

LANGUAGE AND

REPRESENTATION



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BRIAN BOIGON

ANDY PATTON

KIM TOMCZAK

JOHN SCOTT

JUDITH DOYLE

MISSING ASSOCIATES

PHILIP MONK

November 1981 - February 1982

A SPACE

LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION: An A Space project curated by Philip Monk.

At A Space:

Brian Boigon November 17 - December 4, 1981
Andy Patton December 5 - 23, 1981
Kim Tomczak January 5 - 20, 1982
John Scott January 23 - February 6, 1982
Missing Associates February 9 - 24, 1982

At The Funnel Experimental Film Theatre:

Judith Doyle January 29, 1982
Missing Associates February 12, 1982

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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Monk, Philip, 1950-
Language and Representation

Catalogue of an exhibition held Nov. 17, 1981 - Feb. 24, 1982 at A Space, and Jan. 29 and Feb. 12 at The Funnel Experimental Film Theatre, Toronto, Ont.
ISBN 0-9690645-2-7

1. Art, Modern - 20th century - Ontario - Toronto - Exhibitions. 2. Art, Canadian - Exhibitions. I. A Space (Art gallery). II. Funnel Experimental Film Theatre. III. Title.

N6547.T67M66

709.71'0740113541

C82-094785-7

A Space is supported by the Canada Council, City of Toronto (Toronto Arts Council), Government of Canada (Department of Communications), Metropolitan Toronto, and the Ontario Arts Council.

The author would like to thank the staff of A Space, Jane Perdue and Doug Sigurdson, for their assistance, Anna Gronau and The Funnel for their cooperation in presenting the programme, the artists for their contributions, and Shelagh Alexander for her editing of the text. The author acknowledges the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council.

Design & Production: Shelagh Alexander
Typography: Alphabets
Printing: Gilchrist-Wright Limited

PRINTED IN CANADA

PHOTO CREDITS:

Robert Baillargeon, p. 12
Brian Boigon, pp. 8-9
Peter Dudar, pp. 30-31
Vid Ingelevics, pp. 8-11, 20-22, 28, 29
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Coll: Edna Allen Lougheed, pp. 24-26
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Cover image from Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*

LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION

The projects by the Toronto artists documented here were made for or took form in relation to the exhibition *Language and Representation*. As the title came before, the works seemed called to demonstrate its conjecture; but the works produced did not have to illustrate the 'theme' of the title. Throughout the course of the exhibition, the works surfaced within their own conventions and contexts. In turn, this essay does not presume to represent the work gathered under its name. Rather, it considers the problems that this art raises for theory, problems that theory must recognize as its own exclusions.

The artists here do not compose a Toronto school, but in some shared way they work with language and representation outside the formal models presented to them by the art of the last twenty years. It is the representational character of this work, whether language or image alone, or image subtended by language, that is the question here — representation is not *under* question. This 'representational' art could be said to form the third moment of language in art (of the language base or conditioning of art) following the conceptual art of the sixties and the semiotic work of the seventies. It could be said to continue this development if it did not have to present itself as an exclusion from these previous moments; that is, if its representational concerns were not suppressed and forcefully excluded from these previous practices by the violence of criticism.

Because of these theoretical constraints, it is perhaps up to criticism to show that this return is not a reactionary restoration, an *Eighteenth Brumaire* of representation. For if past work has shown that the excluded viewer had to come to speech, more recent art shows us that the referent must come into view. And since the work stands between this viewer and the referent, and mediates them, its reference cannot be the issue of a generalized representation. Its position is one of proximity, which lends the work a local political dimension, and suggests the dedication of this project to the place from which we speak.

REPRESENTATION PAST

At different times in history, terms are given different values, positive and negative in turn. For instance, in its rise and struggle against a feudal order, the bourgeoisie was progressive, which gave the term 'bourgeois' a positive value. In power and against the rise of the proletariat, 'bourgeois' was negative. Now even 'positive' and 'negative' have become invested terms in an overturning of their immediate meanings. Anything positive is automatically ideological, while the negative is critical, as when we say 'negative critique'.

'Representation' is a term whose stock rises and falls in company with the term 'bourgeois'. Representation is seen as the ideological means by which the nineteenth century bourgeois declared its social constructions a natural order and thus legitimized its class rule which continues today. Art's own formal reductions, as part of a general critique of representation, were seen as allied to the struggle against the bourgeois appropriation of presence in the conventional, and the material in the ideological. Today, only work that registers representation in a critical way, that presents it in the form of a critique, is allowed. Even the name 'work' displays itself opposed to the mere immateriality and non-productivity of representation. To make use of representation without these scare quotes is suspect. To speak positively of representation rather than through the negative critique has become a *theoretical* impossibility. Representation then is excluded, not only in modernist art, but in critical and semiotic theory also, even though it may be a term of their analysis. While we might think that the language and photo-text art of recent years may be receptive to representational concerns, conceptual and semiotic art, while seemingly opposed to modernism, are bound by formal models of language. Their aura of orthodoxy has reduced representation in language and image to a negative, that is, ideological, term.

The history of modernism is a history of the progressive loss of content. Modernism's critique of representation in favour of the immediate, concrete and irreducible established the limits of representability by using the methods of a discipline to criticize itself: what was unique and proper to a medium asserted itself in all its positivity. Modernism sustained itself in this self-criticism, and its history became a repetition of the form of a critique; but it reproduced itself as this *form*, never as what was representable within its own limits. Even phenomenology, in its concern for the contents of experience, repeated the empty form of a presumed presence; as much as phenomenology was a 'return to the things themselves', it put the world out of play. Similarly, semiotics, as a continuation of the modernist project, has had to exclude the referent as a disturbance to the purity of the theoretical model. In all cases, reference, representation and the real have been condemned in favour of a material formalism.

While the exercise was to conceive what was representable as more than a remainder, in the end, representation as a whole was excluded from this modernist history. The two moments of modernism — the formal-reductive and the semiotic-textual — have always rejected representation as synonymous with idealism and have championed what seemed impossible for representation: namely, production and the materiality of the sign. But now even these terms must be called into question in their systems of value and legitimation; they must be re-examined *at their word*. (In what sense exactly can we talk of the materiality of the sign, of revolutionary production or transformation in

language, of the production of an effect by a text or a work of art?) A revalued convention of representation, as an affirmative rather than negative value, however, may take us beyond the reductive exclusions of formalism and the critique-bound orthodoxies of ideological analysis. Rethinking representation even so far as a theory of action may show how, contrary to the beliefs of a materialist aesthetic, representation leads to the social.

REPRESENTATION PRESENT

The sweep of condemnation by reference to a name makes representation's use uneasy. Any discussion of representation is bound to confuse it with the representation of traditional *mimesis* and with the historical movement called Realism. Today it is automatically associated with the iconic referentiality of New Image painting. But the works in this exhibition have little to do with the conventions of *mimesis* and iconicity, which in the case of painting (since here it seems for commentators that it is always and only a question of painting) reintroduce notions of style and originality. This is not to maintain that convention and referentiality do not pose two fundamental issues for representation.

In *Language and Representation*, on one hand, we think of representation as *language*, as what is representable by language, and of language as the most flexible system of representation, the only one that can talk about itself. In representation we do not simply have a collection of factual or descriptive statements with attributable truth values; nor do these sentences necessarily compose a fiction. They are a type of naming that is brought into relation, in cases, with an image or images.

On the other hand, representation is a placing of an *image*, or images, established by various relations between different codes of representation, technological and iconic, that may be schematic or symbolic as well as analogic. Reference does not entail iconic resemblance; it refers somebody to something, but in various ways. The image is hardly ever a single, unarticulated, 'natural' image. This dissociation of codes does not oppose representation: the work can be and is syntactically and semantically differentiated.

Sometimes this image is inflected in turn by a text or voice, and complicated in instances by a referent — a visual or verbal naming which sets up another sense of representation. The necessity of reference or naming gives the content a concrete dimension; it is not just the case of a formal coherency of representational codes, or of a reference to a cultural code already in place. This representation by means of a reference/referent may come into play in the construction of a narrative or image by the specific use of material of a (auto)biographical, historical or political nature, or by the ensuing structural positions that the work creates in relation to the referent, one for the artist, another for the viewer.

Reference also distinguishes the representational in this case from the fictional. Representation does not have to take its traditional form of an organic whole whose composition is transparent to the 'reality' it presents. Now its 'realism' can still be critical, requiring the cognitive and referential, not just the imitation of an action. But it is not the realism of the 'art of the real'; it is not the reality of material, process and context where the referent is structurally effaced. Initially, however, this representational art concerns itself with the structural conditions and problems of representability without forgetting

the referent. Representation's return signals more than a regression to old uncritical forms, and yet the problems it introduces are only secondarily formal.

Very simply, I can say that representation is something which stands to somebody for something. That is, a representation stands for and refers to. But having said that, while structural conditions of representability ensue when something stands for another, the relation of representation to its 'object' (the something) and 'user' (the somebody) introduces the semantic and pragmatic dimensions respectively of the work. These relations take it outside a formal, self-referring system. A work is referential and representative as well as representational.

A representational work is doubly directed: the reference towards its referent (the social real) and the representation towards its audience. The referent is the 'origin' of the work and pointed to by the work. On one hand, the artist represents (stands for) the referential origin which comes first and serves as subject. On the other, the representation of the work returns to the referent, points to it as subject. (The representation may point to its object in a quasi-indexical manner or point out something in its absence. The relation of artist to referent and audience to representation maintain a proximity even in the absence of an object, an absence that makes representation.) The work then mediates and stands between the referent and the audience, between production and reception.

We take advantage of the double sense of representation's 'standing for'. Art and politics meet in the word 'representation'; and every artistic production contains a representation of the viewer on the model of political representation. As well, the artist must position himself or herself in relation to what is represented (its choice as subject, the referent and social real), but not authoritatively as the representative spokesman; and he or she must bring that representation about by the relations of the codes of representation among themselves in the work and to the viewer.

The formal investigation of representation is perhaps now secondary to what is represented, which is not to say that the work is not critical or that this investigation is not part of the artist's practice or prior to it. But the investigation is not primarily a structural concern, which in the end presents an empty formal model. An erased referent resurfaces, and content returns as a semantics of history. It is by now commonplace to read 'content' into the form of a work. History is latent in more than the form of a work. Having been structurally effaced, content returns with all its effects in representation.

REPRESENTATION FUTURE

A search for value can only take place through representation. Revaluation of representation, as other than an ideological constraint, may be that passage from socialized to social desire. Presumably this will have a force, or the value of a force, brought about by representations. Under the conditions of our history, however, the modernist critique of value has led to the destruction of all values without being able to institute any new value except that which is a formal law, or that which floats. Value is short-circuited by the incessant repetition of this critique, by the constant consumption and evacuation of meaning by critical theory and an art that forms itself on this writing.

To take a position and to say something is the double sense of representation's 'stand-

ing for'. To call for something to take a place, for someone to represent positions and values, to call a halt to the infinite production of capitalist flows, is to call for work at its word. To be more than symptoms or parasites, clever inhabitants, bachelor machines or bricoleurs; to be more than Baby Boom Baudelaires or critical terrorists; to recognize the crisis of overproduction equally in art and in the market, and not to accede to a reactionary or recessionary criticism; in short, to reconstitute the avant-garde in its original social terms, means to find new strategies or recognize art's limits. Once we recognize that the seventies art strategy of 'inhabitation' of popular media, a so-called disguised or didactic entertainment art, has no effect outside art's marginal site, we can accept that marginalization, close the system and find our collective representations, in other words, extrude the utopian dimensions of the art community. At the same time this would be a refusal of this peripheral site through a projection of values and a refusal of the theorization of the margin. But if that does not satisfy us, as condemned as that community is to the same forces of capitalism, neither will the other dominant practice of the seventies, semiotic critique, allow us our say, tied as it is to the 'always already there', that is, reflected in the system it criticizes. It permits us a structural position, but no speech as subjects. What is left is both a strategy and a limit, namely representation.

At one time, work at its word would have been the promise of art. Representation loses none of its potentially utopian character in being critical at the same time, as all the works in this exhibition are in some sense. But representation is not primarily critical — based on the model of the critique — because something else is said. The point is to speak *for*, as well as against. To position that other as more than determined, to bring it to speech, is the role of representation.

Philip Monk,
Toronto

BRIAN BOIGON

The gallery never escapes its concept of form. It is always reproduced in the work it displays or exports. Even with the varieties of dematerialization of the art object, a context travels with any work outside the gallery as the very possibility of its meaning. The gallery is never really displaced; and it is always able to recuperate what seems to by-pass it: earthworks, conceptual art, performance, etc. Post-minimalism's contextual assault on the modernist transparency of the gallery only took the reductive demands of modernism to the work's setting when it brought the gallery's structure to light and indexed its surfaces. A spatial or structural formalism, it remained as tautological or self-referential as any modernist work.

To break this self-referential contextuality, to allow a work semantic representation and reference outside itself, does not mean restoring neutrality to the gallery. On the contrary, it means recognizing the conventions through which art acts. We need not fear the loss of the clean, well-lit space that the artist-run centres respect as much as the commercial galleries. The communicative conventions within which art acts — and this is the fundamental shortcoming of art's understanding of its *effects* — is not bound by any tradition. Conventions are constructed with the viewer in mind, a viewer given position and competency within the codes and representations presented.

Brian Boigon's architectural installation at A Space exists under unique conditions. During the exhibition, it functions as an architectural installation; after the exhibition, it transforms into a renovation of A Space. For the duration of its 'exhibition', it is turned into an object by a series of drawings: it is both the referent and the signified of the drawings. This representation in and through drawing puts the installation's spatial objectivity and architectural programme into question: it is a fragment of the drawings and a critical realization of architecture's representational codes, but not a tautological re-presentation. That is, the drawings present these codes problematically. And in displaying these codes, the

drawings give the viewer the ability to read them in the space.

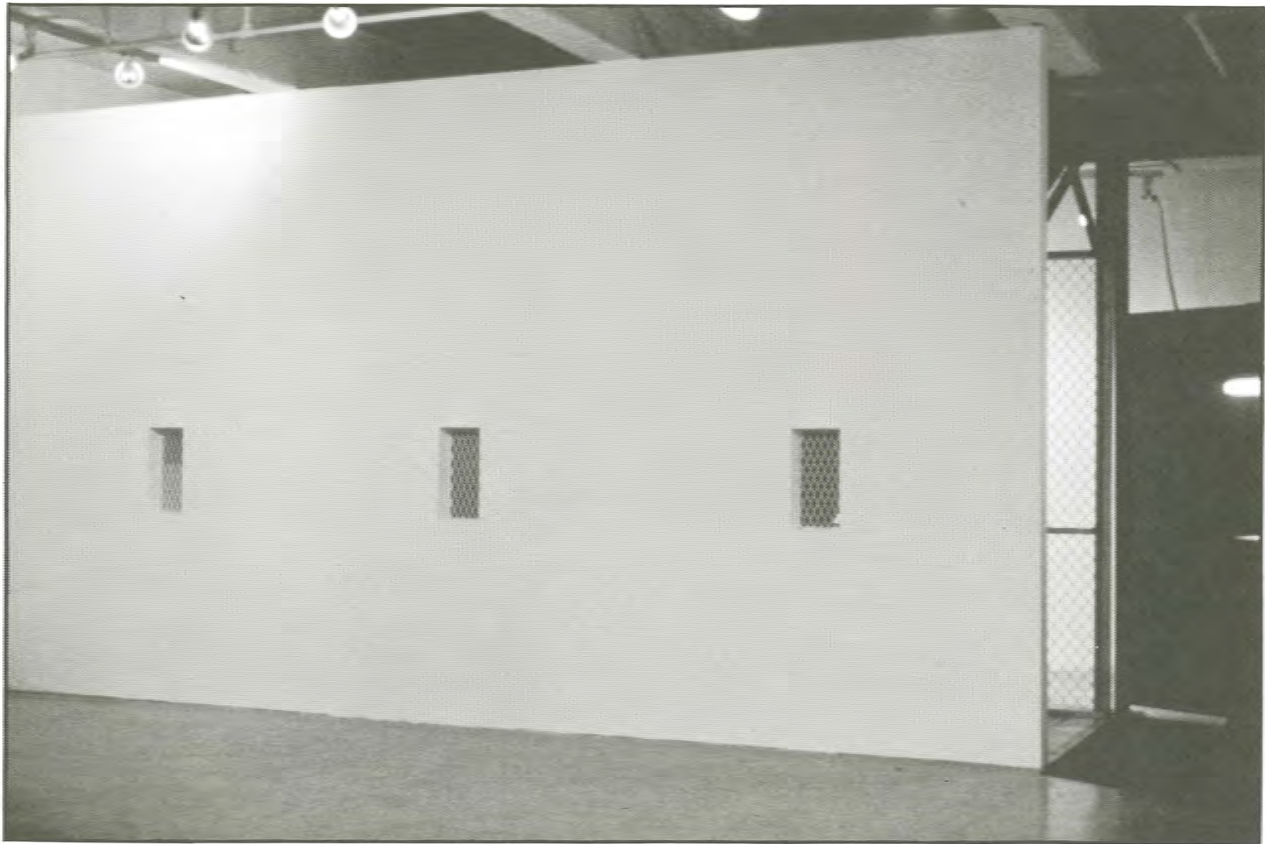
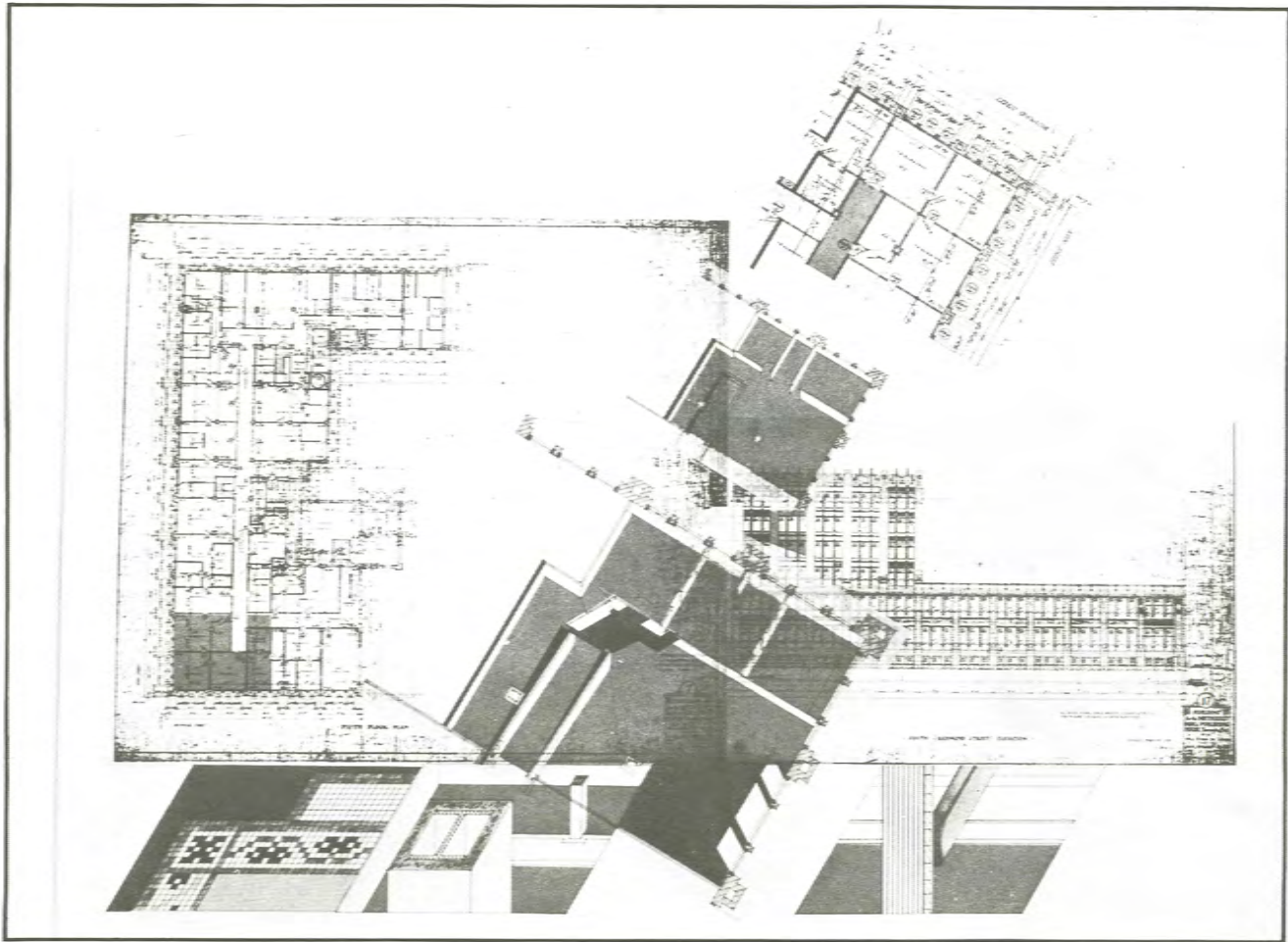
After the exhibition, the installation does not simply dissolve into the transparency of its architectural programme serving to direct circulation and to separate the functions of administration, production and exhibition. At the same time, the artist/architect has attempted to represent the conflicts of this artist-run space: administration versus production versus exhibition. Here, without the drawings to fall back on, architecture itself is used to represent these conditions beyond the constraints of its own formal codes.

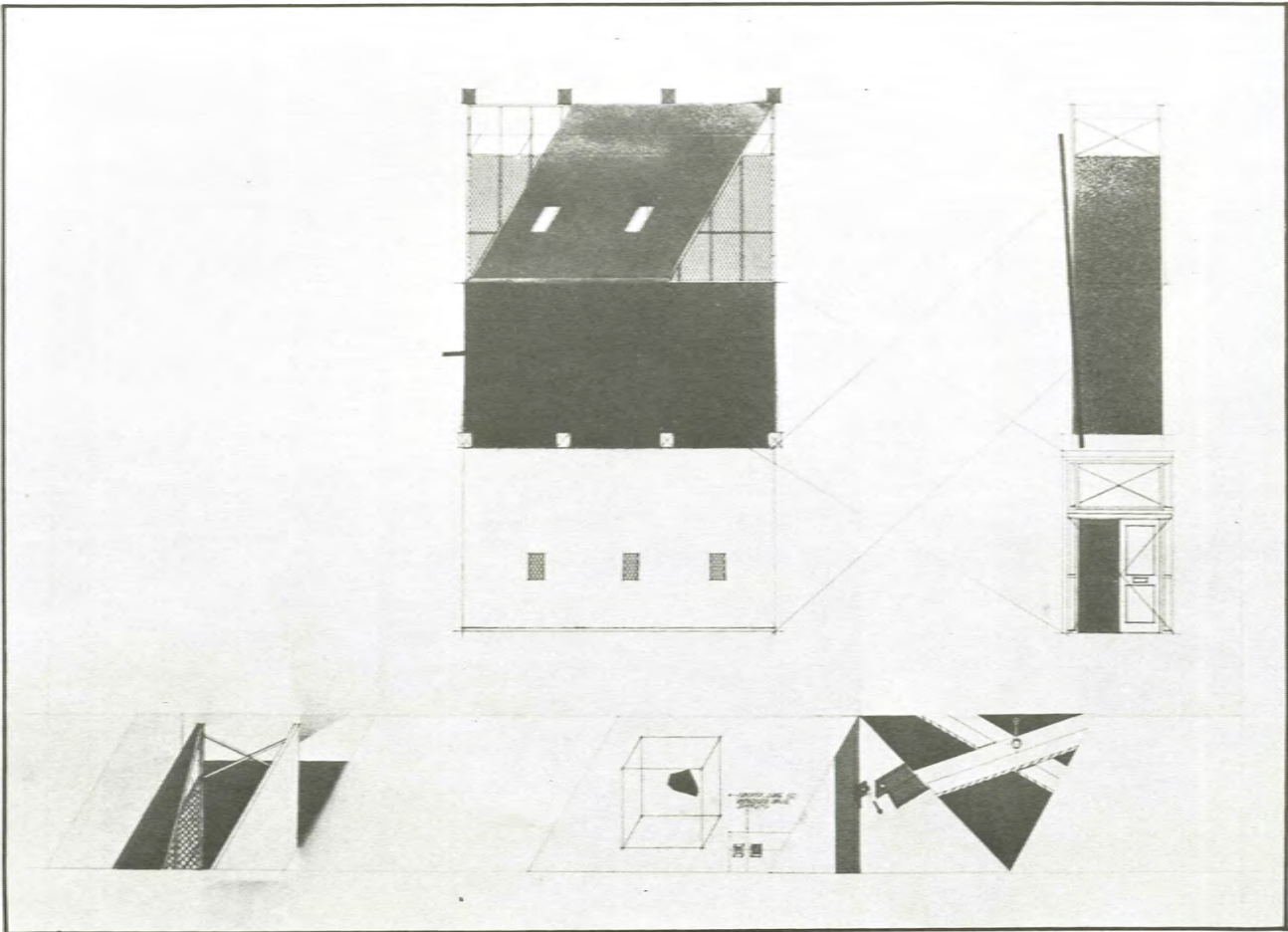
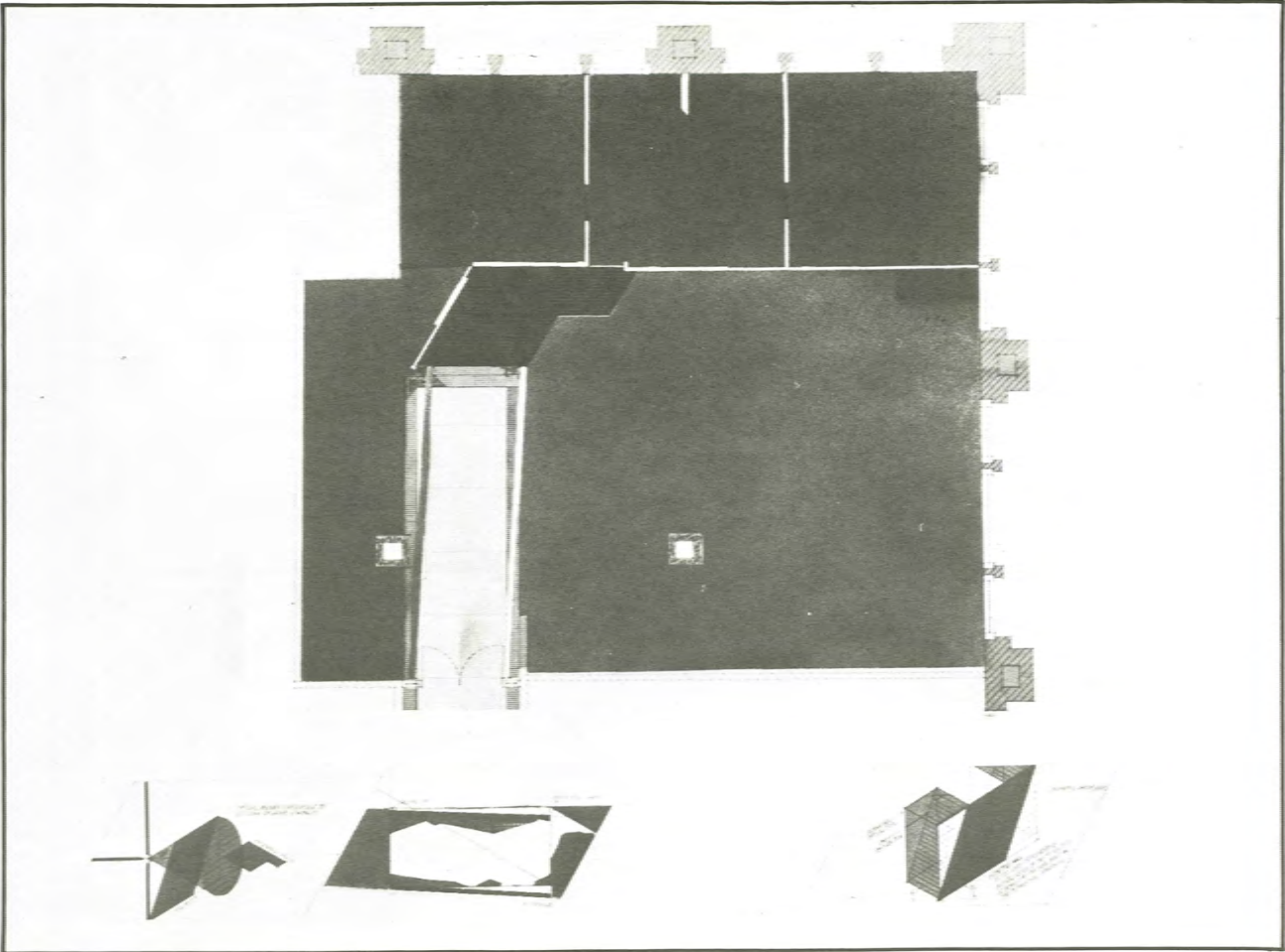
The installation is part of two formal institutions. It thus passes between two representations, between the formality of its architectural codes and the 'content' of the space, as a fragment of its codes, as a fragment in the space.

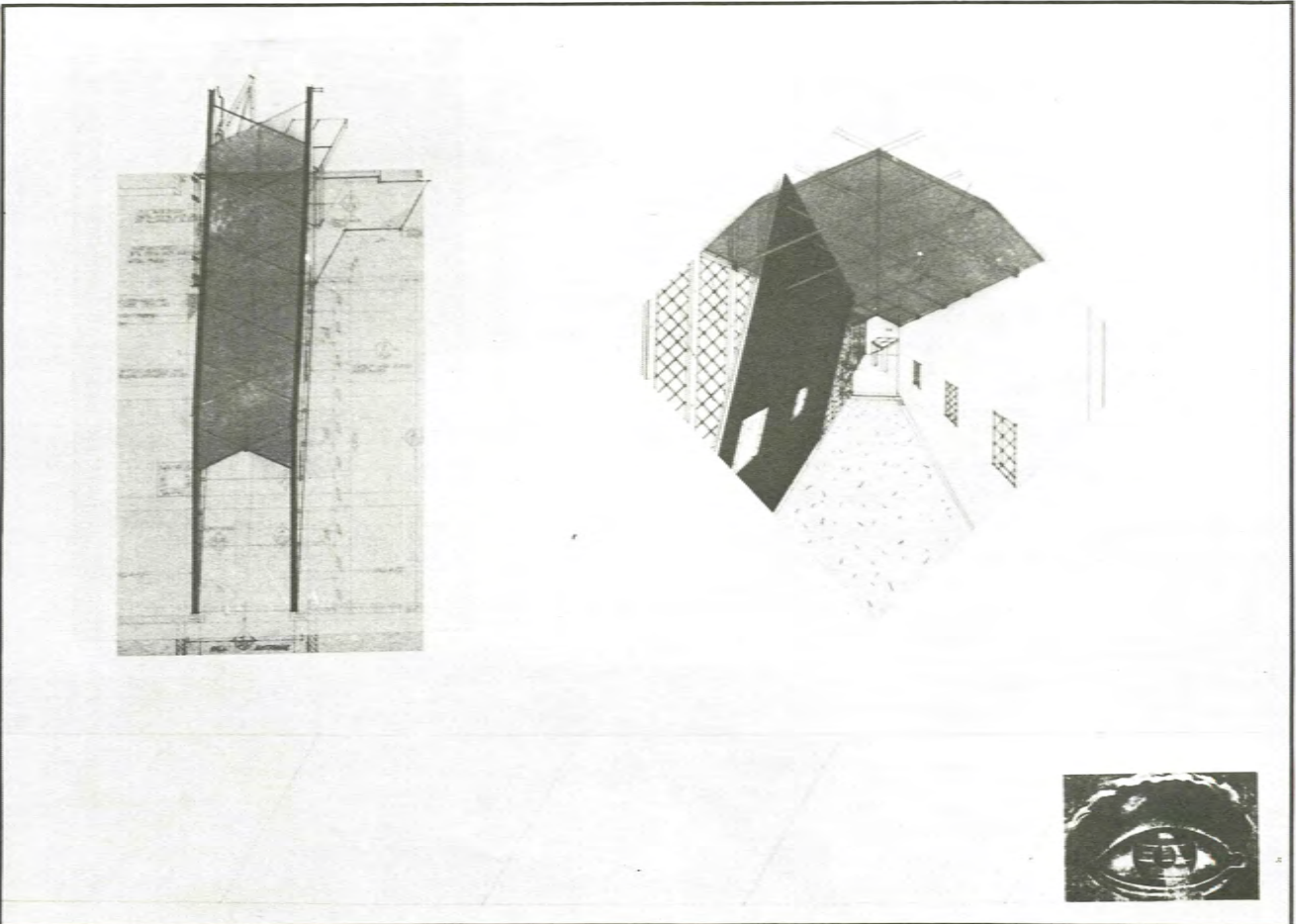
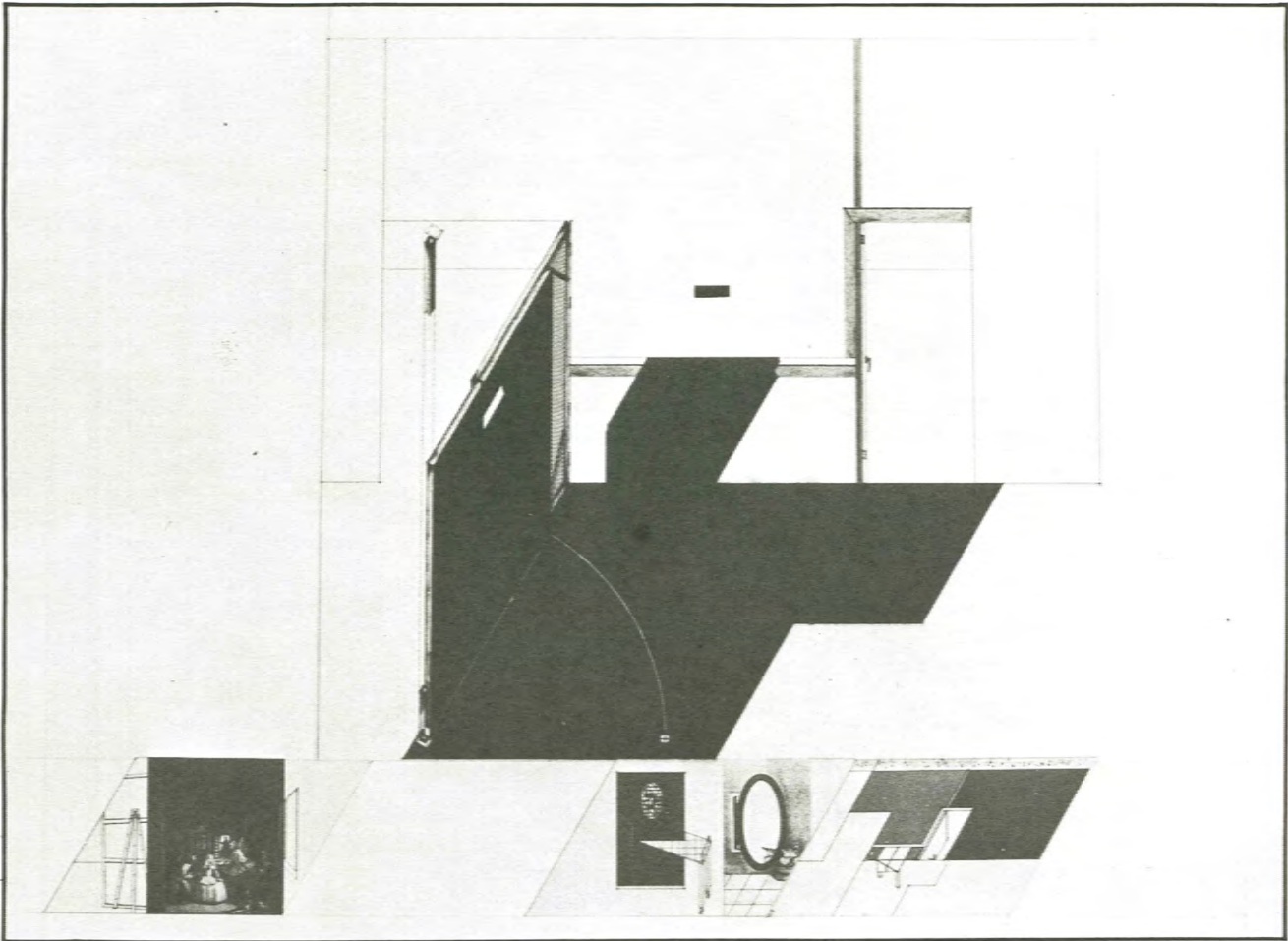
The fragment is a figural invention of modernism. This fictional device, which can generate a form from the logic of its initial conceit, however, does not point beyond its own invention. The immediacy of its presence is unlike the architectural fragment here which is more a representation of the space and a marking of absences. This fragment constitutes itself on the basis of evidence it uncovers: the historical traces of original occupancy — the tiled mosaic floor, column grids, moulding and ceramic block partition walls — of the Methodist Book Publishing House, built in 1913. But since the search for origins is no more than the trace of its own practice, the resulting representation is also the limit of its own discourse. It is restricted by the limits of its own analysis and presentation. In reflecting on its limits, in order to present this other 'content', the *critical* discourse of the installation and drawings attempts to make the representation of limits more than the limits of representation through various disruptive strategies. It reconstitutes the history of the space but articulates a difference through skews and perspectives that reflect upon its present functions and contradictions. Through this articulation, which is not mere juxtaposition, through the skews of sight and context, a representation appears.



Architectural Installation, 1981







Drawings, 1981 Pencil and mixed media on paper, 100 x 97 cm

ANDY PATTON

Andy Patton has produced an unknown body of work, unknown precisely because its forms of presentation are anonymous and its mechanisms unspoken. Between 1978-1980, he worked in the street with a series of language posters; their intervention was descriptive or political. They were presented outside the gallery without the artist's name, grounded in the ephemeral context of xerox street advertising. An attempt was made to blur the semantic markers of the usual gallery context (or sanction) and to provoke a non-intentional response from an accidental public. The logic of this process eventually abandoned language description for the photographic insertion of a postered site in the site. This extreme of self-representational and self-referential act functioned through the delay of its insertion and differential interruption. But it reflected a nostalgia for the site, a utopian desire for the surface of the world, for a pure productivity in an urban capitalist reality.

The retreat to the gallery that the A Space work implies is only recognition that while language may be effaced in production it still provides the context of a work. And it recognizes that only by providing for the convention of an audience that the blurring of semantic markers can be realized. Those who were barred from the artist's earlier intention — the art public that carries a context and history in its head — are the only ones who can make the posters work by means of their rules and infringements.

The back-lit advertising-like transparencies at A Space stand between the conventions of advertising and the gallery. They thus position the viewer in particular ways. But the work does not serve to legitimize either: it uses the conventions of the gallery in order to make something appear, but refuses the reproduction of advertising. Advertising, like art, has a built-in view of the spectator, a position and function for him or her. Outside of its manipulation and demand for buying response, advertising is positive in the creation and circulation of desire, which makes it a capitalist mode. But the circulation of desire is also the frustration of desire, desire's double bind. Patton has chosen not to disrupt the structural relation of advertising to its accidental viewer, as when he put a self-conflicting image in the street. Rather, he is speaking both directly and indirectly through the advertising format with a 'we' and a 'you', but not the 'we' and 'you' of advertising. He is not inhabiting the format or medium, nor is he deconstructing its image-text relation. A message is embedded in the actual structure of the format, image and response. That is, it must function the same way as the advertising message, with the same syntax and effects, but it must state something else while manipulating this structure.

Our position in front of these images is not accidental — we confront them in a gallery, not in the street. And yet, just as we are accidents of the production process ('mere sources of error' as Lukács defined workers in the capitalist mode of production), the accident forms part of some of these images.

As in the misregister in the source reproduction of Manet's *Portrait of Zola*, we become the accidents of the message of advertising, reproduced in its identity, fluctuating in its double bind: *One of you will serve as two / reconcile yourself to it*. It is as if the accident of reproduction serves to represent the ambiguous intentions of advertising. It represents both the content of the piece and the viewer as subject to it. Images may slide in these pieces, but not the language. Although the ambiguity that is condensed in the verbal message could be called a poetics of advertising, it has more to do with the social coding of language. We are addressed and caught in this language: in its baits and traps; in the address of 'we' and 'you'; in the binary numbers 'one' and 'two'; in the opposition of strength and service. We are bound to these images: *We think as bait*. The advertisement is bait to our thought, a tantalizing desire, but our thought is automatically its bait. We serve it: we think *as*, not *like* bait.

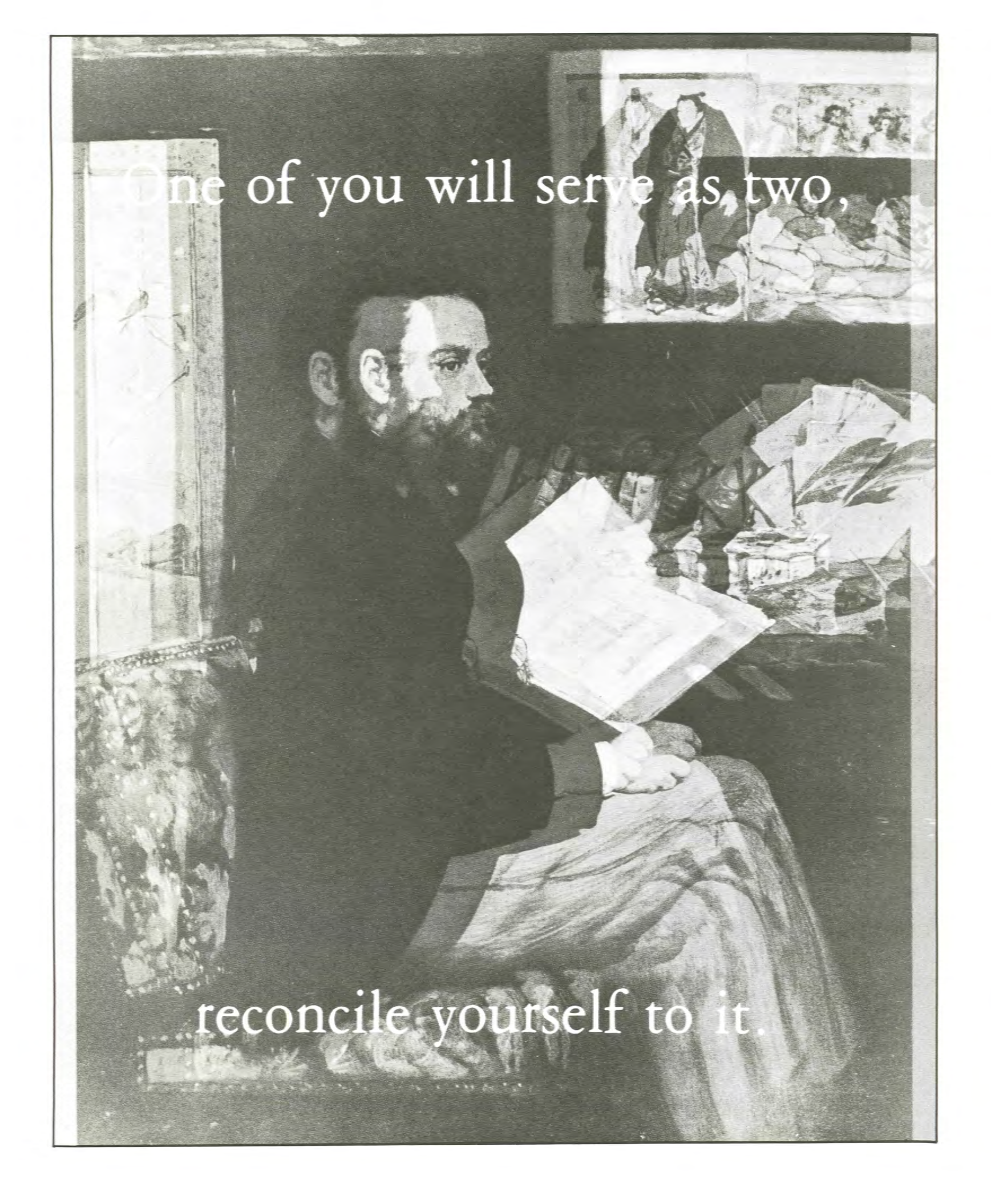
Against the onslaught of advertising, how and where do we control our representations, meanings and values? It is not a matter of subtly subverting its processes through inhabitation of its devices. What is presented to us in advertising and these images of Patton's are property relations. Who controls what, and who is where in the process? One of the works tells the unabashed truth. The text — *You are strong / stronger even than the poor / but you cannot stop* — of the 'good-life' advertisement shows where strength is permitted: in the Law of the capitalist code.



Fluorescent light boxes, colour photographic transparencies

We think as bait





One of you will serve as two,

reconcile yourself to it.



You are strong . . . , 1981
99 x 124 x 20 cm

One of you will serve as two . . . , 1981
63.5 x 76 x 20 cm

We think as bait . . . , 1981
63.5 x 63.5 x 20 cm

Only one way to keep being trapped . . . , 1981
90 x 63.5 x 20 cm

Dedicated to my brother Jay, dead in a crash of his plane at Big Hook Lake, August 1, 1981.

A.P.

KIM TOMCZAK

The very title of Kim Tomczak's installation, *Museum of Man*, provokes the question of presentation. The presentation of a museum-type display case in an art gallery unfolds the museum's ideological bracketing and invokes its dehistoricizing of objects. These are the mundane objects that have not been designated aesthetic and given special status and singular value in institutions that similarly efface their social formation. The museum's own origins are obscured in its ideal of human history. The museum historically is associated with colonialism and imperialism in the same way that modernism and the gallery are related to capitalism. The difference: objects under the former are collected; in the latter they are produced under these conditions. In this simple form, however, the installation should not be taken as a museological investigation which, in the last instance, restricts itself to a formal inquiry.

This installation poses the problem of the presentation of the literal within a symbolic apparatus. The very real contents of the three glass chalices — meat, blood and a combination of urine and excrement — are contained within a museum-type display case. The case is surrounded by a number of perfumed-scented handkerchiefs spread randomly on the floor; Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* plays. Two short texts are stencilled on the floor: 'Because I love you' at the entrance, and 'Spoils of War' in front of the case. How can the literal — meat, blood, feces — represent and not be short-circuited by its immediate effect of disgust? There is not enough distance for us; these elements are too concrete. But we should not focus too intently on these elements of the display case. They signify by entering into a complex, contradictory whole, contained by and in opposition to the other ideological symbols and representations — the case, handkerchiefs, music.

Museum of Man is about war, not about the museum, although the museum provides an analogous ideological

mechanism. Through the concrete objects of the body — the bodily remains, dirt and disorder of war — the artist displays what is never presented to us in images and representations of propagandistic preparation for war. What usually is presented as the heroic is only suggested here in its accoutrements, in the ambience of the perfume, the handkerchiefs and music. What is presented and what is absent are reversed in their emphasis. In the end, the body is always the object behind the exchange value of ideology.

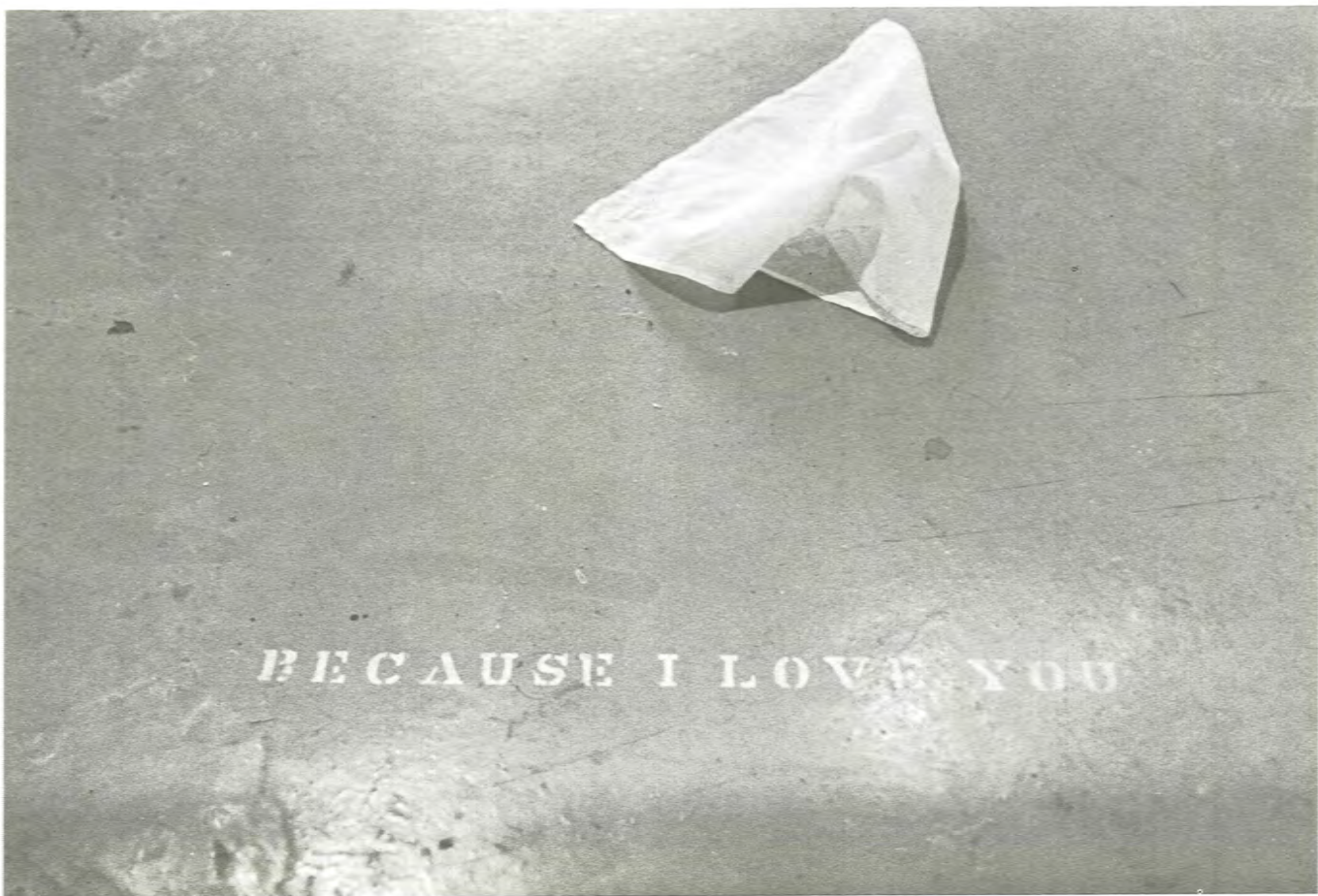
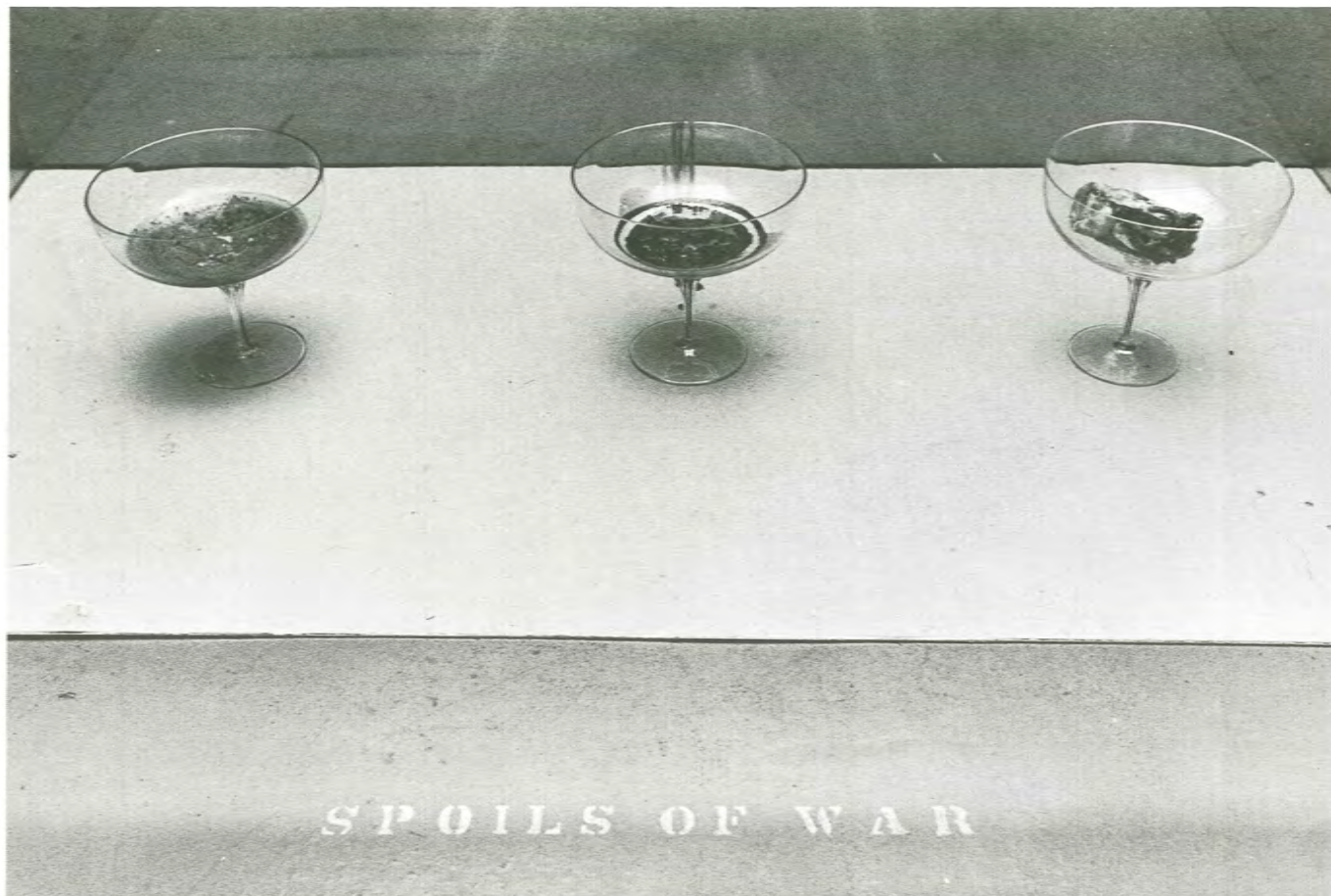
While the display case shows the unexpected spoils of war (not the plunder of war, but the reality for the masses who fight or sustain it), the case is part of a strategy of containment. Wars supposedly are fought on the basis of differences; yet the name, *Museum of Man*, dispels these differences. It implies that man is essentially humanist, transhistorical and beyond class differences. On the other hand, the quasi-ethnographic suggestion of the presentation tries to show that this evidence of war is historical: it happened in the past; it is not present, i.e., it is no longer possible.

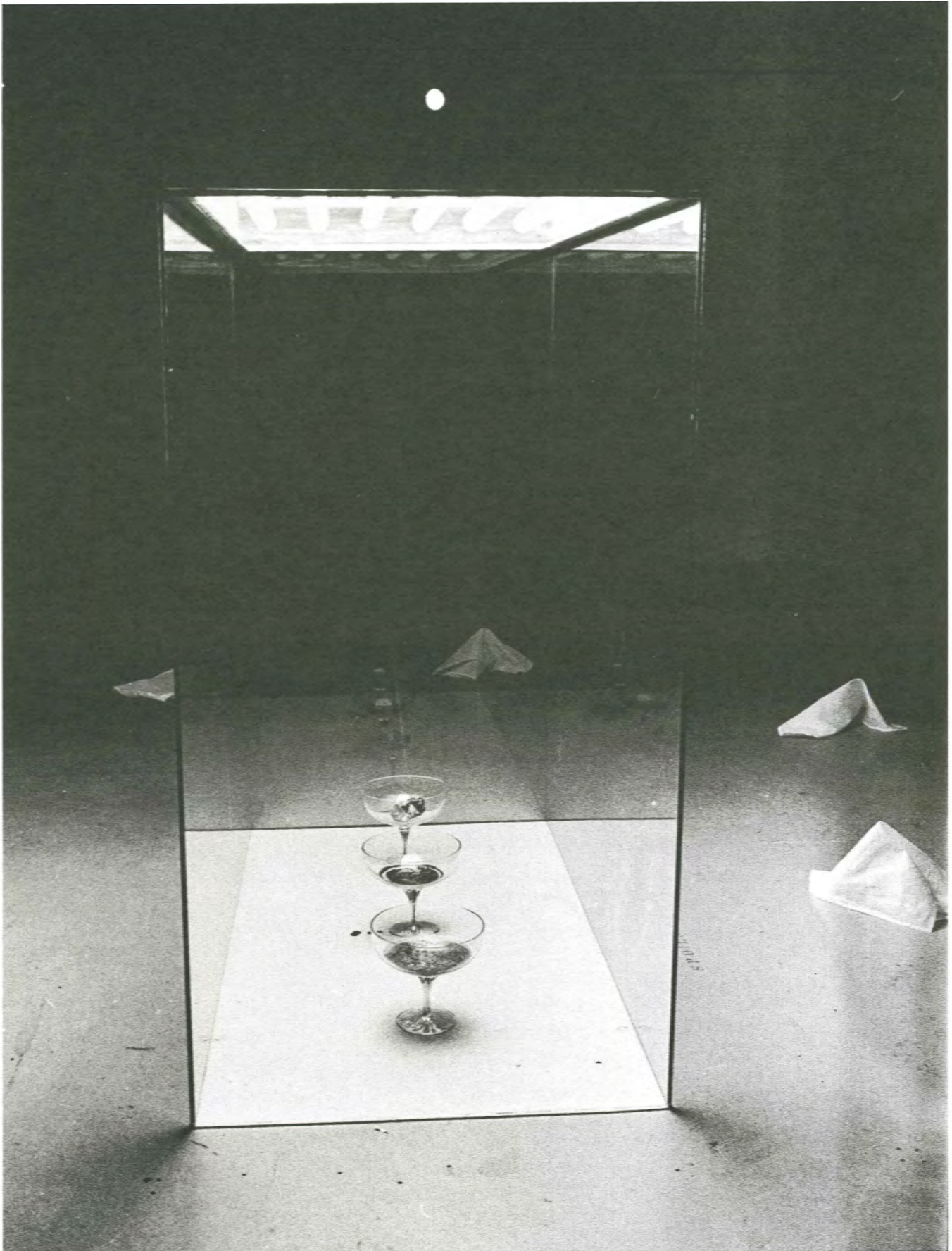
The real is kept in place, out of sight; or if it cannot be avoided, it is 'scented' in representations, that is, it is made ideological. The handkerchiefs similarly expose class differences: held up to the noses of upper-class ladies to avoid the stench of the streets; or women dabbing tears and waving the boys off to war. (There is a World War I heroism about this work; but while its sentimentality denotes that era, the installation connotes the current war hysteria.) The handkerchiefs are polyvalent in their references, accumulative in their associations. Their incipient romanticism — 'Because I love you' — is reinforced by the music, and they metaphorically transform into swirls of ballroom dancers. But they could also be the bodies or graves of dead soldiers. Polyvalence only comes down to the fantasies of ideology. In reality, the referent exceeds this structure.



Museum of Man, 1981

Glass chalices, excrement, urine, meat, blood, glass case, fluorescent fixture, handkerchiefs, audio tape





JOHN SCOTT

There comes a time in contemporary history when work has to be taken at its word. Rather than formal work on structure, material or sign, the times demand something be said. Taking a position and making a statement are matters of representation. Instead of the play of signifiers, the indeterminacy of the code or the wordless context of formal reductions, something takes a place and things are given their names. Perhaps we can see the plurality of 'postmodernist' strategies to be no more than capitalism's ruses regulated by the same system of signs as late capitalism; cultural nihilism as no more than capitalist equivalency, and produced by it. Naming puts a stop to that sliding.

Immediate response to contemporary politics allows no time for formal restraints, their refinement and development, their devolution into the recognizable signs of a signature style, material or formal investigation. Confused with an art expressionism, this immediacy is neither expression nor presence: it is a necessity that represents positions and names names. Immediacy then is mediated through the name and a process of signification. One of these names is 'class struggle'.

It is within these terms that John Scott's *Class Struggle 1982, A Drawing Disco Installation*, subtitled *Hell's Open Kitchen*, operates. This installation is a collection of drawings painted directly on the walls of A Space and lit with black lights. Two drawings in particular are confronted. On one side, we see a wall of angry 'proletariat' rabbits with 'CLASS STRUGGLE' emblazoned in red fluorescent paint below and 'HEAVEN' above. In the opposite corner, we find a ghost-like figure with arms extended and a radio beacon radiating from its head and with the word 'radio' in its rays, and beside it 'memory'. One could complain that a simplification takes place in this naming and implied class opposition; that it is thus more propagandistic than analytical; and that since this analysis is missing, this naming is not the identity to which the proletariat must come (if that is possible through art at all). For who is named, and how are the classes established by their relations and positions in the production process?

The artist attempts to identify these questions within the gallery, to recognize the terms in order to start a dialogue based on these names. The artist's function differs from the intellectual's task of organization, the 'intellectual' who speaks

to the bunnies in the upper register of the drawing. Yet both have to analyze the legitimizing structures of their own practices or discourses to discover the degree to which each are class representatives. What the intellectual speaks of and what the artist represents may be two different things. Finding a direct image, however, is equivalent to causal naming.

Class struggle has another name here, and that is memory. But it only stands as a name; and it is placed in the rays of the patriarchal radio tower, that is, in an apparatus that controls by means of its own ideological projections what is spoken of the past and present. Memory brings an *other* to speech. That naming also reawakens a positive utopian desire and demand: the 'heaven' of the rabbit wall. This is not a simple naming. The position of 'heaven' in this drawing is exactly that reserved for 'capital' in nineteenth century popular political prints which evokes the delusion of false consciousness. Its position thus mimics what Marx wrote about the spiritualization of secular contradictions.

This dialectics of image and name is internally contradictory. Or, rather, a direct image is conceptualized by naming, in a manner analogous to Eisenstein's montage method, and resolved by the viewer. In his film *Strike* (an instance other than montage), Eisenstein showed how a utopian (ideological) scene could function within another, stricter narrative representation. One of the first images after the strike shows a group of workers, men and women, as if on the way to a picnic: revolution as festival! But we discover that this is only a cover for an organizational meeting. On the narrative level, festival was only a disguise for organization and a reminder of its necessity. 'Festival' thus remains on the ideological level. While Eisenstein shows this desire, he does not let it rest as regressive: organization and struggle must intervene which counteract the initial image. Still, Eisenstein displays this powerful image of festivity which is registered as a positive effect within the didactic narrative.

John Scott's previous work showed how abstract shapes become representational through labelling and mimetic association. His activity was analogous to scientists creating systems of representation for robotic weapons, the subject of his drawings. This fascination and complicity between the two 'semiotic' acts have now been replaced by the view from the other side.





Radio



Class Struggle 1982, A Drawing Disco
Installation: Hell's Open Kitchen

Installation shots, wall drawings
Fluorescent paint and black lights
945 x 324 cm
586 x 324 cm

JUDITH DOYLE

During its short history, performance art has passed from apodictic presentation of the body; to displacement of the artist by the fragmentation and dispersal of the body in technological codes; to effacement of the artist in representation. In the latter, the artist realizes or operates the performance but is absent as performer. The (spoken) 'I' thus has travelled in a trajectory from the apodictic to the representational, from the *diegetic* to the *mimetic*, direct to indirect speech. Since the artist bodily is absent in this last type of performance, and the positions and presentations thus something other than the artist, the gesturality of the artist's presence is replaced by a new subject.

Not only does performance become subject to representation, a new subject presents itself to view. This subject may have been unspoken because it was never given voice through history; or the unspoken may have been suppressed as 'woman' — as an unrepresentable position; or the subject may never be spoken of, as death is repressed, unspoken and unrepresentable. Representation itself is repressed, and it can only come to the fore as a loss.

The film *Private Property / Public History* recalls all these positions. It is to be viewed together with another film, *Launch*, as if the two were montage images. They are not separate, but successive and supplemental: the more 'personal' first and 'political' second provide the ground and background for each other. Each are composed of voiced reminiscences (but not in the original voices) creating narratives over a series of old photographs — in the first film through a dialogue; in the second through two monologues. These primary sources — photographs and reminiscences — are subject for representation as image and text, redoubled through other voices and through the film medium. But as well as being a reference, the photograph itself is a trace; the photograph comes first as the constitutive trace on which speech is articulated and representation is possible as evidence of the loss of the other inscribed in the present. Since the photograph becomes material for representation, but is related to its original referent as an index, what is the position of the artist making this material representational and standing to the material and sources?

The search for a subject of art, and hence representation, became a search through the image. These photographs came into the possession of the artist by accident — passed on from a lot at a country auction. Certain features provoked the artist, one of which was the record of a long friendship between two women. The artist set out to discover something of this friendship and found one of these women, the one who took most of the photographs, in a country nursing home. Identities and narrative were traced through the photographs by talks with her and various people face to face with the images. Partly through these talks and locale, the Collingwood ship-building industry became the subject of the second film, and its collective enterprise the foil to the individual narrative and genetic 'dead-end' of the first film.

A curious feature of many of these photographs, which initially provoked the search, was the recurrent, distinct shadow of the photographer in the foreground often falling across the subjects in the photographs. This accidental, amateurish and yet obsessive shadow was a register, not of the inscription of making, but of the proximity of its maker.

In many ways this proximity and distance were prefigured in the artist's 1981 performance, *Transcript*. A written copy that usually starts from speech, etymologically 'transcript' is a writing across, to the other side, into a different state or place. It bears the same conditions as representation: something takes the place of another; but it is not necessarily a re-presentation since its form has changed from its origin which now is figured as a loss. *Transcript* was based on the spoken accounts of two displacements — one, the physiological displacement of a broken back, and the other, the physical and psychological displacement that is emigration. Even though spoken, and speech finds a privileged relation to presence, these transcripts already called for representation in the apparatuses of physical and cultural difference since they were displacements. But since the texts, spoken in the first person by the people the artist knew, were presented and represented in other than their original voices through various means in image and live and recorded speech, we could call this representation a transposed proximity. The performance, then, was a play of presence and absence, a representation of material close to the artist but not of her, and a presentation to the audience through her own absence in the form of representations of what usually remains unspoken — pain and emigration.

Representation gives witness to an original loss. In *Private Property / Public History*, the narrative search and register of loss is lent rhythm by the filmic sense of time and given particularity through voice and image. The loss is doubled in a different sense, for the old woman who took the photographs in her youth, in the return of the loss of the 'referent' that the photographs now represent. Spoken memory and snapshot are of the same personal order for her; but in the exchange that took place with the loss and transfer of the photographs, personal property becomes public history. At the end of a genetic line, the images change hands and what serves as a family retention becomes material for a representational act by the artist. A 'genealogy' is constructed backwards from this end of the line, but the search through these traces is not ontogenetic: it is an investigation constructed from photographs and their supplemental narratives. The artist constructs the film through the woman's loss, a content that is duplicated on the formal level. As much as the images and text turn us to these referents uncertainly identified in conversation, the film's own apparatus and constraints bind us to a loss that is fundamentally representation. The woman's individual loss is reason perhaps why the artist shifted to the collective endeavour and representation that we find in the narrative of the construction of ships in the second film *Launch*.

Private Property / Public History

"I lived in Creemore. My Father lived there for a long time, and my sister lived there a long time. On the farm, we had apples and grain, and lots of pears. We took pictures for a long time.

I have no family. My house was in a glen, and I've lived here all my life. What I like best is that it's my home. I went on the railroad once, a way out to the west. My husband and I got a car, and we dropped it off, then we came back.

There was a big fire. It wasn't in my home — I have never had a fire in my home. I spent a lot of time with Eva, I lived near her, but she's not there now. It burned down. She moved out west. I like my life here very much. It was never hard. Who are you?

I have lived on the farm always, thirty-five years. Before, I worked in a store in Creemore. Let me see those pictures. I remember the boats. Dalt and I had a car, and we went way out west. I love it there. Dalt never went to war.

That place is burned now. It's gone.

Very very very very very many years ago. That's my little Collie. That's Dalt's dog. And that's my sister. Where'd Dalt go? Where'd Dalt go, hmmm? I had no children. Lloyd is out west. I was out there for three weeks. The happiest moment of my life was my wedding day. Where'd Dalt go?

2: What do you suppose the year on this one is, 1925...?

A stern look. You don't suppose that's Dalt — the young fellow.

2: That's definitely not Dalt. That doesn't look like the living room here either. The only wall you could put a chesterfield along was that one there.

That was taken before they put the window in.

2: But do you think it's Dalt and Edna?

Oh no. That looks like out west somewhere. See there's quite a family that went out west. There's hills in the back — it could be. I was just thinking, the size of the field, although there are fruit trees around the side of the house there. Possibly, the way the barn comes down the same slope there, I would say those two are of a type.

She talked about a fire last weekend. She talked a lot about that fire, and about taking the water out of the pond. Where was that fire?

2: It was their barn. That was Gord and Eva's barn.

She said Eva's house burned down and Eva went out west. She must have gone out west at one time.

2: Well, Dalt hit some pretty hard times in the thirties. He hit on — I don't know the details, whether he did declare bankruptcy or had a forced sale or something — I really don't know the details. Gord did tell me he hit on some hard times and had to

liquidate some property.

I think Edna would be fairly sensitive to that because in those days you didn't — it could have been in the twenties. But I know there were some troubles. They mightn't have been what we would today consider problems, just a shortage of cash flow or something. I would say he was in his early thirties in those days, and likely a fairly progressive type, caught in expanding just like a lot of people are today, purchasing a farm maybe, and having to liquidate some livestock. If it's a bad market, it doesn't do you really that much good.

2: Villa Reid

Villa Reid, it's not...well, she's got a smile like Mary Reid, so she must be related through the Reid's somewhere. She sure looks like Mary when you sit back and take a look from back here and blot out the hair. I'd swear it was Mary.

2: She took an awful lot of pictures. Being single like that and no family, I guess they...

There's that same woman, I think working in the shipyard during the war. It would be the first World War, gauging by the smock that she's wearing.

2: What is she holding on to?

A tube. I think they'd set the running rod in that sort of tube, because the rods would be heavy at the base.

2: Did the women keep working in the shipyard after the war was over?

No, they didn't. As far as I know, there's only one woman working there now, and she's in maintenance.

2: Here's a picture of a ship launch.

Gee, that must be an old picture. They were making steamboats anyway — there are rivets in it. Seems like, between the wars, they made a lot of tugs — I think they made their living with tugs and scows.

2: Could that one be Dalt? I'm just going by the eyes. If you look at the eyes — I used to see him quite a bit in the sixties because I worked in the bank here. He'd always come in, looking — he always had the look. He was always looking past you. You know some people when they look at you they're sort of looking over you or through you or over top of you? Well, I guess they spent a lot of years working at that. You look at people and they're looking behind you...that's what that guy's looking to me anyways. That's why it looks like Dalt to me.

It looks like a fairly well-to-do type...that lady has the features of Villa Reid. That's that other girl we were saying about before. She's just got a different look on her.

2: Nobody knew these pictures were to be sold?



Private Property / Public History, 1982
Super 8mm colour film, 16.14 minutes

Well, they were notified, because I got a note about it. And Mrs. Jackson knew. Lloyd McCague, he knew too because I phoned him and asked, and he said the Public Trustee had notified him.

2: Look at that hat.

I remember she had a box of snapshots that were up in that room. Are you trying to identify these people by any chance? My oldest sister would have been more apt to know these...I'm quite a bit younger than Dalt. I wouldn't recognize these people. But here's your shadow. That's the same one as that.

These must be the old Lougheed pictures. I imagine these were there before Mrs. Lougheed moved in — before Dalt was married. You see, he lived with his parents, and he looked after them until they died. Dalt was born on that farm and lived there all his life until ten years ago when he and Mrs. Lougheed went to the Erinrung Nursing Home. You see, all their family — five of their family — went west. So I would assume that when Edna arrived she got a bunch of these pictures and put them out of sight. I really never...when I was cleaning out the house, I never looked at the pictures.

2: Because of the surroundings I would say that looks like a western picture. There she is again.

They may be sisters, they may be friends...it's the same place, there's the same row of trees.

2: Edna is in a lot of photographs with that woman.

I should have gone down to the sale that day but it was Thanksgiving Day, and we had company from the North, some coming down from Thunder Bay and some from Frobisher Bay...I just couldn't get away for a day like that. That looks more like Edna than anything I have seen yet.

2: It could be Edna and Effie. She had a sister.

There were only two girls, two sisters — but Effie wasn't that much taller than her. She did have friends though. She worked in a store.

2: Dalt and she — they weren't young when they married. She loved to dress and big ear-rings and beads to match and all that type of thing. They were the type that went to town every Saturday night.

They went to quite a few things, but they weren't, you know, terribly public-minded. They weren't the type to belong to all kinds of organizations that were around.

2: They hadn't any children, and we were just saying yesterday after the funeral, that's the last of that era of Lougheeds. That is, the Lougheed name. There might be some Lougheeds that are married to someone else, but the Lougheed name is now gone.

2: All of the Allen's are gone — Edna is the last brother or sister living. There's only nieces and

nephews there anymore, and they're scattered. So the photographs — I suppose they sent them back and forth out west to keep in touch with the family.

They were only out west once, for a trip. But you see, so many of the family lived out there, they communicated backward and forward for many years.

2: I would say so, yes. I'm fairly sure that the people out there had the means to take pictures. I think some of them did fairly well financially.

I'm years and years younger than Dalt, and he's the youngest one of the family. Dalt was called in the first World War, but he didn't have to go on account of his being the only person to work on the farm.

2: He was a very politically-minded person. He was Tory right from the top to the bottom.

People vote now more for the man they think is going to do the most good for them, regardless of party. At one time, if you were born into a Tory or Grit family, you bloody well stayed that way, or you were near disowned by the family.

2: That was Dalt. He was Conservative right to the back bone.

He just never voted for anybody else. We've voted both ways. The man's that going to help you, that's the person to vote for. Why would you vote for a person that only gets ten votes. He's not going to get you anything he promised you just because he's a Tory or a Grit.

But Dalt was deep-dyed.

2: Dr. McKinnon Phillips of Owen Sound was Minister of Health for quite a number of years. You'd be foolish to vote against him because if anybody could get anything for his riding, one of the Ministers can.

So you'd vote for him. Whether you were Conservative or Liberal or whatever.

2: No, elections are very quiet now compared to what they used to be.

It used to be you just looked at a subject and if the sun was shining you took the picture. That was the sum and substance of it. Now, you go by...you know, you're more specific about your lighting. Where the shadows are, all this type of thing.

2: There's a lot of people that take pictures. Nearly everybody has a camera and has had for many years. We've taken pictures and recorded what went on. But mainly for personal reasons I would think. We do competition work and things like that. But I think most people, nowadays especially, just take what they think is going to be of interest to them. To hand down from one generation to the next generation.

That's my nephew's wedding, and the evening light makes the colours...my granddaughter, friends,



Gordon's birthday cake. My daughter-in-law decorated it. She's got quite a flair for that type of thing. This is what I like. I like to be able to take my nephew's wedding pictures.

These are not for competition, of course.

We judge them for composition, colour and sharpness, impact. I think they go a little too much by impact. More than what they should. I like to be able to take pictures of weddings and things like that.

Impact is... colour. Whether the colour is outstanding. I don't know if that's the way to explain it or not. You can get one that's very bland, or you can get one that's good, natural colour. I think that naturalness has the greatest impact.

2: It's the one that draws your attention first and holds your attention.

Subject matter. One thing rather than three or four things that... some of them try to get too much into one picture.

They have written a couple of books — one on Collingwood Township and one on Grey County, and Collingwood Township plays a part in that. They have a Historical Society that keeps up... I don't belong to the Historical Society, but they sort

of keep up a running history as things go along. I wouldn't say there's any specific interest.

2: Dalt travelled all over buying and selling and trying to make a penny here and there, and Mrs. Lougheed didn't want to be alone. So I stayed there with her for a winter, and went to school about five miles away. She went through some pretty hard times — I mean, she had a rough time going through the change. Before she married Dalt, Mrs. Lougheed worked in Meaford — she worked in Hill's store, selling hats. She really was no farmer, though she adjusted to farm life. But she always had those nice hats, always fancy, and everyone always said she came from town. She certainly liked good living.

It's strange but I don't remember her ever listening to music, or even turning on a radio. And I don't remember the Lougheeds ever mentioning their anniversary. Oh, Mrs. Lougheed after awhile took to farm life. She had a dog — its name was Old Fly — it was a thoroughbred dog.

There was a niece, Villa. Yes, that's Villa Allen there. She died suddenly. Villa Allen Reid died suddenly, under rather strange circumstances. It was just a short while ago. I don't know exactly the details, but I think she choked."



Launch, 1982 Super 8mm colour film, 19.07 minutes

MISSING ASSOCIATES

Material, presentation and audience reception are not three successive moments of a work but are each bound to the other. A change of material changes the relation to the audience and the form of presentation. A different attitude to the audience also changes the presentation of material. Can we isolate presentation as we have material and audience here? Or, in fact, is it through presentation that each loses its quality of 'in itself', that in considering the other, each must consider representation? The work mediates material — no longer 'in itself', but a reference/referent — and an audience in the space of meeting that we can call representation.

Any change of discourse, or any change in one of these elements, is a violence to a conventional set-up. But even the return that convention itself signifies is violent. It may be a violent disruption of the space faced with an audience, or it may be a space where violence can be articulated.

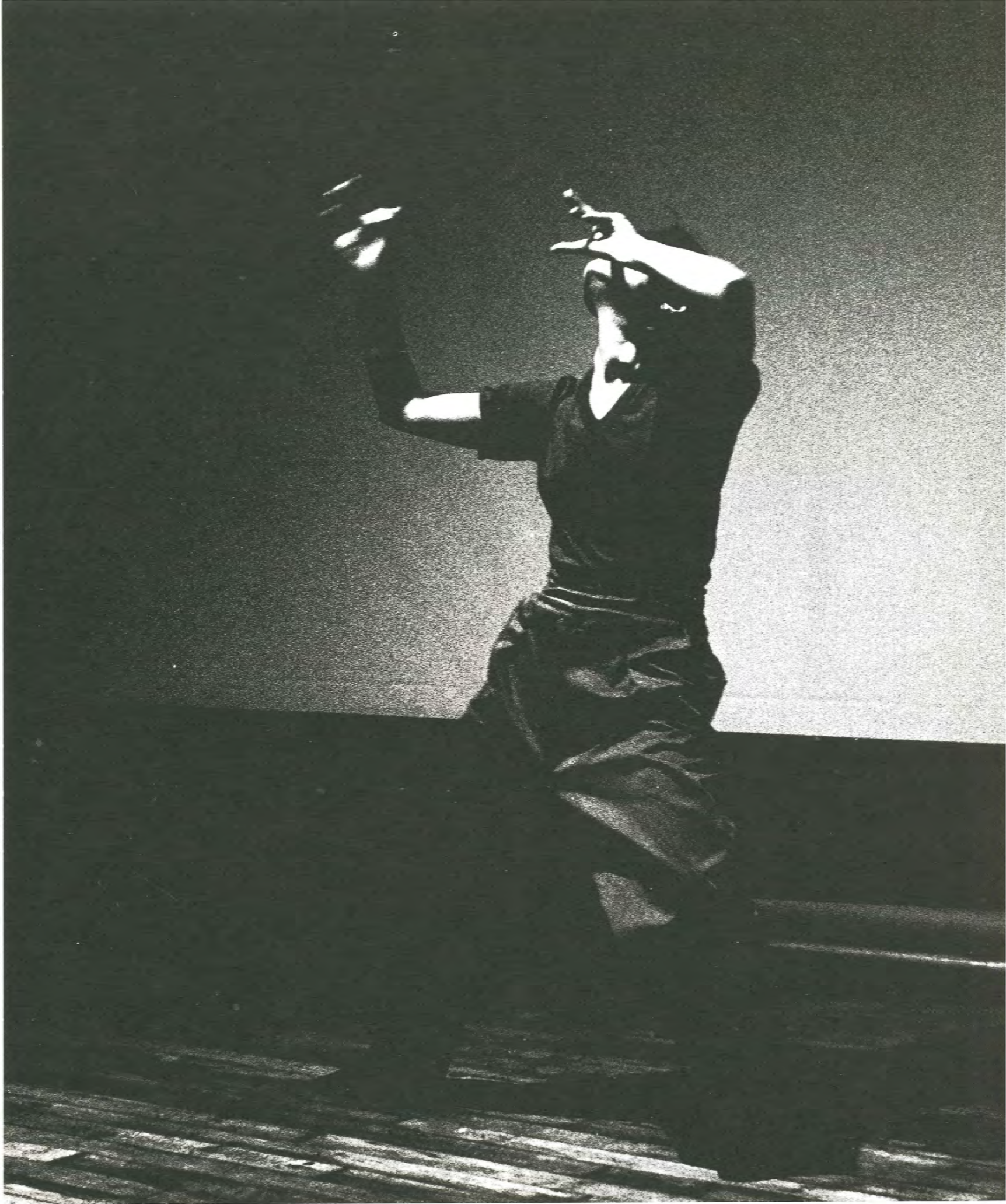
Missing Associates' work has articulated that violence, redirection of intensity, and change of strategy. Their early work was both a violent experience for the audience and a violence to the forms of dance (which were two moments of the same strategy). A Futuristic rhetoric met a 'terroristic' strategy in confrontation with an audience, and dance served as the unsuspecting and disguised ground for a political presentation or dialogue that formerly and formally it was unable to sustain without incurring violence to its form or to the dance institution. *Dogs of Dance* stridently interchanged guerrilla and dance manuals. Dance forms were violated, not only in the introduction of fighting stances, techniques and blows, as well as martial arts instructors as performers, but also in the dancer coming to speech. For Lily Eng, this coming to speech, in the sense of introducing politics into dance but also literally through the voice, took effect within dance; for Peter Dudar, it took the form of a movement toward film and performance. Already that displacement into film calls for representation, just as the excess of speech is a displacement/placing that is subject to a system of representation.

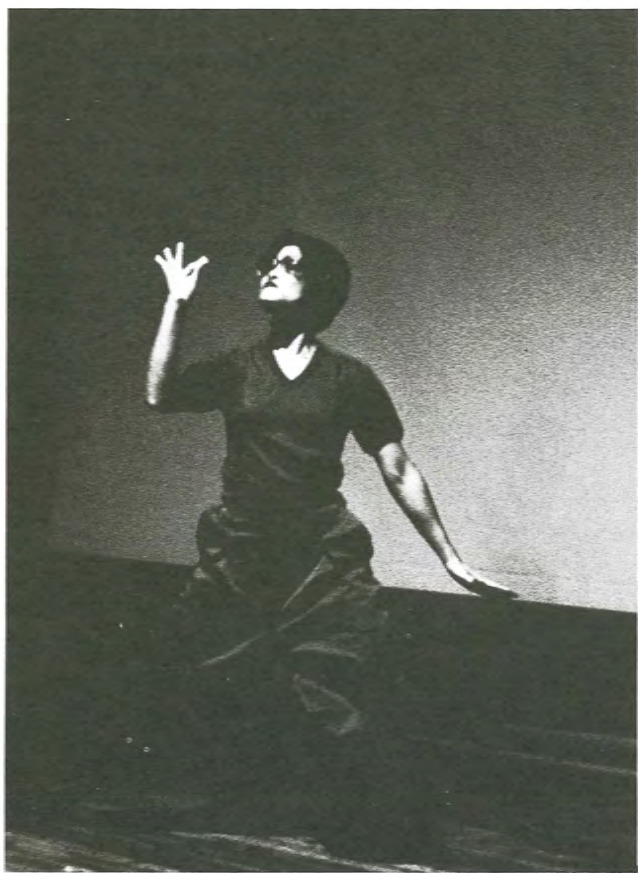
For both Lily Eng and Peter Dudar, representation coincides with the change of strategy to a communicative intent. For Lily Eng, it also coincides with the introduction of music to her improvisational dance. The titles to the dances — the names of the music and the mood/lyrics — reinforce an intention. Intensity is graduated and condensed in a cluster of interpretational gestures and movements. Politics and dance have shifted to dance and interpretation, rhetoric to restrain-

ed representation.

While Peter Dudar no longer dances or choreographs, the violent effects of dance have become inscribed within a different regime. Not only do I mean the representational apparatus of film, but the implantation of politics in the body itself. The body is an active field of intervention. The subject's consciousness is not the only site of ideological constraint. In the film *DP*, and its companion slide and audio installation, *Resistance*, this registration is enunciated through a voice: a narrative of constricted movement, of surveillance and subsistence, of occupation, forced labour and escape in the Ukraine and Germany during World War II. (The installation and performance, *Transylvania*, similarly treats another narrative and history of control through an individual soldier in World War I.) This double inscription of voice and body is carried through the narrator's descriptions and answers to questions on inter-titles. But at the same time, other titles constrain that narrative for us and indicate the ideological forces historically at work. That is, the narrative is forced to 'speak' something other than the questions it is asked. The history of these displacements are spoken under the Left and Right slogans of the inter-titles: 'Imperialism', 'Nationalism', 'Practice'. This series of slogans, ideological naming and placement lose their investment in the dissolution of their opposition as we hear their actual and similar actions on the body of the narrator: first forced labour and imprisonment, then 'Repatriation', 'Seizure', and accusation of 'Collusion'. Their restraints are more than ideological, becoming totalitarian on both sides. When asked 'How did you feel when you knew that Germany had lost the war?', the narrator replies on titles: 'Whoever wins, you lose.'

The narrator does not speak for the artist, although the story may have come to the artist through personal contacts. The titles are another order of constriction that is now representation and an ironic counterpoint to the personal narrative. The titles reverse the effects of the slogans' usual meanings in a complex of contradictions: 'The Long March' becomes a 'liberation' from both the Nazis and Soviets in an escape to a capitalist country; 'Triumph of the Will' accompanies the narrator's commentary on surviving a concentration camp. While the statements of the inter-titles are a displacement and distancing of representation, another positive force intervenes: periodically the film is broken by the insistence of another resistance, that of the body of Lily Eng in performance.





Decades

Lily Eng
Improvisational Dances

1. *Decades*, 1982, music: 'Decades', Joy Division.
2. *We Shall Be Happy*, 1982, music: 'We Shall Be Happy', Trad. arrangement.
3. *Here She Comes Again*, 1982, music: 'Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima', Penderecki; 'Enola Gay', Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark.

TRIUMPH

A friend of mine was really getting on my nerves. Everyday he'd say 'I can't stand it anymore! I'm going to kill myself.'

OF

'Listen,' I said, 'We haven't been tatoood. And if we haven't been tatoood they probably won't keep us here more than a year.'

THE

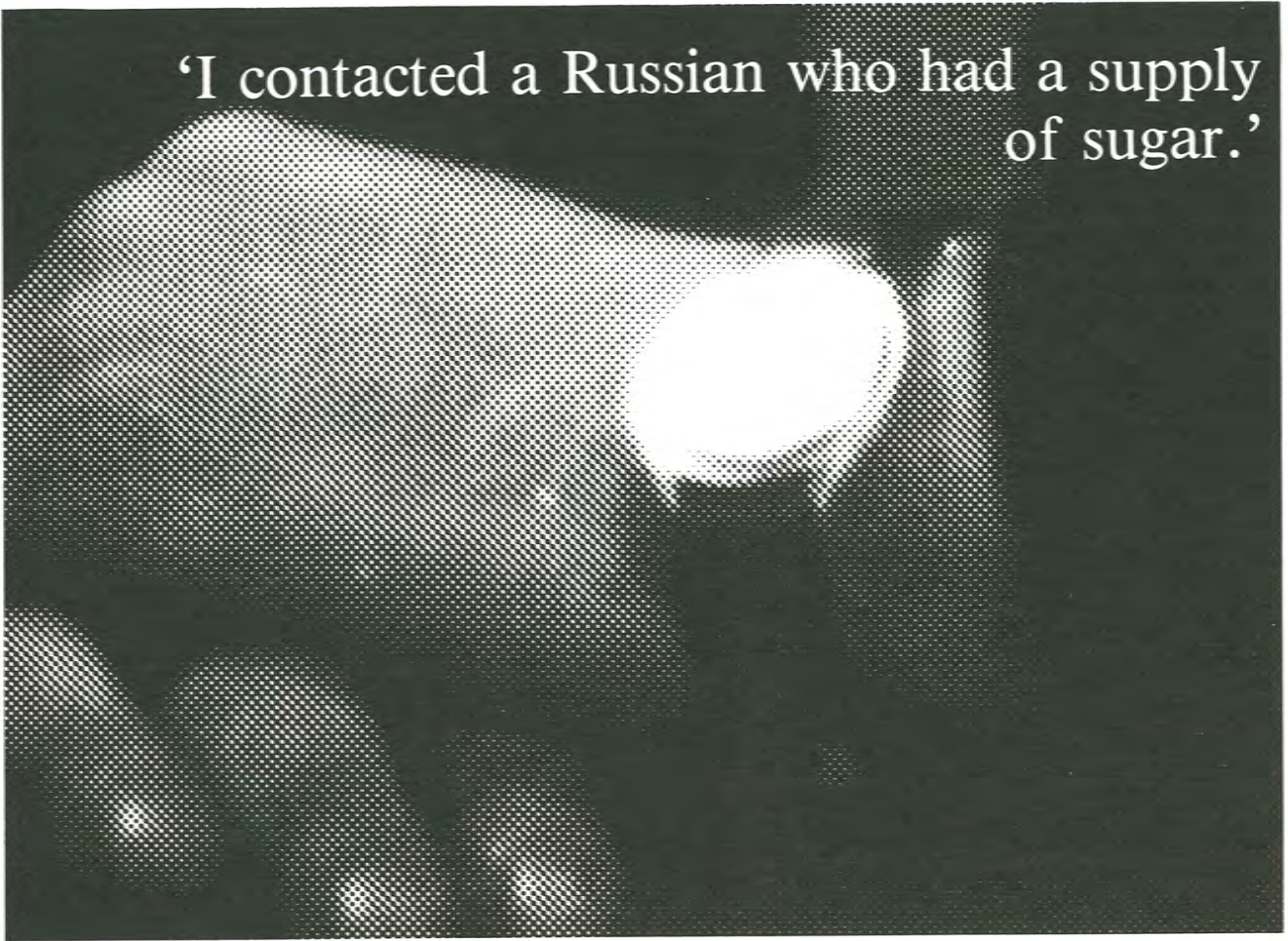
Now, in a year about eighty per cent of us will die. Some will get sick, won't be able to work, and will get their food cut off.' You're no good to the Nazis if you can't work. Others will get beaten by the guards and so on.

WILL

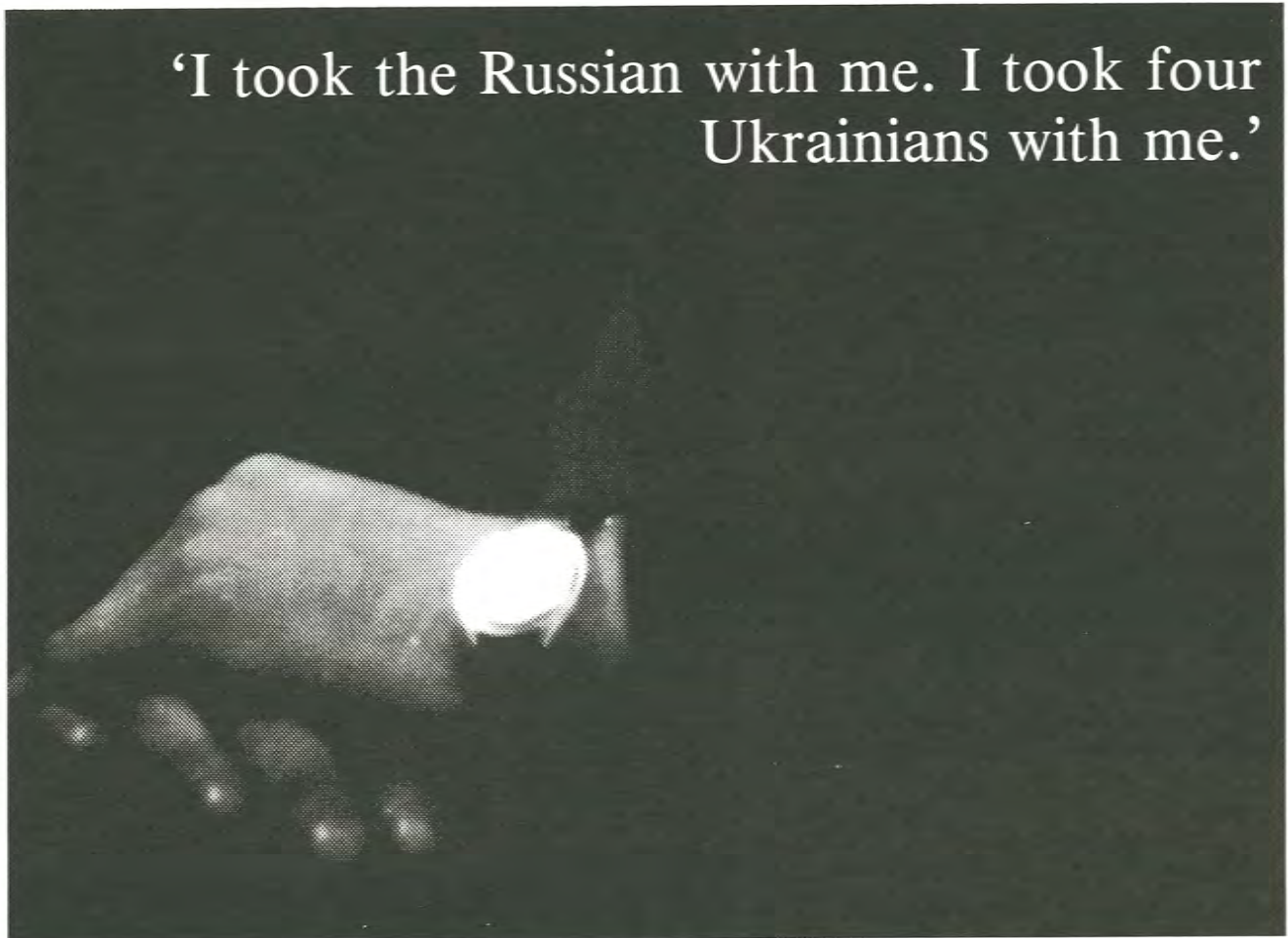
But half of the people who die will die because they want to die. 'Look, we have a twenty per cent chance of surviving. It's crazy to kill yourself.'

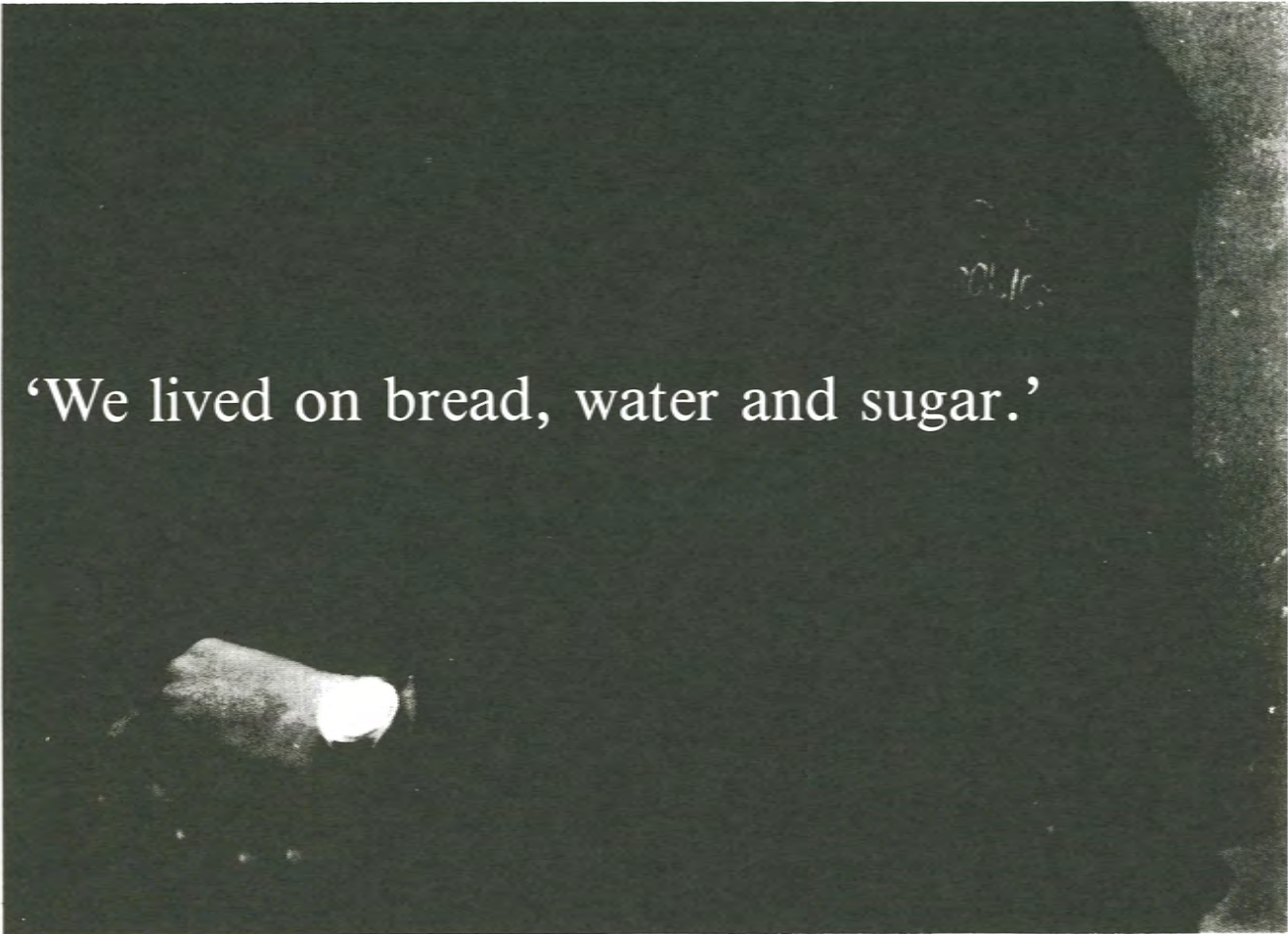
DP
Stills and
voice-over

'I contacted a Russian who had a supply
of sugar.'

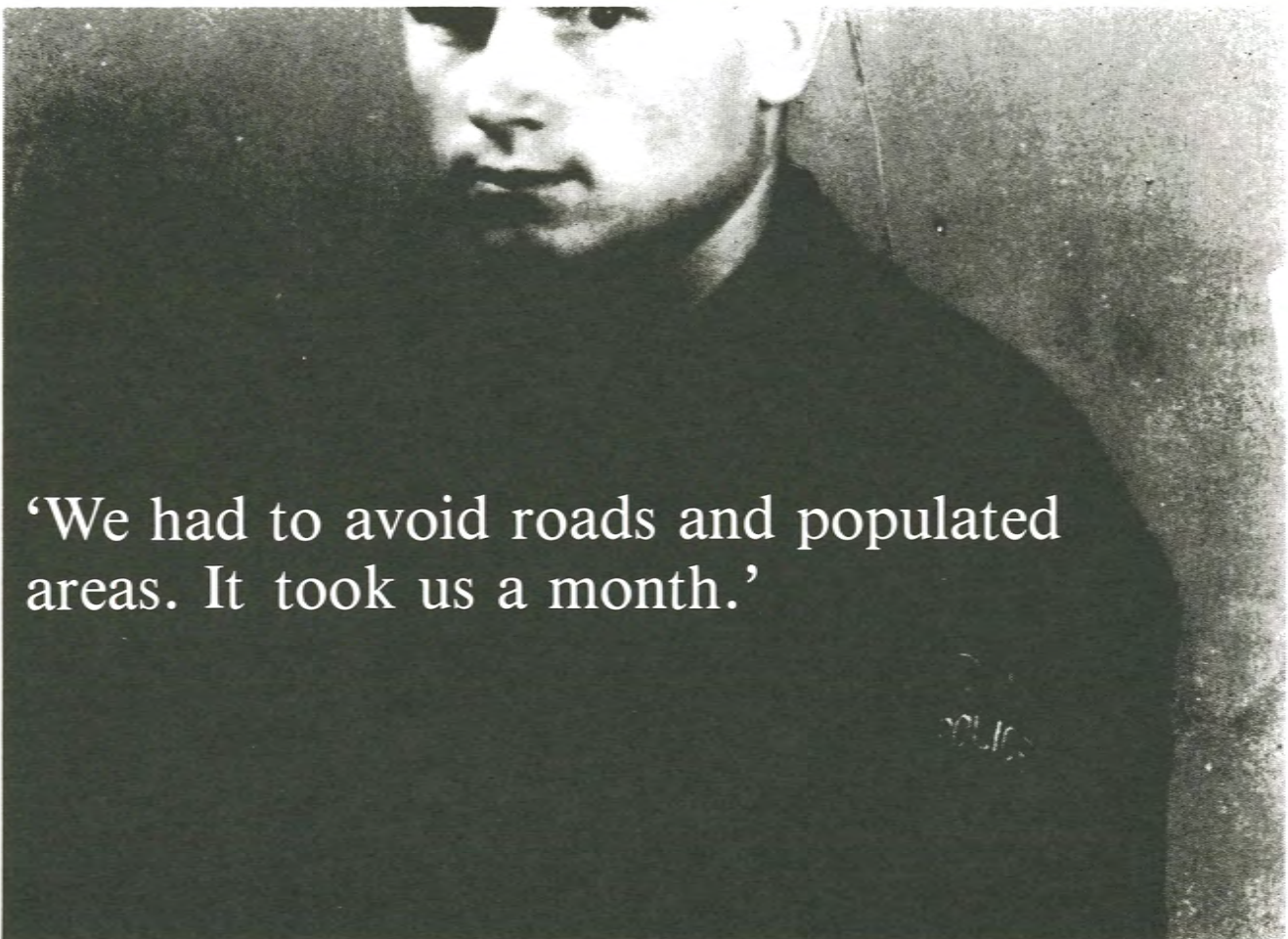


'I took the Russian with me. I took four
Ukrainians with me.'





'We lived on bread, water and sugar.'



'We had to avoid roads and populated areas. It took us a month.'

Missing Associates

Peter Dudar

Resistance, 1980

Slide and audio installation.

Transylvania, 1982

Slide and audio installation and performance.

Designer/Director: Peter Dudar

Script/Performer: Corinne Palmer

(Based on a story by Eugene Dicker; original story edited by Ron Liberman.)

A SPACE

ISBN 0-9690645-2-7