

Gloria Friedmann: Double play (theater and photo)



Francis Hars: Reportage n° 9 (photo)

XI BIENNALE DE PARIS

AN ARTIST'S life and work can be divided into two periods: one when he is under-saturated with ideas and one when he is over-saturated. The latter is the period of the Biennale. It is a time when the artist's work becomes a kind of a collage of ideas, images, and experiences. It is a time when the artist's work becomes a kind of a collage of ideas, images, and experiences. It is a time when the artist's work becomes a kind of a collage of ideas, images, and experiences.



Novi Images: Fatale beau 7 (photo)

gards, all barriers collapsed, and poets, painters, writers became performers and provocateurs. A certain number of rules separate this genre from all other forms of performance: It must be unique (we'll assume the Biennale's participants make different gestures each time). Nothing but traces can remain (recordings...). And they must take place no matter where. (This 'No Matter Where', other than for Martine Abaila's 'Café-Crime' is the Museum of Modern Art which appears in fact to be a very very official 'somewhere'). The age where everything can be performance, marvelous moment, has not yet arrived. These few rules aside, a performance can be of any sort and based on violence, banality, voice, gesture, the body, and every kind of instrument among which is video, represented at the Biennale as separate technique.

Television, often the image of a 'degraded culture', has now become, thanks to video art, a new artistic 'support' system. This process allows one to hear, see, and instantaneously modify what one has just recorded. All this appears very simple, the chal-

ties. The debates organized on the occasion of this Biennale will perhaps permit us a glimpse of the future. The points of view of the artists, critics and historians who participate will surely allow those who have made the rounds of all the rooms and examined the works therein, to better understand what they have seen.

Meanwhile, a first judgment,

in the urban tissue (urban autoroutes, railway lines...), 'The quest for a collective architectural creativity between users and builders'. The aim is to give a less functional and more living image of modern architecture, which plays such a primordial role in the vigor of each city and every instant of our existence. Architectural researches are often very close to artistic ones, in following both their principal currents and the resultant mentalities. It is without doubt intentional that the accent is placed on reconciliation with what is already in place, a refusal of major modifications, a true asceticism, and sometimes even a surprising mediocrity: witness the 'works' of many.

The photography of art is not the work of photojournalists but of painters. If those who practice this art call themselves painters it is because they see no reason to not consider photography, as painting, just another medium. These artists are thus not limited by the rules of photography and, on the contrary, are open to every sort of pictorial experimentation. One shouldn't think, however, that for these reasons the creation of a 'work of art' is in any way made easier. The painters who come to this technique have behind them an experience and a culture which bring about the creation of something far more complex than a simple 'pretty picture'.

Sara Holt, for example, after a great many experiments with movement and exposure-time came up with photographs imprinted with an eery poetry, landscapes illuminated by splashes of light, and moons doubled by their shadows. Sophie Calle has used her lens to far more harsher ends. She asked 28 people (in general, strangers) to occupy her bed, one after another. As observer, she photographed and recorded these passing sleepers' reactions with an unrestrained and unindulgent voyeurism and thrilling results. Of these performances we have but texts and photographs.

Performance Art is a form which is in itself a fundamental questioning of art. It sprang out of the 1920's in movements such as Dada. Everything had to be questioned ruthlessly in this golden age of the avant-

tiely independent art, is often the subject of numerous misunderstandings. One should, in fact, expect neither image-bound stories, nor experiments made with a view to further results. Color, speed and other characteristics proper to this technique can become in themselves as much a fundamental element or the subject of inspiration as a face, a tree, or a stormy sky. Dominique Noguez (in charge of this section) stresses moreover that: 'Contemporary experimental cinema is less a cinema of the signified than one of the signifier ranging over each of the elements of filmic significations'. It is thanks to such definitions that this cinema finds its place at the heart of the plastic arts.

If this art form is only this year taking its due place (at the Biennale) it can in no way be said to be a recent innovation. Duchamp, Léger and many others showed an interest in it in their time. Its development nonetheless appears uneven: At this exposition we count only one Belgian, one Pole, and one Swede against the large number of French and English.

Architecture here takes on another dimension which reflects the title of this section: In search of Urbanism. The original projects presented her call, for the most part, on such relatively new concepts as: 'The search for a new cohesion in those sectors of the city until now torn up, dismantled, or divided by the violent incisions made

Whatever the case, the notion of art is constantly evolving, the range of artistic possibilities ever widening and an artist is rarely at his height before the age of 35. It is for just this reason that Raymond Coignat, the 'Inspecteur Général' for Fine Arts, organized the first Biennale de Paris in 1959. Every two years it brings together a great number of French and foreign artists. This year, for the first time in its history, the Biennale is being held a year late.

Each country invited sends several artists; but on what criteria are their artist choices based? It is far from obvious that this selection takes place everywhere in the same way. For this reason I feel reticent judging the contemporary art of countries where creation seems to be in a bad way. Does the state of affairs reflect artistic reality or government policy? In France's case, a committee of art critics is charged with the choice. This year it had 600 files on hand. It is obvious that in giving a privileged position to works in vogue, one risks overlooking the artist who by the originality and uniqueness of his creations will truly mark our era. Besides, such an artist may have already reached forty and therefore been eliminated from the competition.

This huge exhibition is valuable for the statement it makes. It mirrors current concerns, the choices of young artists in their majority, and gives us a taste of what tomorrow's art will be like. The Biennale allows participants to recognize one another's work, to meet and thereby allow discussion among those concerned with the same problems—in short—to widen their horizons. It should not be forgotten that the first Biennale presented the works of Yves Klein, Buffet and Agam, among others, and that later Biennales exhibited Arman, Le Gac, Christo, Buren, Botéro... each proved themselves in his own genre later on. This said, it still appears that the public's interest in many of these artists comes more from infatuation than with any examination of the works themselves. Suffice it to note that Buffet's paintings, which will in no way mark art history, are sold by the tens of thousands in reproduction.

This year, three new policies: experimental cinema and architecture, presented for the first time, along with the increasingly important place occupied by photography. If cinema is often called the 'seventh art', experimental cinema, claiming to be an en-



Klonaris-Thomaidis: Unenrich II: Astara (experimental cinema)



Patrick Connor: Airman (sculpture)

cing themselves from the images which have influenced them. In looking at the works on exhibition, names of well known artists often leaped to mind. Can this be attributed to the participants' age or to a momentary freeze on artistic creation? There last few years have witnessed a dissection of art, techniques, subsystems, significations, and contexts. But if Barnett Newman gave the makeup of a canvas its fundamental significations, the subsystem/surface artists have only managed to put it all out of joint. Reconstruction appears to be very difficult nowadays and it seems many artists, feeling perhaps incapable of creating new images, feel more comfortable linking up with ancient. In any case, it's impossible to start all over from the beginning (before Duchamp for example!) and to forget the most recent developments. An analysis cannot be negative, one must know how to profit from it and to search for a new synthesis further on, it's always possible an element has been overlooked. In my opinion an art work is made up otherwise than of things solely material. How is it that certain Minimalists have been able to give a poetic and aesthetic dimension to their work and that extreme simplicity can sometimes appear so rich? Creation is a 'going beyond' the norms and of oneself and cannot be based solely on 'givens'.

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Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
(Museum of Modern Art)
116 avenue du Président Wilson 75016
PARIS
Open every day except Monday from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. Wednesdays until 10 P.M.

- Plastic arts
- Performances/Installations: from 20 Sept. through 23 Sept. from 14 Oct. through 17 Oct., from 21 Oct. through 1 Nov.
- Video
- Experimental cinema: from 30 Sept. through 12 Oct. at 3 P.M. and at 5:30 P.M.
- Music: from 28 Sept. through 21 Oct., Saturdays and Sundays at 5 P.M. Tuesday, 23 October at 9:30 P.M., room 104 of the Radio France Building (free admission)
- Symposia
- Book reviews

Georges Pompidou Center
Open every day except Tuesday, from 12 noon until 10 P.M. Saturday and Sunday from 10 A.M. until 10 P.M.

- Contemporary galleries: Artists' spaces.
- Museum cinema: Experimental cinema from 13 Oct. through 12 Nov.
- Industrial Creation Center: Architecture Center starting 24 Sept.