

ART INTERNATIONAL PARIS Nov. 1973 XVII/9

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Beneath me, as I turn to look out of the window, the focal point on the opposite side of the street is a brightly lit, gleaming white interior. Within it, as though in a fish-tank, a man in spattered overalls is intent on some transformational activity which is as yet unclear to me. He kneels, as though humbled, amidst pots of paint, odd piles of wood shavings, bits of rope, tools and rags, while his right hand rests on the first rung of a ladder. Behind him, placed upright against the wall like a plank, is a length of milky-coloured plastic inscribed with four bold black capitals: FURE.

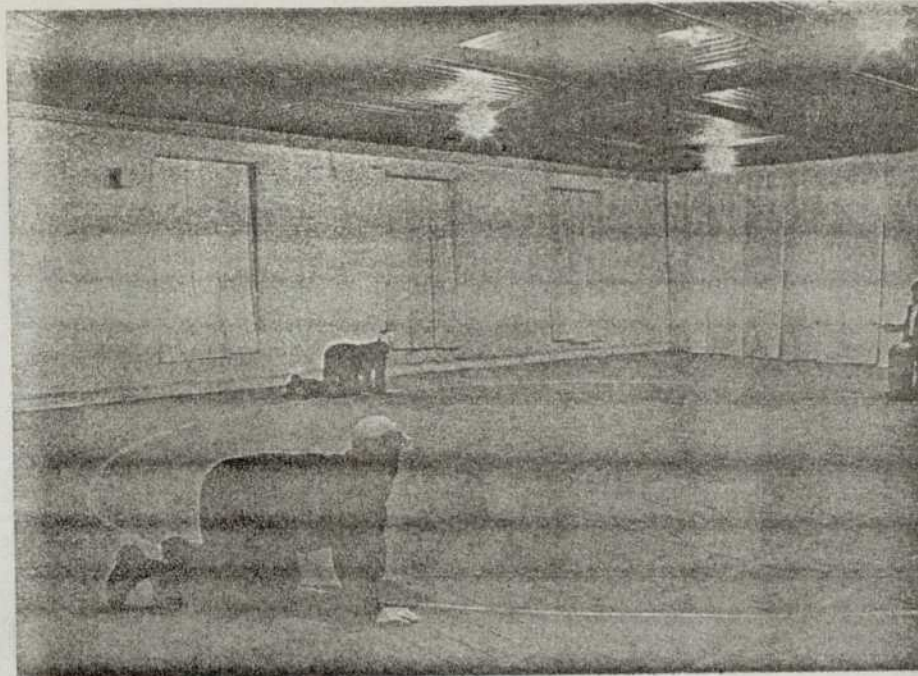
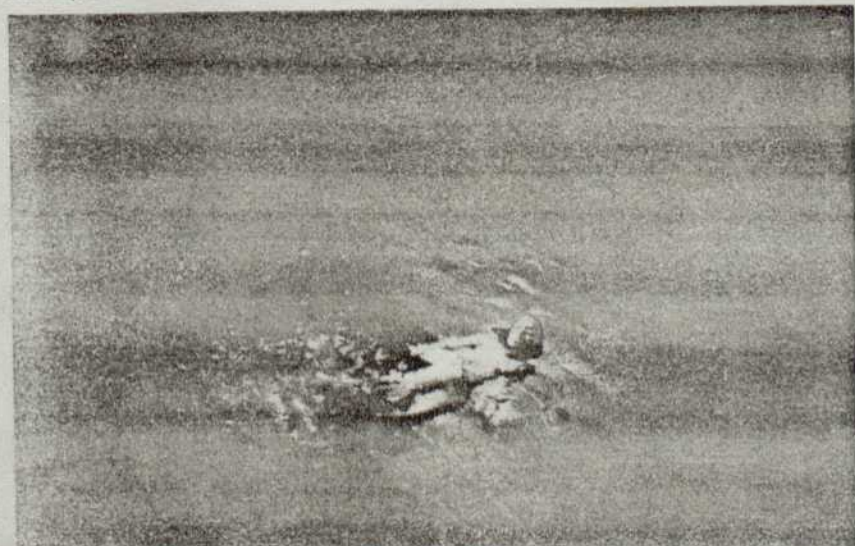
The whole scene is urgently familiar. I have been here before, crossed this interior, stopping to reflect on its disorder and apparent meaninglessness, before moving on, often still wrapped in doubt. I have seen it strewn through immaculate galleries or neatly sealed off in august museums. I have seen it, in compact and forceful fashion, this very afternoon at the Eighth Paris Biennial.

The light goes out. The man, now changed into a suit, is standing outside, carefully locking the glass door. Over his head run another four letters: COIF, followed by a gap of equal length. The distinction is drawn. This is not, to speak with what little strictness is left, an exhibit. It is a man who has been redecorating a hairdressing saloon.

Yet I am quite certain that it could have been inserted, without exciting particular surprise (who would allow himself today to look surprised at the convulsions of art?), in the bland spaces of the Musée national d'art moderne, both of whose sections have served to house the new Paris Biennial. There is no reason, either, why it should not be there, if the particular *peintre en bâtiment* would agree to being converted into a *peintre artiste*. As an "environment", it confronts the viewer with quite as much reality of a certain kind as many another experience on show; and it does not appear to be more, or less, interpretable in aesthetic terms than a good number of the accepted entries.

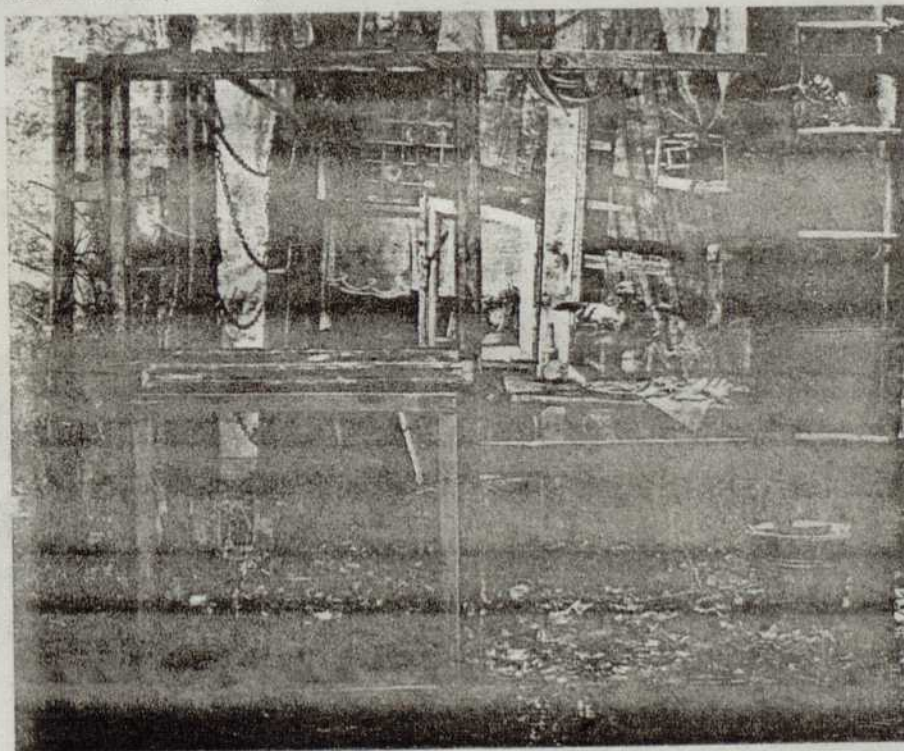
This is not a rib-digging comparison. Jokes about signing a fire hydrant or presenting the most banal or intimate gesture as art already belong to another age, and have since flown back into the jokers' faces. To a large extent, the present Biennial does bring the street into the museum. Conversely, it creates that curious democracy of the mind whereby an interior in the process of being redecorated can exercise a certain fascination, as though its jumble in fact signified something beyond itself. How, in any case, could one joke about a show that represents, whether one agrees with its choice or no, fragments of the collective

Antony Donaldson. Galerie du Luxembourg



John Davies (Great Britain). *For the Last Time*, 1972. 8th Paris Biennale, Musée d'Art

Karina Raeck (Germany). 8th Paris Biennale



Moon-Seup Shim (Korea). *Relation-Pla* Biennale

