

imagination of a whole generation of artists now between twenty-five and thirty-five? The works come from all over Europe and the Americas, with some remarkable contributions from Japan and Korea, and although certain national, or at least hemispheric, flavours persist, they are as nothing in the great general sweep towards forms of expression which owe as little as possible—despite the obvious cost in allusive richness and coherence—to anything that has come before them.

No other generalizations are valid. Thereafter, room after room, you pass through quite separate worlds. Irony, mysticism, nihilism and kitsch are all assembled beneath the same roof. You leave a stardust-spangled tent filled with small plastic Tarzans busily masturbating (by Wolfgang Weber, a member, as it were, of the group that calls itself the *Düsseldorfer Szene*) to plunge into another candlelit darkness in which two real, naked bodies, a man and a woman, slowly enact some fraught rite amid carefully strewn, vaguely charismatic odds and ends. You go from sand into pebbles, and then gingerly round some red-hot electrical installation snaking menacingly over the floor (by the Japanese Tatsuo Kawaguchi). At the same time, there are memories of an old, and still fully appreciable order of aesthetic experience in the tressings and patternings of Christian Jaccard, and the colour-dawns and -dusks in the tapestry-like paintings of another Frenchman, Louis Cane.

In all, how moderate and well-behaved this Biennial seems when one thinks back only just over a year to the last Kassel Documenta, with its emphasis on factualism, sickness and self-mutilation. Photo-realism, which was so dominant then, is quite absent here. Extremism and militancy have been replaced by an interest in creating atmospheres, in making public private corners of fantasy. Within a year, if these two anthologies are truly indicative, the homage to literalness has apparently switched to explorations of the unconscious. The camera has given way to a fascination with dreams in which one seems to catch glimpses of Robert Wilson's stage visions. Moreover, the work of art as an "object" is shown to be in rapid recession before a desire to communicate via an "environment" which belongs as much to a concept of theatre as to any traditional notion of art. However uneven the quality of this year's Biennial, it is proof of a tremendous widespread search to change existing structures and to create a more total and more demanding form of expression. Its very confusion, which makes considerable claims on the spectator's goodwill and attentiveness, provides a stimulating experience.

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One abrupt stage in the explosion of traditional concepts that has been with us in so constant and intense a fashion since the impressionists can be found in the experiments of the futurists, currently in review, to one side of the Biennial invasions, at the Musée national d'art moderne. Like Dada and surrealism, for whose militant tone it provided a precedent, it is frequently more interesting in its intentions than in what it actually left behind in the form of individual works. There is an almost prurient satisfaction to be had now in rereading Marinetti's wildly impassioned claims for the scope of the new movement; and no doubt some nostalgia for the fierceness and the acceptance of personal risk with which they were defended.

The Manifesto which Marinetti published in 1909 in *Le Figaro* seems both comic and sinister today, as full of rhodomontade as of a will towards totalitarianism. With all allowance for poetic licence and the fervour of the newly converted, Stanza no. 9, for instance, is still hard to swallow: "We wish to glorify war—the only hygiene for the world—, militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of anarchists, noble ideas that kill, and scorn for women."

A group photograph of the principal members, taken in Paris in 1912, reveals five heavily dressed, black-bowled men standing in attitudes of grim defiance. Marinetti, a clear bowler hat taller than the rest, has the air of a successful impresario (which, for a moment, is to a large extent what he was). Clearly, the caption would be the last line from the 1909 Manifesto: "Upright on the topmost peak of the world, once again we hurl a challenge at the stars!" The neo-Nietzschean imagery is bereft of Nietzschean irony; and the principles of futurism as declaimed by Marinetti have more to do with shock tactics—or even an extreme form of public relations—than with a viable new artistic system. In this respect, the tracts written by the other members, such as Boccioni's on sculpture, have much more specific relevance.

In the present selection of works and documents, however, futurism still seems important for two reasons. One was its desire to change not only art but the whole texture of life. It was the first artistic movement to demand a renewal of every basic human attitude. The other, which was of course related, lies in its resolute modernism. It had the courage and determination, however foolhardy it seems in retrospect, to accept the new, industrialized facts of life and attempt to make a corresponding poetry out of them. This compact show gives pride of place, rightly enough, to the works of Boccioni. Now that the thunder of the various declamations has died down, his works

Dado. *Les 3 cachots*, 1972. Oil/canvas, 195 x 365 cm. Galerie Jeanne Bucher

