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ART

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5700 SPIRIT OF THE AGE

A LOT of art has been crossing a lot of frontiers lately. What should be the two most significant international exhibitions of contemporary art of the whole year or more have just opened in Berlin and Paris; and London has two major international shows itself, of New York and Italian art.

In Berlin, at the Martin-Gropius-Bau until January 16, *Zeitgeist* is a challenging follow-up from our London "New Spirit" show, with Christos Joachimedes and Norman Rosenthal selecting 45 artists, 11 of whom have produced large-scale works for special presentation; from Britain, Barry Flanagan, Gilbert and George, Christopher Lebrun and Bruce McLean are included, in a showing of pre-

dominantly German, Italian and American artists, which should enliven the art scene with its biased vigour.

In Paris, the 12th *Biennale de Paris* (or *Biennale des Jeunes*, as it used to be, since the artists must be under 35) is at the Musée de l'Art de la Ville de Paris (the Iena metro station serves it) until November 14. This tends to be a rather schizoid event: compiled from every nation, with extreme care, by a worldwide intelligence network of talent "correspondents" and commissioners, so that selection for it is a genuine accolade; but mounted in a way that can be so mentally distracting to the visitor, and so unhelpful to the artist, that one sometimes wonders if, like a casting directory, publishing the catalogue alone without showing

the works might not do as much good in the end.

However, assiduous visitors will find Bill Woodrow's exhilarating, carried-through sculpture; from scrapheaps, refrigerators and suchlike he conjures up ingenious shapes—a bat takes off from the car door it is cut from, a gun emerges out of a fridge's metal side, to splat an over-stuffed armchair onto the wall behind.

Anish Kapoor's sculptures are simple biomorphic or architectural shapes, glowing on the floor with their dusting of powder paint; Stephen Farthing uses his intelligence and history to launch imaginative scenes, with a strong line, particularly evident in his drawings. Five other British artists—Shelagh Cluett, Graham Crowley, Raf Fulcher, Ray Smith, and Alison Wilding—are included in the "second team" documented (unsatisfactorily) on slides; as well as eight British film-makers due to have screenings, and a revived "sound" section, with the British group Whirled Music invited. There is more potential *zeitgeist* here than anywhere else; but visitors should be registered addicts of art, or those who absorb impressions by osmosis rather than by their senses.

At the ICA in London, a New York season, in all media and across them, is in full swing, and lasts till the end of November: a special issue of the *Literary Review* contains several essays full of superlatives on the New York scene and its explosive energies as talents

bounce off one another like the kids in "Fame."

An exhibition of seven young artists from New York can be seen until November 21: John Ahearn, Ken Goodman, Mike Glier, Keith Haring, Robert Longo, Judy Rifka and Cindy Sherman, while upstairs, Laurie Anderson's variety of artworks are witness to a lively mind and imagination, too versatile, inventive, curious and interested in human contact to leave a tidy trail for art-historians and their books. If you get a bit cynical about the hip-hype floating around downstairs, she will restore your faith in art as an adventure in living; plenty of *geist* in this *zeit*.

At the Hayward Gallery until January 19, *Arte Italiana 1960-82* is Milan's attempt at a full documentation of two decades of art of which we have seen little here since Fontana and Manzoni. To say that much of it looks like high-class window dressing may not be so much of an insult as it sounds at first—one has only to go out onto the balconies of the Hayward and look around to envy that Italian "total style," which can do something both daring and elegant with any aspect of the visual scene.

Not much serious research in form here, or ideas chewed away at, or agonised communication, but several things to please the eye first, then maybe tickle the mind. The choice of works is questionable; it is the same situation as *zeitgeist* v Paris Biennale—would you rather have individual depth, or committee breadth?