically, creating the uncertainty necessary for a healthy public life. Photographers and cartoonists do this on a day-to-day basis and some of

their best work can embody the spirit of a whole movement or age. They, like the artists in advertising, strive to communicate directly with the broad mass of people and can successfully bring to the whole population another view of the world which causes them as workers, voters and consumers to seek change in political, economic and social policies. While the artists in the Whitechapel Exhibition are seeking to do this, they do not have resources to compare with those of the commercial world and only have a tiny share, if any, of public funds for the arts. Moreover, because the mass of people, following a pattern set for them early in life, are often very conservative about 'art', they need not only to consider self-expression but the form,

content and style of their work as a means of mass communication. The avant-garde and abstract artists have difficulties in communication with intellectuals — never mind the mass of the people — but it can be done.

The outstanding challenge to those engaged in socio-political art work is that of giving powerful expression to the great ideas of social change, equality, justice, freedom. How does an artist depict an attack on repression, bureaucracy, exploitation and complacency? Such concepts are difficult to define in language, let alone on canvas or in sculpture. However, they are all aspects of the human condition and it is not therefore surprising to discover that much socio-political art is figurative. This is because the artist, by depicting people in various social conditions or mental states, can imply, if that is what is required, condemnation of the circumstances which bring about suffering, degradation or fear. On the other hand, the artist can try to lift people's self-esteem by offering them a new and positive view of themselves and their lives. Just by recording them at work, play or in the home artists suggest to ordinary people that they already have dignity, intelligence and a capacity for life which is worthy of admiration. Such a considered statement, carefully executed by an artist or photographer, will always draw appreciation from a mass of people who usually consider themselves not interested in, perhaps hostile to, art and artists. Ordinary people *do* welcome gestures of solidarity from artists and respond in kind because intuitively they know that all movements for social change require a vision which needs to be made explicit in widely understood images. Trade Union banners are a classic example of seeking, in a very practical way, to give visual expression to the great ideals of a vast movement for social change. Today the Labour movement's poor record of interest in the arts reflects its absorption into national consensus politics and while banners and music are very helpful on the march the Labour Movement thinks it has arrived.

This is sad. The struggle has moved on and new visions are needed. Redfern's brilliantly successful portrayals of alienation imply the problems arising from the intensification of the

division of labour which place increasing stress on people from all walks of life. The clamour for democracy at the work place is complemented by the demand for a better quality of life in hundreds of broken communities, where minority groups are seeking equality and the Women's Movement has begun to articulate a forceful challenge to the whole established basis of human relationships and sex roles.

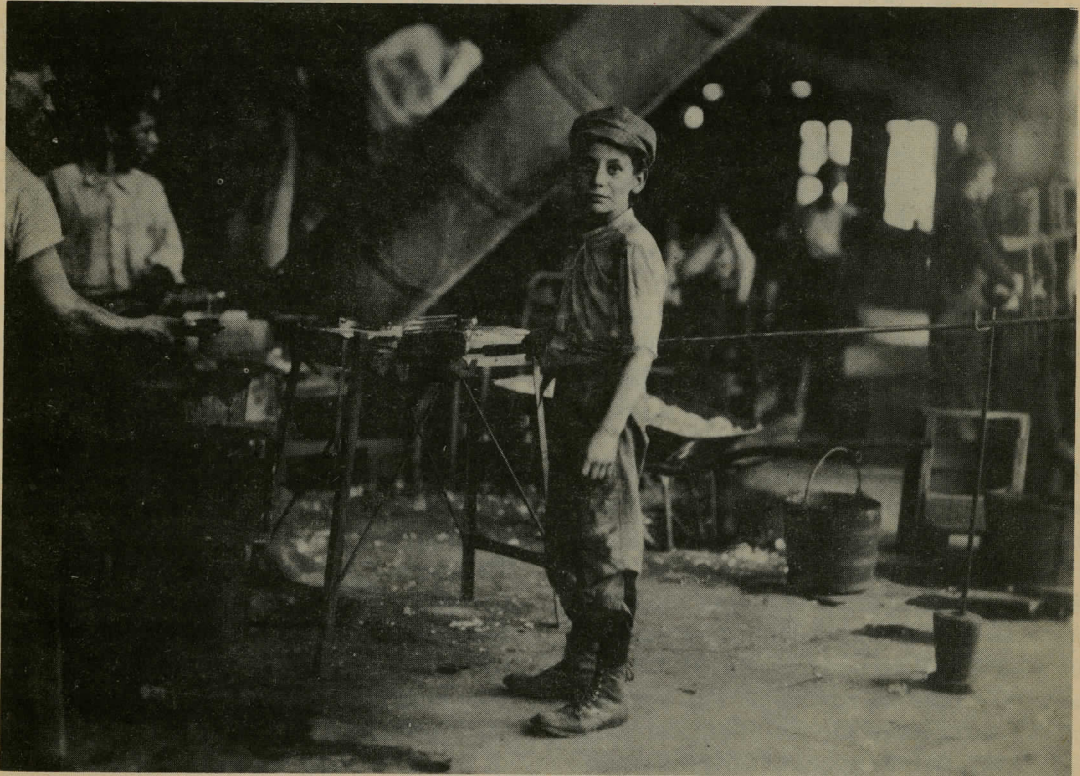
These and other new movements for social change continue to grow, and some artists are working with them, learning to give expression to their aspirations; but this process is not without difficulty. Artists first need a clear understanding of the social and political ideas involved, many of them not yet fully formed. Then they must give expression to them choosing from what is now a vast range of media. Consequently some of the art at the Whitechapel has an obviously experimental purpose, where the ideas need further refining. However, one thing is clear: art and politics have always mixed; they mix now, and in my view will increasingly do so in the future. The results of this mixture can benefit artists who need to be closer to the mainstream of social life. In turn, the artist can help enrich and develop social and political debate in our society.

It desperately needs doing. Moreover, artists can help change the terms of the social and political debate and greatly widen the social situations in which it is conducted. There are countless subjects, worthy of the artist's talents in the homes, work places, streets, pubs and clubs of everyday life. It is here that artists can find stimulus, inspiration for new work and a new audience for that work. In doing so, artists will find a new place in society. In return they must accept that the community and its aspirations will become part of their work. If artists are to exhibit in pubs, factories and community centres, then they will have to be able to say something meaningful to the people who go there. Beauty for its own sake is an issue for ordinary people but much more urgent are the problems associated with the way they live. It is with these problems that the artists at the Whitechapel are beginning to grapple.

Ian Jeffrey:

THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF DISCLOSURE

Lewis Hine: *Factory boy, glassworks, 1909*



The difficulty with much of the photography of disclosure is its apparent imprecision. What exactly does it reveal? It is often hard to answer with any confidence that it shows this or that precisely: rather — that its disclosures are elusive, ambiguous. This might be taken as a shortcoming. If the photograph makes no immediate point what then is its purpose?

The way around this difficulty has been to pretend that it does not exist, that the meaning and point of most documentary pictures is quite apparent. There are no problems. And at first sight this might seem so. Take the work of Lewis Hine, for example. Surely this is the most straightforward of all examples of the photography of disclosure. Between 1908 and 1918 Hine worked in America for the National Child Labour Committee, taking photographs of children at work, mainly in the factories and on the city streets. The photographs show individual cases, particular children at work in particular places. Hine captioned his photographs in some detail: 'Neil Gallagher, Worked Two Years in Breaker, Leg Crushed between Cars, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, November 1909', is one such caption. The pictures were used as magazine illustrations and in touring exhibitions. They drew attention to the evils of child labour and, they seem to have fulfilled their function. But they have also had a successful, and troubling, afterlife as collectors' items, very little of which depends on their radical intention.

How could they have survived in this way? In part because they are ambiguous, liable to any number of interpretations. The child labourers are shown in their workplaces, but nothing on show points irrefutably to the evil of their situation. With other captions and in another context the pictures might be used in support of the practice which they were originally used to condemn. The children shine in the darkness of the factories, and bring their own vitality to the streets. Clearly the photographs were to be read in conjunction with their captions and supporting texts; in this way their meaning was limited.

It can be said, then, that photographic ambiguity is resolved by captioning. Some limit is imposed on the openness of the picture, which takes its

place as an illustration in a story or analysis. However the caption makes no final limitation: Hine's children still demand to be seen even though they are no longer exploited. Nor do I think that they ever functioned purely as illustrations, as a means of making a point. Instead they worked to complement the text, referring to another means of approach to the world, in which it appears as irreducible, resistant to translation. The Hine pictures are cautionary, reminders of an intransigent reality which precedes that of the text and its formulae.

This is not necessarily true of every documentary photograph but is true in Hine's case. Where the figures of the workers are shown in their own context of factories and shops it becomes possible to think in terms of interactions between man and machine, man and building, adult and child; or at least it is possible to see that such relationships exist, even if the photograph gives no specific details on their nature. That is to say: Hine's photographs give rise to questions which can be seen to have been answered or neglected in the text.

This is one way in which a photograph complements a text but there are other ways, which may not be recognised, even though they are part of any experience of looking at photographs. In particular photographs carry with them a time of their own. They may refer to the same material as a prose passage, but they cannot be read in the same way: what they show is shown simultaneously. The moment of the photograph is particularly full; more so than that of the text which is always in transition, as is the moment of actuality in which time unfolds. The moment of the photograph is, then, a moment of wonder, holding steady what is otherwise in flux. In this respect it makes the strongest possible reference to an alternative to the prosaic time of the document. There is always a chance, in front of a still photograph, of an addition to or a qualification of understanding. It is a challenge to the text, allowing another view of the material. Hine's photographs, as I have suggested, are sufficiently full to show more than one aspect of child labour; the children are evidently exploited, but equally clearly they are also engrossed and graceful in their work. It is possible in front of such pictures to see



why employers could be blinded to the harm caused by child labour.

Photographs provide us, the onlookers, with another means of access to the material under discussion. They can make it possible to check on what is said, or claimed. And they confirm, against the abstraction of the text, that there was another time and place with its own palpable reality, different to our own. Thus they ensure against my taking this moment and this particular viewpoint as especially privileged. Basically they confirm the existence and the autonomy of others, and this has its value in society: without this sort of acknowledgement sympathy and understanding are impossible.

Understanding, however, is inadequate without the work of re-enactment on the onlooker's part. Not all photographs make this invitation to re-enactment. Not all photographs of industrial workers reveal what is involved in industrial work. Photographs of heroised steel-workers, for

example, merely impose on us, taking everything for granted. However, images which are sufficiently full both invite and make possible the job of reconstruction; they furnish the material and because of their incompleteness, raise questions of relationship and purpose, and make wider knowledge possible.

This invitation to surmise and reconstruct our understanding is most marked in those documentary pictures which include the greatest range of detail; as, for example, in the report on a Midlands Polish community by Jan Siegeida which is included in this exhibition. The pictures have captions, which point to their being records of the major ceremonies in the life of the community. The chief protagonists are presented; old men with long memories, priests, children in ritual dress but beyond that, the photographs show the predicament of such a society, and show it in such directly spatial terms as are accessible through the camera. A figure in a St. Nicholas costume waits for his cue

in a narrow suburban kitchen. Children at a festival sit around a table isolated on a wide wood floor. The community is both constrained and isolated, surviving in reduced circumstances. At least this can be gathered from the pictures, and not as it might be gathered from a written description. The difference is that the photographs incarnate the predicament of the community directly in terms of a narrow kitchen or an open floor, giving a spatial palpability to what otherwise could only be abstractly explained. Nor in any other sort of account would these conditions appear to be particularly remarkable, but here they are realised and become important.

However, as with Hine's photographs, they show nothing conclusively, but they do — as I have suggested — set surmise in train, raise memories and provoke questions. They are important precisely because they do not seek to give the 'correct

line' about Polish communities in the Midlands, or about refugee societies in general, but because they invite me, or any other observer, to consider and imagine a broader reconstruction of what is given in fragmentary form in the photographs. In front of such images I am forced to be active, to understand in the fuller sense of the word.

Yet this type of photography is less familiar than it might be, partly because it minimises the importance of individual authorship, giving the spectator an equal role in deciphering the image. Which, as a style, hardly fits in with the publishing ideals of the period, putting as they do a premium on the point or on the 'strength' of the image. Still photography is, to a certain extent, determined by the practice of the prevailing medium of the time which is television. Dominated as it is by the fear of boredom, which must be overcome by quick and inventive editing, dragging the viewers through a

Jan Siegeida: St. Nicholas Surrounded by Devils



spatial fantasia of extraordinary viewpoints. It is precisely the atrophying effects of this sort of visual diet which can be counteracted in still photography, which allows us to come to the image in our own time, and to come to our own conclusions.

Of course these are extremely polarised and schematic alternatives and photographers have audiences without time or without any habit of scrutiny. Either that or they work towards special ends, to create awareness of a particular problem. This is the case with Nick Hedges' photographs for Shelter which in their slanting views through windows and along walls make spatial equivalents for the claustrophobia of narrow, poor rooms. These photographs reveal scandalous living conditions, and in their arrangement give an imaginative access to those conditions. Plainly they are critical pictures and successful in those terms. At times, though, they transcend the limitations of

their purpose and invoke something or an ideal against which to measure the shortcomings of the desolate slums. In one of the photographs two girls lie in a chair in front of a dead fire in an unredeemably seedy room. It is as though they are remembering or rehearsing with their bodies some other way of being, more elegant, more in keeping with a composed life. Thus the photograph discloses both actuality and the possible, the better condition which is implicit in the present.

Something like this is probably at the basis of Hine's photographs too. His children look remarkably graceful against their dark workshops. They have, in fact, been singled out and staged, taken away from their work for the moment, restored to individuality. Their placing in the rectangle of the photograph has a similar function; they are often shown standing, picked out against a wide background, and although this does suggest questions of

Nick Hedges: *Unemployed sisters*, 1970. Photograph for 'Shelter'.



relationship between figure and workplace it is also a way of aestheticising the child as a person become a posed object on a blurred ground. Even if there is something exquisite about this it remains a way of valuing the child as other than a component in an industrial process. In his work Hine gives a value to ordinary people which is in every sense, opposite, to the view which obtains in the mass society recorded by his camera.

Reformist photography of this sort is governed by a redemptive impulse. As it shows what is, it refers to what might be, to the utopian idea vaguely or obliquely materialising in the actual. Without any such reference to the ideal such photographs can only be completed in the text or in the memory of the observer; their point can only be inferred from what is not given in the picture. And although some photographers prefer to rely on external reference for the completion of their meaning they are comparatively few. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how any photographs of society can fail to be about the interaction and gap between the ideal and the actual which presents itself everywhere.

Nonetheless this condition of culture as an interim state on this side of the ideal can be overlooked, and it is the virtue of many photographers that they bring it to our attention again. It may simply be to point out that society fails to approach the ideal condition which it imagines for itself. The fantasy world of the adverts seen in a certain light contrasts cruelly with prosaic world stumbling past the billboards. The advertisers dedicate themselves to creating a false consciousness; they set up overpowering but vacuous schemes for the future and draw their clients into a state of ruinous dependency. This is often the point of a lot of the photography of disclosure, which shows the relationship pessimistically, as though the contest is necessarily unequal with ourselves moving towards eventual alienation. To take this view may appear to be realistic, but it overlooks the fact that culture is of our own creation, and as such it can be re-made or adjusted by people who are less tractable than our pessimistic fantasies allow for. This fact is also expressed in much of the photography of disclosure, where human actions are shown to go against the stereotype. The figure on the hoarding may smile

on into perpetuity but it is ignored by its audience otherwise engrossed. In Martin Parr's photographs it is this aspect of the human condition which is celebrated. People may be amazed by the amazing but they are just as likely to be attentive in another direction; they are shown to be resolutely preoccupied with the conduct of their own lives. It is as the active unpredictable agents of the culture that they appear. There is nothing new about the arrangement of the photographs; like many others they present Man in contact with the Ideal, but unimpressed, rooted in his own particularity.

The stereotype is also at issue in Roger Mayne's photographs of the city streets, the classic ground of alienation in images of modern society. Here, though, the street is a stage for a different kind of action, more animated and less oppressive than before. The pattern of conventional expectation has been unsettled, even refuted, and another view of social life made possible. The photographer has drawn attention to the stereotype itself, called it into question and shown its insufficiency. He has also indicated — and this is most important — that we are at liberty to go beyond habitual ways of seeing, that the stereotype can be taken as nothing more than a starting point to which we are not bound to be subservient.

Roger Mayne:

Street Football, Southam Street, 1958



ARTISTS IN SOCIETY

For artists there is practically no financial return from making socio-political statements in their work. All great art has been a political statement of one kind or another, at the point at which it was produced. The political statement in many cases has subsequently been de-fused with time and therefore is now saleable as a trinket. To earn a living the artist has to learn to edge out his fellow and give the market what it wants. He is working under economic and often in physical conditions unthinkable for decades in any other employment. However this situation can be changed by creating a wider market for the artist's work and extending to the artist benefits which are enjoyed by other workers, but denied to him at the present time.

To move in that direction we need to dispel some myths about artists. They are no different from other people. Some can articulate about their work; some can't or don't want to. What tends to make them *appear* different, is the way in which they work and their unusual position in society. For example, the fact that they work on their own in their own work place lifts certain restrictions from them; they neither have set hours to clock in nor do they have to conform in dress or in other ways required by a particular job. The fact that they have therefore traditionally looked different and don't necessarily appear to be working when others *are* doing so has led to artists being labelled as eccentric, living an easy life. The clothes and work times have always posed a threat to outsiders, as they indicate an apparent freedom which they themselves do not enjoy. Since the sixties this difference is no longer so clearly discernible, yet the myths still persist.

The reality of an artist's life is somewhat different from the popular image. It is much harsher. To deny that artists enjoy their work is foolish. They do, but no more and no less than anyone else who has actually chosen the job they want. The fact that many millions are in soul-destroying jobs is no case for criticising artists; it is a case for seeking to improve the lot of all workers. But we are discussing artists from the outside, the outside that is basically ignorant of the artist's way of life and work, and as a consequence society can play havoc with his or her survival.

As a simple experiment, try your hand at one traditional art

form; pick up a pencil and paper, draw for an eight hour day, with an hour off for a meal, of course. Do that for a five day week and you will discover two things, first that art is work; secondly that you will need a long apprenticeship before you will be able to articulate in a visual way what you want to say.

I hope we have so far established several things: that the artist is obliged to accept the individualist role, and that art is work, but that artists have little status in our society. A situation which is developed in many ways from our childhood. For boys it is implied that art is not man's work, while girls are told that no woman has ever been a great artist. Art is a form of expression, suitable for children, but must be slowly erased from the curriculum as they go up the school. It is whispered that those who return to it do so because they are 'useless at anything else'.

With all these stigmas attached to his interest, the growing artist moves on to become more and more isolated from his peer group. Further humiliation awaits as he seeks entry to art school, in discovering that his general creative ability is not a sufficient qualification; he must have O & A level GCEs in other subjects. This insistence on academic qualifications designed to raise the status of art undervalues the potency of the visual image produced by someone whose main form of articulation is in this direction.

The artist who makes art school must have an eye to the future. 'How can I make a living when I leave' is an honest and creditable question. But this is where censorship begins.

This need to make a living puts the artist in the same position as all other workers, he has to look towards those who are able to employ him. It becomes clear to the art student that a living is only to be made by an artist if he is taken on by a private gallery and that gallery has a clientele. It is a clientele which does not like to mix its art and politics; Art is art and Politics is politics. It is necessarily a wealthy clientele, one which does not like to be reminded where their wealth came from. These galleries are fully 'supported' by the art schools, which still adhere to the notion that a political art work is not 'good art'. So if the artist really wants to express through his work the overriding issues of the time, he will not find buyers for his work in this system.

There is only one other place to look — towards the 'have-nots' of our society, the people at the sharp end of social problems, and their organisations. This section of society has been denied access to art for so long that it regards it with the greatest suspicion, as it has not in the past

been about their lives or part of their lives. Art has tended to be about the loves of those who can afford to buy the art work. Working class organisations on the other hand have need of their membership subscriptions to help build and educate the movement that will defend their rights. They have not yet realised the power of visual images to disclose injustices in the world.

So the artist has a cruel decision to make, and even if he takes the road to the galleries there is no guarantee that he'll get a job. So on the doorstep of art school he sees that society does not regard art as a resource for human well being but a commodity to be traded in the market place. However, so that he will not be too demoralised, a small system of prizes has been set up, often given by commercial companies, and there are a few grants from the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations, which will keep the artist in a suspended limbo, dependent on patronage. No other section of the community would accept such haphazard, unreliable working conditions. The fact that the artist who does not produce a saleable commodity must rely on a grant means that in order to make his political statement an artist must appeal for public support. That is not unreasonable, because society may not like what artists have to say, but needs to have it said as a contribution to a healthy public debate. Accepting a contract with a gallery is, for an artist, to have the door closed; galleries offer contracts in order to bind the artist more firmly to them, and for the artist to change direction in his work is then very difficult. There are no codes of practice, regulating relationship between artists and patrons, and there is no way an artist can collect a share of the profit from a work which is resold at a larger sum. In short, the country does not care about its artists. It trains them, but does not wish to use them constructively.

Even committed socialists have been obliged to accept competitive individualism. They, like all artists, need to better their position. But to unite to fight appears to frighten many artists who feel that their 'freedom' will be impaired by combining. They do not seem to realise that the freedom to work as an artist does not exist at present and banding together to fight for rights as a working person would give the artist real freedom for the first time. But at the moment artists have deep-rooted feelings that artists and unions do not mix. In part because of the artists' patrons are those to whom unions are generally speaking anathema. The artist must soon recognise that he too is a labourer, truly exploited more than most, and it is time that the artist found a new patron, a mass audience; and that means changing society.

Thomas P. Hall:
One Touch of Nature Makes the Whole World Kin
painting, 1867



ART FOR SOCIETY'S SAKE

This text is an abbreviated version of an essay which will be published in full in *Studio International*, 2/1978.

● Just over forty years ago, in September 1937, a young painter called William Coldstream wrote an article which tried to explain why he felt modern art was going badly awry. Looking back on the period immediately after he left the Slade School of Art in 1929, it was clear to him that the catastrophic nosedive taken by Britain's economy had profoundly altered the attitudes of those artists who suffered its ill effects. 'The 1930 slump affected us all very considerably,' Coldstream wrote. 'Through making money much harder to come by, it caused an immense change in our general outlook. One painter I knew lost all his money and had to become a traveller in vacuum cleaners. Everyone began to be interested in economics and then in politics. Two very talented painters who had been at the Slade with me gave up painting altogether, one to work for the ILP, the other for the Communist Party. It was no longer the thing to be an artist delighting in isolation. Sales at the London Artists' Association, which had been good in 1929, dropped to almost none. Although this did not affect me directly — I had sold very few pictures before the slump — the feeling that pictures were not wanted was depressing. ▽

● The demoralisation Coldstream describes here bears an uncanny resemblance to the position in which most British artists find themselves floundering today. It would, of course, be overstating the case to claim that our current economic difficulties are as grave as the Thirties. Such an equation is not only facile but also open to the charge of minimising the privation undergone during that decade: the authors of an authoritative new book on *The Slump* stress that the popular notion of a 'decade blighted by economic depression . . . is an image securely based upon reality for the many thousands of families who suffered

from the miseries of mass unemployment.' All the same, Coldstream's clear emphasis on how art as a superstructure is profoundly affected by the economic base remains a useful guide to understanding the problems facing artists in our own time. For the unavoidable fact of life today is that while inflation still causes an immense amount of suffering, unemployment demoralises an unacceptably large sector of the working population, and the National Front rises to political prominence in much the same way as Mosley's British Union of Fascists, contemporary art is encountering one of the most numbing periods of public hostility manifested in Britain since the slump.

● Patronage for every artist except the most practised purveyor of horse paintings or boardroom portraits on the one hand, and the spoil favourites of the international art investment market on the other, is now pathetically sparse. Some of the liveliest students trained as painters or sculptors are abandoning their attachment to a particular medium in order to attempt more direct forms of social intervention, often accompanied by strong left-wing convictions. A sense of helpless bewilderment has become apparent, even among those who prefer to retain a more orthodox role for themselves, concerning the overall purpose of the profession they are supposed to have entered. And the belief is growing, especially among younger artists with no vested interests of either a commercial or a careerist nature at risk, that they are involved in a ludicrously marginal activity of scant pertinence to the mass audience they should be trying — if they hold out any ambitious hopes for art at all — to reach. Needless to say, plenty of people involved on a day-to-day basis with contemporary art, whether as administrator, dealer, artist or commentator, still see nothing wrong with this. Leslie

Waddington, arguably the most powerful London dealer in contemporary art, is perfectly happy to admit that 'it may be that the most relevant art of today is being done on television, or on film, or in other areas. But, as a dealer, I show certain artists whom I like, whom I think are important, and whom, in certain cases, I make money out of. That is my taste and my decision'. ▽ Not much sign there of any alarm about whether art is proving itself capable of relaying meanings to its society, especially in relation to the mass-reproductive media. It is enough for a dealer like Waddington that *he* admires and is able to sell a number of artists: if nobody comprehends the work outside the tight circle constituting himself, his friends and his clients, then so much the worse for the majority. Art, so the argument runs, cannot be held to blame for finding itself superseded by other modes of communication — and anyway, there is a distinct frisson to be got from realising that only a select few really appreciate what the artist does. Keeping it in the family has always been a robust capitalist urge.

● It might be logical to assume that those who try to write on art, and convey its intentions to other people, would be more worried about its narrowing ability to engage with the population than a dealer who needs only a small band of reliable collectors and speculators to sustain his business. After all, what other motive could there possibly be for making your own private reaction to a work of art public through the mediation of words? A dispiriting answer came from William Feaver, the art critic of *The Observer*, when he was asked recently for his response to the charge that art in Britain today is too alienated from its audience. His reply was full of cosy elitism. 'I'm not too worried about that,' he said airily, as though the whole subject was too secondary to deserve agonising over. 'Just

▽ William Coldstream, 'How I Paint,' *The Listener*, 15 September 1937; reprinted in Lambert (ed.) *Art in England*, London 1938, p.101, as 'Painting.'

▽ John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump. Society and Politics During The Depression*, London 1978, p.8.

▽ Leslie Waddington, Interview by Peter Fuller (Part II), *Art Monthly*, October 1977, p.18.

as poetry appeals to a very tiny minority of people, including poets, most art will probably appeal to a minority of people. I don't think the so-called avant-garde should feel guilty at being alienated from the public, and I don't think the public should feel guilty either. Provided some people are interested, that's all that matters really.' ▽

● Feaver is a writer who regularly addresses a newspaper-reading public made up, in the main, of intelligent men and women puzzling over the alienation he so blandly accepts. It is hard to imagine why on earth he bothers to discuss contemporary exhibitions at all, in view of his obvious belief that most readers should regard as insuperable the problems they experience with modern art and — presumably — see as little of it as possible. If Feaver and his counterparts see no reason either to proselytize on art's behalf or deplore the fact that its social territory has dwindled, then the public is certainly not going to run away with the idea that some artists might actually care about sharing their work with the community as a whole. He ought, by rights, to be reviewing for a little club circular with an equally minuscule clique of subscribers, all of whom are artists ready to take comfort from his reassurances and content themselves with appreciating each other's efforts in a nest of inbred aestheticism.

● But it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to do so. Artists are free, if they wish, to hide their ostrich-like heads in the sand and pretend that all is well. They cannot, however, disguise the aridity of that sand, nor avoid the unwelcome realisation that the only social context they inhabit is a desert in the most negative sense of the word. Scarcely any new growths have been detected in this parched terrain over the past few years. Most artists now simply wander aimlessly across it, asking themselves why an oasis cannot be found and suspecting, in ever-growing quantities, that the way of life which initially attracted them before they went to art school is little more than a mirage. Having undergone a lengthy period of training without any sustained debate about what this training is intended to equip them for, they enter the promised land and quickly discover how desolate it really is.

▽ William Feaver, Interview by Patricia Brown, 'This Not So Charmed Circle, Critics on Critics,' *Arts Review*, 19 August 1977, p.521.

The most prominent metropolitan outlets for their work within the so-called art system are sparsely populated by a tight little knot of aficionados who circulate from gallery to gallery, constantly bumping into each other, exchanging notes about the exhibitions they have just visited, studying the current form of respective artists, bitching or enthusing about the latest centre of fashionable interest, rarely referring the work they discuss to any context outside art itself, and pausing every now and then to wonder — with only fleeting moments of disquiet — why nobody else ever seems to attend these hothouse rituals. Even the most prominent of state-subsidized venues can be virtually guaranteed to register poor attendances whenever they house a survey of experimental art; and if a limited number of dependable purchasing bodies did not exist, like the Contemporary Art Society or the Arts Council, sales of modernist art in Britain would almost cease altogether. (Waddington again: 'there is virtually no internal market for most of the abstract painters I show here, other than the occasional sale to an institution'). ▽

● Apart from perennially successful dealers like Frost & Reed, in whose imperturbable windows the sun never sets on identikit land and seascapes, the principal institution where home-grown business continues to thrive for contemporary British work is the Royal Academy. And the unflagging financial triumph of its annual summer exhibitions is directly attributable to their stereotyped character. In recent years attempts have been made to encompass a token display of modernist art within the portals of Burlington House, but it usually turns out to be watered-down, third-rate and almost unnoticeable examples of the species. Only the art which looks exactly like the art seen last year and the year before is capable, it seems, of attracting a public whose willingness to view new visual experiences with enthusiasm has by now been damagingly undermined. Most of the people who buy the portraits of windblown ladies in jodhpurs, or the heart-felt tributes to Man's Best Friend, would still heartily concur with the sentiments of Sir Charles Wheeler when he declared

▽ Leslie Waddington, Interview by Peter Fuller (Part 1), *Art Monthly*, September 1977, p.8.

twenty-one years ago, in his capacity as the Academy's President, that 'we find the Art world — my Lords and gentlemen — continuing in a funny state. I suppose it has never before been quite so queer.' ▽

● In other words, the 1970s have so far borne out Walter Benjamin's observation that 'the greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the truly new is criticized with aversion.' ○ The trouble is that the avant-garde, while rightly despising the Academy for pandering to the pockets of people who elevate anodyne cliché and visual reinforcements of the ruling class into a prime merit, continue to regard the 'truly new' as an ambition sufficient unto itself. If it is condemned by the public, so the innovator's typically defensive argument runs, then the chances are that good art is once again being sacrificed at the altar of ignorance and vulgar philistinism. Rather than having the humility to admit that 'philistines' might actually hold an opinion worth listening to, and maybe even learning from, the avant-garde then proceeds to wheel the creaking figure of Father Time with his beard and sickle onto the stage. He rebuffs the cat-calls from the common audience by posing as the arbiter, who will eventually settle the controversy as firmly in modernism's favour as he has already done with Impressionism, Cubism, and all the other isms you care to mention.

● When Carl Andre's infamous brick sculpture provoked such a prolonged and widespread furore at the Tate Gallery, the best rejoinder Sir Norman Reid could muster as a directorial justification of his purchase was the comment that 'for at least a hundred years every new form of art has been ridiculed and labelled a folly.' The *Daily Mirror*, which reported Sir Norman's words, cocked a cynical snook at both them and Andre by giving its front-page story the banner headline 'WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH'. ► And the pos-

▽ Sir Charles Wheeler, Speech at the Royal Academy Dinner on 1 May 1957, reproduced in 'Remarks On Art, 1952-1977,' the catalogue of 'British Painting 1952-1977,' Royal Academy 1977, p.21.

○ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' *Illuminations*, London 1973 (Fontana edition) p.236.

► Philip Mellor, 'What A Load Of Rubbish,' 16 February 1976. (The entire front page is reproduced in *Studio International*, March/April 1976, p.95).

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Whichever way you look at Britain's latest work of art...

WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH

How the Tate dropped 120 bricks

By PHILIP MELLOR

TOP art gallery now under the last night for the 'The Bricks' sculpture by Philip Mellor

Bizarre

Price

How the Tate dropped 120 bricks

Thrombosed dead Ulster

sibility must be conceded that Reid's reasoning, taken to its logical conclusion, could easily be trotted out to justify the most shameless confidence tricks which artists are prepared to play on their more liberal-minded supporters. It also implies that the modernist establishment has by now come to accept that 'the best' art is inevitably reviled at the time of its inception, and that the ability to arouse widespread hostility is somehow a healthy sign. Can some observers therefore be entirely blamed for caricaturing Reid's standpoint by suggesting that the more everyone loathes a contemporary work of art, the more likely it is to earn the ultimate accolade of entering the Tate Gallery's collection? The joke may be unfair, but it reflects a very understandable suspicion on the part of the lay person that no yardstick is now being consulted to differentiate between the serious artist and the opportunist fraud.

● Those who seek to dismiss a rumpus like the bricks controversy, as a cooked-up Fleet Street scandal without any permanent significance, should not be so hasty. It may well be true that the national press and television were guilty of seizing on Andre and, without even trying to comprehend why his sculpture takes the form it does, made him a scapegoat to satisfy their own never-ending lust for sensationalism. But however scantily discussed the brick sculpture actually was by the journalists most

eager to turn it into an object of abuse — most of them never bothered to see the work, let alone contact Andre to hear his side of the argument — it has since become an enduring symbol of the chasm in understanding and sympathy now separating modernist artists from the public with whom they ought to be communicating.

● As a catchphrase, 'The Bricks' is now set fair to enter the English language on a lasting basis, signifying people's very genuine suspicion that artists no longer care whether or not they make sense to anyone beyond their own camp-followers. When BBC Television mounted an intemperate and superficial attack on avant-garde art, its presenter, Fyfe Robertson, told his viewers that these 'lunacies' should be called 'phoney-art. You can condense these two words into one which has the proper flavour of contemptuous derision, *Phart*. For the public *Phart* began a few years ago, with the famous bricks at the Tate Gallery... You have to take your hat off to these bricks and reverentially too, because they're not just bricks, they're a symbol, proof if proof were needed of the extraordinary forward leap in appreciation of the significance of form and the subtler nuances of artistic apprehension.' ▽ The irony was heavy-handed and refused to discuss art with any seriousness at all, but it did reflect the palpable anger and perplexity which many lay people still voice when 'The Bricks', and by extension modernist art in general, come under debate. To brush off their antagonism is tantamount to maintaining that artists need take no cognizance of the often reluctant alienation which society feels when confronted by their work.

● Hapless art administrators like Sir Norman Reid should not, then, be held wholly responsible for this breakdown in trust. By basing his apologia on the wisdom of posterity he was doing no more than echo the sentiments of the artists who produce grossly unpopular objects for the press to snipe at. In order to convince themselves that they are justified in making art which is so often despised, these embattled creators have to assuage their loneliness with thoughts of the vindication to

▽ Fyfe Robertson, *Robbie Programme (Art)*, transmitted by BBC 1 on 15 August 1977, text reproduced in *Art Monthly*, October 1977, p.8.

come. At once long-suffering and confused, they deserve compassion for having to sacrifice the satisfaction of immediate feedback for the altogether more elusive hope of retrospective or even posthumous recognition. But they do not deserve any sympathy for viewing this state of affairs as an inevitable fact of life, to which all Thoroughly Modern artists are condemned. That attitude prolongs the divorce between art and public, giving it permission to flourish as an unfortunate but necessary evil. Whereas the truth is that artists deserve to be scorned and ineffective if they throw up their hands in despair at the thought of communicating with the great mass of their fellow human beings *in the present*, when the possibility of arriving at a reciprocal understanding should be at its strongest. An artist makes a nonsense of his or her activity by waving aside all thought of a contemporary audience. As T.J.Clark has pointed out, 'no art is hermetic; even Mallarmé dedicated his *Prose* to someone, an imagined and imaginary "Des Esseintes". Des Esseintes was a character from another man's novel — abstract, therefore, but richly particularised; representing a phantasied elite, but an elite with real and specifically demanding faces. Mallarmé is even conscious (ironically conscious, but with an irony which reveals a real effort at a particular excellence) that he cannot satisfy this public; the poem, as the title says, remains merely *Prose, pour Des Esseintes*.'

● Art for art's sake simply does not exist, except as the figment of an anti-social imagination. The concept is as faulty as it is decadent; and any attempt to rephrase it for twentieth-century modernism in terms of 'art for the future's sake,' so that its current alienation can be explained away, should be exposed in all its bad faith. The ill-effects of failing to make art relate to its own time have snowballed over the past few decades to the point where alarmingly little connection between the two can be discerned. That is why the late 1970s, and indeed the rest of this century, must be dedicated to redressing the balance.

● But this end can only be achieved if several notorious pitfalls are avoided. One

▽ T.J.Clark, *Image of the People. Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, London 1973, p.15.

is the creation of a catchpenny movement, a new self-righteous avant-garde rising from the ashes of the current recession with a freshly-minted label like Slumpism or, as one reviewer wrote sarcastically, Socart. ▽ Such a move would imply that only a certain kind and number of artists ought to aim for a social function, whereas the attempt to make art *truly* social should be the concern of every artist worthy of the name, not a chosen few.

● But this desire for inclusiveness should not lead straight into the second pitfall, which would bring about a modicum of integration sufficient only to protect a reactionary structure from collapsing. It will always be necessary to distinguish between a genuine desire for change, and the sleight of hand which seeks to shore up the status quo by permitting superficial radicalism. As long ago as 1840, Edward Edwards argued that 'at the very time when the sad forebodings of a renewed combination between discontent and ignorance are already rife in our land, the highest *political* interest of England demands the employment of the arts for public and national purposes.' Edwards believed that the arts were 'direct and efficient co-agents in attaining the worthiest objects of good government — RELIGION — CIVILIZATION — SOCIAL ORDER', ○ and so do plenty of his ideological descendants today. Artists should not be coaxed into community involvement on the level of the Queen conducting a royal 'walkabout' among the inhabitants of a deprived area, one minute performing in gaily coloured clothes and the next disappearing from sight in a polished limousine. That merely papers over the cracks rather than attacking the real reasons why cracks appear in the first place.

● The third pitfall is busily being dug by all those who maintain that there is nothing wrong with modernism which a little education will not cure. When everyone has been taught to appreciate the virtues of contemporary art, so the thesis runs, the hostilities now dividing artist and public will cease. The trouble with this attractively simple notion is that education can-

not, in a context of financial cut-backs and the continued existence of privileged schooling, be relied upon to instil culture into the underprivileged in the foreseeable future. The Redcliffe - Maud Report warned in 1976 that 'large areas of Britain constitute a Third World of underdevelopment and deprivation in all the arts and crafts' ▽, and there is no reason to suppose that this 'Third World' will soon be given the chance by our educational system to bone up on modernism. Besides, ought more people to be educated into believing that modernist art as it now exists represents the best of all possible worlds? Surely not: change will hardly be brought about by gently elucidating the merits of a system which has so demonstrably failed to bond artists with the society of their time.

● The answer will rather lie in a renovation of art by those responsible for practising it. And they will soon discover that, as John Berger stressed in 1960, 'the constant problem for the Western artist is to find themes for his art which can connect him with his public.' ○ Therein, self-evidently, lies one of the keys to a social art, but great care must be taken to ensure that it does not open the lock of a door leading to yet another pitfall. For the avant-garde stance of outraging society will not be improved upon by going to the opposite extreme and becoming the servile supplier of whatever your customers say they want. T.J. Clark has warned that 'it is when one of those stances towards the public becomes an autonomous or overriding consideration (on the one hand, *epater les bourgeois*, on the other, producing specifically for the market), or when the public becomes either too fixed and concrete a presence or too abstract and unreal a concept, that a radical sickness of art begins.' □ The painting which a Victorian crowd is staring at so avidly in Thomas P. Hall's *One Touch of Nature makes the whole World Kin* may have succeeded in uniting the admiration of all classes of society, from the mutton-chopped gentleman to the driver in the hat who appears to have kept his omnibus wait-

ing while he savours Art. But the odds are that the picture they are surveying is probably as sentimental as Hall's painting itself, and early modernism did have good reasons for rejecting the treadmill of satisfying clientele with the lowest common denominator the artist can devise.

● Even so, it will not do to dismiss the kind of consensus art which Hall's picture typifies without trying to understand the complex of pressures — commercial as much as social — which bring it into being. Modernist artists ought to study the annual list of best-selling reproductions and find out why they are so popular, not laugh them out of court as vulgarities beneath all serious attention. Conversely, Marxist artists who hold the straightforward conviction that the way to forge a working-class art is to mirror the lives of their audience with the greatest possible directness, ought to heed the experience of Orozco. After a lifetime of mural painting committed to the principles of the Mexican revolution, he was objective enough to concede that 'proletarian art' was too literal in its approach. 'Proletarian art consisted of paintings representing workers working and which were assumed to be addressed to the workers', Orozco wrote in his autobiography. 'But that was a mistake, because a worker who has toiled for eight hours at his job doesn't much enjoy coming home to find "workers working", but something different which has nothing to do with work and which will serve him for relaxation.' ▽

● A lot of misunderstandings arise from the over-zealous efforts of some middle-class artists to achieve an instant identification with what they consider to be a heroic mass called 'the workers'. Although they invariably do so under the banner of Marxism, they should remember what Marx himself advised: 'what is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of 'Society' as an abstraction *vis-a-vis* the individual. The individual is *the social being*. His life, even if it may not appear in the direct form of a *communal* life carried out together with other is, therefore, an expression and confirmation of *social*

▽ Lord Redcliffe-Maud, *Support for the Arts in England and Wales. A Report to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation*, London 1976, p. 18.

○ John Berger, *Permanent Red. Essays in Seeing*, London 1960, p. 69.

□ T.J. Clark, *Image of the People*. (op. cit.) p. 15.

▽ Jose Clemente Orozco, 'Proletart,' trans. Michael Schmidt, *PN Review*, Vol. 4/No. 4, p. 13. (Originally published in *Occidente* magazine, 1945).

▽ John McEwen, 'Socart,' *The Spectator*, 4 March 1978.

○ Edward Edwards, *The Administrative Economy of the Fine Arts in England*, London 1840, pp. 187, 193.

life.' ▽ The evolution of a thoroughly social art will only be attained over a long period, and artists need time before they learn, through more and more contact with 'the individual' who makes up 'Society', how best to go about implementing the reciprocal relationships which are needed. George Orwell deplored what he called 'those muscular-curate efforts at class-breaking', and artists should take heed from his words before they rush in to clasp their brethren in an instant union. 'If you belong to the bourgeoisie', cautioned Orwell, 'don't be too eager to bound forward and embrace your proletarian brothers; they may not like it, and if they show that they don't like it you will probably find that your class-prejudices are not so dead as you imagined.' ○

● Nor should anyone be so schematic that they convince themselves about the desirability of destroying modernism completely in the name of a brave new proletarian culture. Modernism contains an abundance of egalitarian seeds within its apparently anti-social husk, and the aim should be to let them loose so that they can germinate with other, more popular elements. Raymond Williams did well to warn that 'those who believe themselves to be representatives of a new rising class will, if they accept the proposition of 'bourgeois culture', either be tempted to neglect a common human inheritance, or, more intelligently, be perplexed as to how, and how much of, this bourgeois culture is to be taken over. The categories are crude and mechanical in either position. Men who share a common language share the inheritance of an intellectual and literary tradition which is necessarily and constantly revalued with every shift in experience. The manufacture of an artificial 'working-class culture', in opposition to this common tradition, is merely foolish. A society in which the working class had become dominant would, of course, produce new valuations and new contributions. But the process would be extremely complex, because of the complexity of the inheritance, and nothing is now to be gained by

diminishing this complexity to a crude diagram.' ▽

● Williams' sensible remarks can be applied very directly to the decisions facing any artist who wants to overcome the claustrophobia of modernism today. For it is important to retain the best in twentieth-century innovation even as ways are developed of marrying it with more popular traditions. The right which Conceptual Art has claimed for the artist, in terms of disengaging from the automatic habit of providing a certain kind of material entity for a gallery context, could lead to the evolution of many different kinds of extra-gallery work. Marx and Engels were at pains to criticise 'the subordination of the artist to some definite art, thanks to which he is exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc., the very name of his activity adequately expressing the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on division of labour.' ○ And it now looks as if the subordination they deplored stands a good chance of being rectified by artists who refuse to have their potential effectiveness controlled by the conventions surrounding the use of particular media.

● A painter today does not have to restrict his or her practice to easel pictures for display in a gallery: alternative surfaces are available anywhere for those enterprising enough to take them on. Nor does a sculptor have to carve, model or weld objects which fit into a dealer's white rooms when the whole world is full of other possibilities. Other artists, likewise, need not specialise in a specific medium at all — they can investigate the possibilities of working within every kind of context as agents, through art, for social change. Factories, hospitals, schools, libraries, pubs, football clubs, bingo halls, housing estates, television studios, women's institutes, government departments, street corners, town halls, working men's clubs: these are only a few of the options open to the artist who is prepared to forego, either partially or altogether, the artifice of restricting art work to a gallery ambience.

● It takes a considerable amount of hard-headed commitment to turn away from the possibility of rewards within the dealer system. However slim the betting chances are on becoming a highly marketable product, the fact remains that artists have no prospect of reaping rich dividends outside the market. In 1965 Gustav Metzger emphasized that 'the art world is a very tight little world. It has capital investments such as dealers' galleries, dealers' stocks, artists' studios, and their stock of work. The artist has contracts to galleries and responsibilities, such as wives, children, mistresses. Dealers are largely concerned to make money. Fundamental technical change is definitely not desirable in such circumstances.' The balance of power has shifted a little since then, but not enough to make a substantial difference. Most of the artists feted at the Hayward Annual in 1977, twelve years after Metzger wrote his statement, are lodged securely within that selfsame 'tight little world', and they owe their reputations to the exposure gained from this world. We can still recognise, all too easily, the reality of Metzger's description of how 'it is from exhibitions at dealers' galleries, that are reviewed in the Sunday papers, that organisations such as the Tate Gallery, the Arts Council, and the British Council stock up with contemporary work. In this system it is unquestionably the dealers who dominate much of the development. Unless he can pass through the dealers' one-man show hoop, unless he is able or is prepared to become a part of the dealer's 'stable', the living artist in England does not exist as far as the official art world is concerned.' ▽

● To stand out against such a system is never easy, but it must be done. Otherwise the mentality of the British artist, so heavily conditioned at the moment by the apparatus of dealer, critic, institution and official status which Metzger so succinctly summarized, will never be shifted away from the archetype of Misunderstood Outsider which prevails today. Everything within this apparatus conspires to keep artists in a childish state: they body forth their own 'visions', and then see their work

▽ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, reproduced by Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (ed.) in *Marx and Engels on literature and art*, New York 1974, pp.70-71.

○ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, London 1937; Harmondsworth 1963, p.203.

▽ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, London 1958; Harmondsworth 1963,

○ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, reproduced by Baxandall and Morawski (op. cit.) p.11.

▽ Gustav Metzger, *Auto-Destructive Art*, a lecture given at and published by the Architectural Association in 1965, partially reproduced by Andrew Brighton and Lynda Morris in *Towards Another Picture*, Nottingham 1977, p.76.

processed through a series of channels which at no point impinge on the lives of millions who never go near a gallery or museum. It is scarcely surprising that one of Britain's most admired modernist painters, Roger Hilton, confessed in a letter shortly before his death that 'most artists are separated by a vast gulf from those who batten on them, also, let it be said, in all fairness, from most of the rest of humanity. You sometimes wonder how people can stand it, the weather man, the disc jockey... Let alone the train drivers & even worse those people in factories doing repetitive boring work day after day making parts for motor cars.' For Hilton, art was 'essentially, a breaking out, a shedding of old moulds,' and yet this radical activity was conceived solely in terms of an internal dialogue with his own private self. 'Every true artist is a revolutionary but only in his own domain. He probably does not even vote.' ▽

● I would suggest that artists today need to start voting, not only for political parties at general elections but also for the ability to act socially among the 'rest of humanity'. Hilton's melancholy letter washes its hands of all duty in that direction, but it is imperative to move beyond his standpoint. Typical though his isolationism may be at the moment, it must be broken down and replaced by an attitude which does not shrink back in horror from the thought of what life is like for the mass of the population. Writing in 1933, Orwell analysed the reactionary fears of 'cultivated people' in terms which could easily be applied to artists today. 'Naturally they side with the rich, because they imagine that any liberty conceded to the poor is a threat to their own liberty. Foreseeing some dismal Marxian Utopia as the alternative, the educated man prefers to keep things as they are. Possibly he does not like his fellow-rich very much, but he supposes that even the vulgarest of them are less inimical to his pleasures, more his kind of people, than the poor, and that he had better stand by them. It is this fear of a supposedly dangerous mob that makes nearly all intelligent people conservative in their opinions.'

▽ Roger Hilton, 'Every Artist Is A Con-Man,' letter to *Studio International*, March 1974, pp.119-120.

○ George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London*, London 1933, Harmondsworth ed., 1963, p.107.

● The fear harboured by the artist can easily topple over into an outright feeling of disdain for the public—a disdain which is, predictably and tragically, returned in good measure. Nothing but stalemate will arise from artists who strike a position of arrogant defiance, hugging their unpopular work to their chests and refusing to entertain the remotest possibility that some of the criticisms they encounter might be worth paying attention to. When Carl Andre was finally asked by the British press, two years after the original bricks were dropped at the Tate, how he reacted to the furore, he refused to give an inch to the opposition's point of view. 'It's really a struggle about authority', he told a newspaper interviewer. 'It's people saying first that the Tate should not have bought the sculpture and ultimately that such sculpture should not be made. At least in America, where none of the fine arts are popular, nobody interferes with the artist or considers he has this soap-manufacturer's obligation to make a popular soap.' ▽ Like a lot of modernists Andre sees the hostility of the public purely as a potential act of censorship, a threat to his continuing freedom to produce the work he wants from his own imagination. The public senses this, and as a result viewpoints on either side of the fence stiffen into polarised extremes which offer scant prospect of anyone occupying the ground in between. But this area is precisely the one occupied by most of society; and unless it is inhabited by the artist soon, there will be little possibility of modern art occupying anything except a remote and insignificant place in the lives of ordinary people ever again.

● Some artists would doubtless reply that it really does not matter how sparse the audience for their work is: they relish the knowledge that their public consists only of a highly discerning minority who appreciate every subtlety and nuance. Such elitists should be obliged to realise the full social consequences of their standpoint, however, and be prepared to accept responsibility for the terrible loss which ensues. 'An art which arrogantly ignores the needs of the masses and glories in being understood only by a select few opens the

▽ Carl Andre, interview by Janet Watts, *The Guardian*, 15 March 1978.

floodgates for the rubbish produced by the entertainment industry', Ernst Fischer declared. 'In proportion as artists and writers withdraw more and more from society, more and more barbaric trash is unloaded on to the public.' ▽ It is an uncontested fact that advertisers rush in where artists fear to tread, and I can see no inherent reason why the forces in our society which simply want to sell their products in a capitalist market should be allowed to have it all their own way. Quite the reverse: the 'barbaric trash' Fischer so rightly condemns should be countered with all the tactics which artists can devise to sustain the existence, within society, of the imaginative human consciousness which is not motivated by the will to profit by selling something which people invariably do not need. This consciousness is all the more difficult to preserve now that those who sell have such a formidable battery of resources, both financial and visual, to back them up. But artists should be its guardian, and ensure that its independence from commercial motives will always be upheld as long as art itself possesses a widely acknowledged place in the world. If they fail to do so, I can see no convincing reason why we should care very much whether art lives or dies. Hidden away inside itself, exerting none of its wonderful capacity to transform the awareness of those who come across it, art has no value to society whatsoever.

● Artists who are prepared to take the initiative in both hands, and forge indissoluble links between their work and humanity as a whole, face formidable obstacles. At the earliest stages of the extra-gallery projects which I have been fortunate enough to observe at close quarters in this country, and about which I have written elsewhere ○, it would have been quite understandable for their practitioners to decide that the problems outweighed the discernible advantages by a colossal amount and abandon the struggle. The daunting effort involved in gathering together the necessary funding, discovering how best to gain the confidence of the lay people with whom you are dealing,

▽ Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art. A Marxist Approach*, trans. Anna Bostock, Harmondsworth 1963, p.101.

○ See in particular the catalogue of *Art For Whom?*, an exhibition held at the Serpentine Gallery, London, April-May 1978.

evolving technical and organisational procedures to cope with working in locations where no precedents exist to guide you — all this might well be enough to discourage the artist from contemplating such endeavours. Nobody will leap forward with even a subsistence wage for the job, and so — paradoxically — the need to earn a living militates against the need to make art itself live again. No wonder the dealer system still has the whip hand: it is so much easier for the artist to slot into the ready-made niches which gallery and market alike are adept at providing, so much more reassuring to appeal to a small audience whose preconceptions about art are similar to your own.

● In the end, it comes down to deciding, as an artist, which side you are on. There are potent forces in Britain to make you afraid of making your ideology explicit in terms of art, and plenty of artists have been frightened into a form of closet socialism which believes in egalitarian values but fails to make them a corner-stone of the work itself. I am constantly being told, by representatives of those forces, that I must never presume to tell artists what they should or should not do. Artists, so the refrain runs, ought to be left alone to 'do their own thing'. But the feebleness and vagueness of this slogan is a condemnation of the Liberal standpoint it endorses. The trouble with the concept of unlimited freedom is that it rapidly degenerates into tyranny when left to indulge itself without any clear idea about what it should be doing, why, and for whom. Just as art students are often reduced to a state of total paralysis by the absence of any sustained discussion in college about the purpose of the work they are supposed to be making, so artists find in later life that the absence of any social demand for their work is ultimately demoralising. Telling artists to go away and create in the inviolate haven of the studio, unharrassed by any unseemly pressures from people who might in other circumstances actually like what they do, is uncomfortably akin to the way society consigns its workers at retirement age to a life of independence which they do not know how to use. The number of artists whose morale is destroyed by this pseudo-liberty is proportionally as great as the number of senior citizens who have no idea what to do

with the endless stretches of free time they find confronting them when they stop working for ever. In both cases, the notion that people thrive in a social vacuum is cruelly misplaced.

● Artists, therefore, must attempt to overcome these pressures, stand up and be counted in favour of the right to play a definable part in the life of the community. And they need financial support from state patronage in order to subsist while means are discovered of integrating them with the fabric of a society which recognises the value of their contribution. The Arts Council, which administers the greater part of this patronage at the moment, is always complaining about the paucity of the funds government gives it. But if it was able to show government impressive proof of its ability to engender projects which gave the artist a palpable social role, then more money would be forthcoming from the politicians who realised that tax-payers received gratification from modern art for a change. In her book *The Nationalization of Culture* Janet Minihan locates the origins of our current malaise regarding support for contemporary arts in the final years of the nineteenth century, when 'cognoscenti appeared to be arguing that the aesthetic experience belonged to the specially initiated. For decades, statesmen had been persuaded to subsidize cultural undertakings because of their conviction that art was not only an instrument of national glory and honour, but an effective means of humanizing and civilizing the 'industrious' classes. Now, in reply to the claims of the cognoscenti, the nation's legislators could well have asked: if art serves no purpose beyond itself, if it neither refines nor educates the people, promoting neither morality nor religion, why devote public money to its aid?' ▽

● It could be argued that for art to be placed under too great an obligation to satisfy the requirements of politicians leads straight to the sinister policing of artists, to censorship and state intervention. The danger is there, of course, and must never be minimised: one of the artist's primary justifications resides in his or her independence from the system which divides most

▽ Janet Minihan, *The Nationalization of Culture. The Development of State Subsidies to the Arts in Great Britain*, London 1977, p. 166.

other members of society into rigid compartments, and no government should pin art activity down too dogmatically. But I believe that it can be no part of the democratic socialist cause which commands my support to monitor modern art in such a way. In the Labour Party's recently published *Speaker's Notes (No. 19)* on the arts, a 'clear Socialist policy on the arts' is called for, leading to a 'fundamental restructuring' which will make the administration of the arts 'more democratic and decentralized.' There is nothing in this document to suggest an oppressive, Soviet-style controlling of the artist; and yet it incensed Lord Thorneycroft, the Chairman of the Conservative Party, so much that he wrote a melodramatic letter to *The Times* denouncing its proposals.

● 'Artists are individuals, and insofar as they are concerned with politics, they are concerned with freedom of expression', thundered His Lordship. 'Artists . . . would certainly object to any direction as to the content of their work however "Socialist, democratic and decentralized" it might be. A new Ministry of Arts distributing public patronage has a ring about it reminiscent of Communist countries where the Socialist content of the artist's work is a precondition of state favour and permission to work.' ▽ Thorneycroft's alarmist sentiments shed more light on the priorities of Conservative thinking than they do on the true nature of Labour Party policy. For the Conservatives have a horror of socially potent art which might reflect unfavourably on the status quo, and they would rather continue to starve it under a system of private patronage administered by the wealthy than see it prosper under state finance dedicated to the enrichment of everyone's life.

● The amount of flagrant distortion in Lord Thorneycroft's letter is a measure, in itself, of how much Conservatives have to gain from ensuring that the artist remains a harmless, lonely 'individual'. They pretend that 'freedom of expression' is at stake, whereas the truth is that they want artists to enjoy only the kind of freedom which exiles endure when they have been removed from any possibility of affecting their own society. The fact that

▽ Lord Thorneycroft, 'State intervention in the arts,' *The Times*, 14 February 1978.

Thorneycroft bothered to write to *The Times* at all shows how much the forces of reaction fear the thought of an effective social art arising in Britain. And this, in turn, should prove an inspiration to artists who have always been told that it is futile to imagine themselves ever helping to change the awareness of anyone outside a coterie of like-minded aesthetes.

● Just how strong the prevalent bias against all thought of social commitment in art really is can be gauged from the views propagated in a new British formalist art magazine, *Artscribe*. A regular contributor categorically announced in a recent issue that 'one of the main features of good art is its willingness to distinguish itself from social art, especially at those junctures where prevailing customs are inimical to it in crude or subtle ways. Conversely it is always the poorest art of any era which best illustrates the particular complexion of the circumstances in which it was made. Most critics, even those with an acute political bias, recognise the socially transcendent capacity of great painting and sculpture of the past; and so if one, as an artist, is primarily concerned with the pursuit of quality, it is advisable that one should carefully censor both overt and indirect social references in one's work.' ▽ Such a programme, if implemented properly, would result in precisely the kind of rootless and introverted work which modernism's pursuit of 'quality' as an isolated value has fostered. The appeal of such an art, with its social guts torn out of it, is obvious to the dealer system which relies on work acceptable to the very rich. And it is no accident that *Artscribe*, whose pages are full of exhortations to beware the 'enemies' of quality, receives financial support from the ubiquitous Leslie Waddington, a man with few worries about the alienation of modernist art. 'I do think that most artists in England — whether of this group or any other — are divorced from the society they live in', Waddington has maintained, taking care to add the telling proviso that 'I don't think external demands are going to make them change or corrupt their art in any way.' ○

● There was a time in this country when

artists would have been unafraid to scorn the views of a dealer who saw no need to worry about art's failure to communicate with society in general. Exactly one hundred years ago, for instance, William Morris gave his first public lecture, and made his attachment to the socialist cause a proud, central claim. 'Unless something or other is done to give all men some pleasure for the eyes and rest for the mind in the aspect of their own and neighbours' houses,' he urged, 'until the contrast is less disgraceful between the fields where beasts live and the streets where men live, I suppose that the practice of the arts must be mainly kept in the hands of a few highly cultivated men, who can go often to beautiful places, whose education enables them, in the contemplation of the past glories of the world, to shut out from their view the everyday squalors that the most of men move in. Sirs, I believe that art has such sympathy with cheerful freedom, open-heartedness and reality, so much she sickens under selfishness and luxury, that she will not live thus isolated and exclusive. I will go further than this and say that on such terms I do not wish her to live. I protest that it would be a shame to an honest artist to enjoy what he had huddled up to himself of such art, as it would be for a rich man to sit and eat dainty food among starving soldiers in a beleaguered fort. I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.'

● Scarcely any British artists have seen fit to carry Morris's passionate convictions about the overall purpose of art forward into the twentieth century, which explains why we find ourselves at such a sorry impasse today. But I believe that the will to become socially integral is a constant one, and I want to end by returning to where I began, at a period during the late 1930s when another English artist, William Coldstream, explained how 'the slump had made me aware of social problems, and I became convinced that art ought to be directed to a wider public; whereas all ideas which I had learned to regard as *artistically* revolutionary ran in the opposite direction. It seemed to me important that the broken communications between the artist

and the public should be built up again.' ▽ Coldstream's views are startling in their contemporaneity; and because they could so easily have been written by a young artist today they make us realise, in the most forceful manner imaginable, how little has been done since 1937 — not to mention Morris's lecture in 1878 — to tackle the issues he highlighted. The apparent contradiction between social aims and modernist precepts which puzzled Coldstream also bewilders artists now, and they must find positive means of resolving it before society finally loses patience altogether and consigns the worn-out avant-garde battleship to the scrapyard. That is why the economic recession of the 1970s may well be beneficial, provoking a greater consciousness of this danger and an increased realisation that artists should contemplate the perceptible needs of the public rather than the hidden mysteries of their own navels. Art for *society's* sake ought to become the new rallying-cry, and never lost sight of again.

▽ William Coldstream, 'How I Paint' (op. cit.) p.102.

(Acknowledgements to the Association of Art Institutions, at whose annual conference in 1977 the first draft of this paper was delivered)



▽ David Sweet, 'Art and Social Constraints,' *Artscribe* No. 9, November 1977, p.18.

○ Leslie Waddington, interview by Peter Fuller (Part 1), *Art Monthly*, September 1977, p.9.

▽ William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', 1878, reproduced by Asa Briggs (ed.) in *William Morris. Selected Writings and Designs*, Harmondsworth 1977, pp.103-104.

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Measurements are in inches, height x width x depth.

Unless otherwise stated, works are lent by the artists.

Details of films are given in the catalogue which accompanies the film programme.

Will Adams

untitled, 1977/78
mixed media 72 x 48

Hugh Alexander

I Study Violence, 1972
collage 34½ x 27
collection: Robert McDowell

John Allin

Gardiner's Corner, 1975
oil on canvas 57½ x 41¼
collection: Arnold Wesker

Lucian Amaral

Lazarus, 1953
oil on canvas 69 x 78

Rasheed Araeen

Paki Bastard — A Portrait of the Artist as a Black Person, 1977
live events with slides and sound
30 minutes

Conrad Atkinson

Silver Liberties: A Souvenir from the Jubilee
paint, canvas, photographs,
documents 108 x 216

Lynda Ayres

Old Woman at Window, 1975
papier mache and wood 44 x 29

George Blair

Silver Jubilee, 1976
photomontage 11 x 8

Derek Boshier

Daily Mail, August 15 1977, 1977
newspaper and ink drawing
23¼ x 31½

Chique — Only Some Women Have It, 1977
collage 31¼ x 21½

Jimmy Boyle

Six Jarrow Heads, 1975
plaster 12 x 36

Ian Breakwell

Documentation of work with the Department of Health 1976-1978 (at the instigation of the Artist Placement Group) and of *The Institution*, a film by Ian Breakwell and Kevin Coyne, 1948

Rita Brown

The Prisoner, 1969
egg tempera and oil 23 x 19

Victor Burgin

Saint Laurent demands a Whole New Lifestyle, 1976
photographic prints and hardboard
30 x 40 approx

Today is the Tomorrow you were Promised Yesterday, 1976
photographic prints and hardboard
30 x 40 approx

Paul Butler

Office, 1977
indian ink, watercolour, charcoal,
conte pencil 48 x 48

Doorstep, 1977
indian ink, watercolour, charcoal,
conte pencil 36 x 48

Flyover, 1977
indian ink, watercolour, charcoal,
conte pencil 36 x 48

Camerawork Collective

Camerawork 8, Lewisham issue, 1977
16 pages of artwork,
each 16½ x 12

David Carpanini

Sometime Never, 1977
acrylic on canvas 36 x 48
collection: Mr B Edwards

Stanley Conroy

Law and Order, 1976/77
oil 50 x 50

The Mugging, 1977
oil 54 x 54

Randal Cooke

Norman Bethune, 1976
acrylic on cotton duck 46 x 70

Saltley Gate, 1978
acrylic on cotton duck 59 x 83

Roger Coward

COM, 1977
photomontage 48 x 72

You and me here we are: What can he said to be going on?, 1977
photomontage 24 x 36

What is the shape of the Process?, 1978
statement and photographs 48 x 12

Jack Crabtree

The Dirty Clothes Lockers, 1975
oil on panel 20 x 40

The Coal Queen with Four Older Colliers, 1976
oil on canvas 18 x 40

Packing it in for the day South Western Division
oil on panel 30 x 38

Out of the Cage, Lady Windsor, 1975
print 14 x 16

Pithead Baths, Nantgarw, 1975
print 16 x 14

Michael Darling

Just a Few Simple Questions, 1976
oil on board 24 x 30

Graham Dean
Shop Soiled, 1977
acrylic on canvas
64 x 50 and 64 x 14

Signpost, 1977
mixed media 79 x 50

Rita Donagh
untitled, 1977
oil and collage on canvas 60 x 60

Stephen Dorley-Brown
Conflict Montage 4, 1977
montage and felt tip pen 16½ x 23

Anthony Dorrell
Trafalgar Square, 1926, 1976
oil on board 65 x 77

Euan Duff
Photographs of the Unemployed
Two photographs from *Workless*
(Penguin Books, 1972)
black and white photographs
12¾ x 19¾ and 13 x 19¾

John Dugger
A Vitoria E Certa (Victory is Certain), 1976
5-colour dyed canvas applique in
27 strips 162 x 288

Peter Dunn/Lorraine Leeson
The Present Day Creates History,
a tape/slide presentation of the
Ruislip/Peterlee Project, 1976/77
approx. 30 minutes

Handel Edwards
The Miner's Kitchen, 1973
woodcarving 36 x 60 x 8

Gertrude Elias
The Pilferer, 1977
gouache 25 x 19

In the Dock, 1977
gouache 25 x 19

Peter de Francia
Hallowed Rituals (triptych), 1973-5
oil on canvas
54 x 47½, 47½ x 54, 54 x 47½

William Furlong/Bruce McLean
Academic Board: A New Procedure,
1977/78
a work for tape and slide
approx. 50 minutes

William Furlong/Duncan Smith
Racism — Battersea/Clapham Junction area, 1978
tape/slide presentation
30 minutes
Brick Lane, 1978
tape/slide presentation
30 minutes

Rose Garrard
Towards a New Heroism, 1978
installation with video and sound
96 x 132 x 144

Charles Gavin
The Balloon, 1970/74
linocut
17¾ x 14 (image)
23½ x 15¾ (paper size)
Remember to Remember, 1971/74
linocut
15¾ x 12 (image)
23½ x 15¾ (paper size)

Robert Golden
Mineworker, (People Working
series, Kestrel Books, 1975) 1978
text and photographs
5 units, each 30 x 20

Peter Harrap
untitled, 1975
black and white photograph
10 x 15 (image)

Margaret Harrison
Rape, 1978
mixed media 84 x 168

Micky Hartney
Withdrawn from Exhibition, 1978
colour videotape and text
10 minute continuous sequence

Nick Hedges
Unemployed Sisters, 1970
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Mrs Moran and Family: West End, Newcastle, 1971
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Mother and Family in Kitchen on the Stairs, Brixton, London, 1972
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Blast Furnace Workers, 1976
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Work with 'Shelter':

Notice to Quit, A Shelter Report,
September 1968, pages 16 and 17

Happy Christmas, A Shelter Report,
December 1970, pages 16 and 17

A Shelter Report on Housing and Poverty, 1971, pages 46 and 47

Josef Herman
Head of a Miner, 1978
oil on canvas 26 x 20

Man Thinking, 1978
oil on canvas 36 x 26

Larry Herman
From: Clydeside, 1974-1976

Ozzy, Blackhill, Glasgow
black and white photograph
14 x 9 (image)

Workers Ferry after 12 Hour Shift at the Oil Rig Construction Site at Ardyne Point
black and white photograph
9 x 14 (image)

Rudder Horne and Propeller Boss of the 264,000 tonne "Cartsdyke Glen"; *Scottlithgow, Glen Shipbuilding Yard, Port Glasgow*
black and white photograph
14 x 9¼ (image)

Coats Mill (Thread Makers), Paisley
black and white photograph
9¼ x 14 (image)

From: Clydeside 1974-76
Assembly Track; Chrysler (Scotland) Ltd., Linwood
black and white photograph
9¼ x 14 (image)

Gottfried Heuer
London W.10, 1976
black and white photograph
6 x 9½ (image)

Kay Hunt
untitled, 1976
mixed media
8 units, each 12 x 9

Alexis Hunter
Approach to Fear XVII: Masculinisation of Society — Exorcize, 1977
colour photographs
2 panels, each 47 x 14½

Approach to Fear XVIII: Boredom — Interest, 1978
colour photographs 15¾ x 21½

Dialogue with a Rapist, 1978
black and white photographs
10 units, each 13 x 15

ILEA Cockpit Art Department
'Art Studies' Project, 1978
text, photographs, drawings, paintings, slide sequence, videotape
96 x 96 x 96

Chris Jennings
Memories are made of this (based on the Conservative Party Manifesto "The Right Approach"), 1977
photomontage
series of 18, each 10 x 8

Dan Jones
Seaman's Union banner
National Union of Seamen banner
cloth 48 x 144
collection: National Union of Seamen (London Branch)

Demonstration for the Release of Five Dockers Imprisoned in Pentonville, 1974
oil on canvas 96 x 48
collection: Trades Union Congress

Leonard Karstein
The Colonel in Mufti, 1962
black and white photograph
16 x 20 (framed size)

County Wedding, 1963
black and white photograph
20 x 16 (framed size)

Arts Conference, 1967
black and white photograph
16 x 20 (framed size)

Leicester Square, 1968
black and white photograph
20 x 16 (framed size)

Mary Kelly
Post-Partum Document
Documentation IV — Transitional Objects, Diary and Diagram, 1976
mixed media
11 units, each 14 x 11

Peter Kennard
Workers Press Centre Pages, 1973
newspaper 16½ x 22½

Workers Press Centre Pages, 1973
newspaper 16½ x 22½

Soweto Sixteenth of July 1976, 1976
oil and printers ink on canvas
45 x 80

Oliver Kilbourn
Putter Lad Riding the Limmers
While Pit Pony Noses Open an Air Door, 1978
acrylic 17 x 30

A Little Further, Piercing the Darkness, 1978
acrylic 17 x 30

Almost Through and on the Way to the Flat (Marshalling Centre) with a Full Tub: An Underground Scene from the 1920s, 1978
acrylic 17 x 30

R.B. Kitaj
Go and Get Killed Comrade — We Need a Byron in the Movement, 1966
screenprint 32 x 21
collection: Victoria & Albert Museum, London

La Pasionaria, 1969
oil on canvas 12 x 12
private collection, London

Ghisha Koenig
Calendar Shop II, 1970
bronze 5½ high
collection: Michael Wolfers

Plate & Coil Shop I, 1972
bronze
11 x 11½
collection: Thelma and David Watt, London

Jasons Works I, 1976
bronze 14 x 32
collection: Samuel Johnson & Sons (London) Ltd.

Bruce Lacey
The Institution, 1963
wood, plastic, metal, glass
74 x 38 x 25
collection: Hans Kennel, Switzerland

Darcy Lange
Bradford Work Studies, 1974
videotape
collection: Bradford Art Galleries and Museums

Lorraine Leeson/Peter Dunn
The Present Day Creates History, a tape/slide presentation of the Ruislip/Peterlee Project, 1976/77
approx. 30 minutes

George Levantis
untitled, 1978
mixed media 41 x 26 x 16½

Andrew Turner

Black Friday triptych, 1974
oil on canvas 96 x 180
collection: South Wales Miners
Library

The Generals' Strike, 1975/76
bire and pencil
20 drawings, each 12½ x 9½

John Walker

Capitalism Works, 1977
photomontage 32 x 22

Kate Walker

Advice to Artists, 1977/78
ink on paper
10 drawings, each 11¾ x 8¼

Paul Waplington

Baseford Hall Silver Band, 1976
acrylic 48 x 62

Retired Collier, Holmewood, 1976
acrylic 48 x 48

Janine Wiedel

From Irish Tinkers, 1971-1976:

Mary O'Brian's Babies
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Tom Reilie's Granddaughters
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Ann Ward
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

Winnie Stokes
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

Mary McDonagh
black and white photograph
12 x 16 (framed size)

Stephen Willats

*Trying to Forget Where We Came
From*, 1977
photographs, ink, text, gouache, on
card
4 panels, each 40¾ x 31

Living with Practical Realities, 1978
photographs, ink, text on card
3 panels, each 43 x 30

Alison Williams

*'Behind the Monkish Austerity
Lies a Man who Hunts in Full
Regalia'*, 1975
ceramic, paint, mixed media
13½ x 29 x 22

Gus Wylie

New Tenant, Skye, 1975
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

Marion Campbell and Loom, 1975
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

Teenage Bedroom, Skye, 1975
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

*Murdo Macpharlain, Melbost
Lewis*, 1975
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

Weaver, Shawbost Lewis, 1975
black and white photograph
16 x 12 (framed size)

The Trustees of the Whitechapel Art Gallery gratefully acknowledge the assistance which many people have given during the organisation of the exhibition. There are too many to mention them all by name but we are particularly indebted to Sally Williams who co-ordinated the arrangements for the exhibition, to Richard Hollis who designed the catalogue, and to members of the organising committee who accepted the invitation to select the exhibition and contributed to the catalogue.

The catalogue essays represent the views of the individual authors, and we welcome their publication as a contribution to the discussion on the possible directions which contemporary art might take.

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