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### Bulletin of the Computer Arts Society

Autumn 2004

#### **An International Picture Language: The History and Aesthetics of West Coast Light Shows** *Robin Oppenheimer*

Light shows from the mid-to-late 1960s immediately conjure up memories of loud rock music, pulsating colored lights, flashing random images, and youthful wild-haired hippies dancing together in a drug-induced trance. As part of the anti-establishment counterculture that took psychedelic drugs and protested the Vietnam war, light show artists and their pulsing light projections are usually dismissed as nothing more than rebellious youth experimenting with cheap old technologies such as strobe lights and overhead projectors that could simulate a drug-enhanced state of euphoria. Light shows quickly evolved from a low-tech folk art to a high-tech computer-generated spectacle that you now see at every high-priced rock concert.

What is a light show? Well-known Pacific Northwest novelist Tom Robbins (*Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*), who was a local arts reporter in Seattle at the time, wrote about light shows in 1967:

*Specifically, a light show is a sort of orchestration in which projections of light are interwoven with pulsations of sound. One or more rock 'n' roll bands are essential, for it is with – or against – the audible rhythms of electrified music that the visual rhythms of electrified light ideally work and play...From 10 to 20 persons are required to stage a light show in a large ballroom.... Equipment consists primarily of numerous film and slide*

*projectors and a stroboscope or two.... Slides, film clips, sheets of acetate, ripple wheels, various inks, transparent paints and saucers of gelatin are also utilized in most shows....*

*Is this art? Some people think so. Since the celebrated San Francisco Mime Troupe threw the cosmic switches for the first public light dance show more than two years ago, the medium has grown rapidly in complexity and verve, and more and more serious artists – and scientists – are falling under its spell. Internationally known generals of the avant-garde such as Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, and Robert Morris have had the assistance of top engineers from the Bell Laboratories in producing their light-sound shows in New York. Most of the world's major galleries have lately displayed works composed of neon tubing and/or other lighting devices.*

*It is not difficult, in fact, to see the light show as a logical extension of what has been the central direction in painting for more than a century.... As modern painting and sculpture have sought to define themselves by casting off all superfluous conventions (including subject matter), so artists began to work directly with light sources, transcending the approximations and imitations to which they were limited by paint and polished metal.*

*It's not easy to define. It is an art of tools and craft. It is a multimedia experience. It disappears when the lights come back on, and because it is a time-based art, it exists only as an experience, not something which can be looked at and reexamined.... I like to think that the light*

*show I'm doing is not simply guiding a visual experience, but actually filtering through the bog of visual information and remixing it, redirecting it so that we are able to reinterpret and challenge what it is we can actually see. Using slide, film and video projectors, computers and mixers side by side with hand rigged contraptions to alter the light form, we put images into new contexts giving them new meanings, and create a moving collage of patterns and pictures which give us a visual ground to reinterpret our realities.*

(Lon Clark, "Power to the Pup!"

[www.xlr8r.com/archive/26/](http://www.xlr8r.com/archive/26/))

Light show artists I've met tell great stories of how they could feel the people dancing in the room responding collectively to their projections. They learned quickly that they could tap into the collective consciousness of their audience by spontaneously connecting layered collages of images both abstract and representational to the rhythmic beats of the music. They could make complex political statements through the collaged juxtaposition of projected cartoon characters or biblical images with political figures and anti-war headlines ripped from the newspaper projected onto a wall or screen. They could, as multi-media artist Stan VanDerBeek wrote, "deal with logical understanding and penetration of the unconscious level to reach for the emotional denominator of all men, the nonverbal basis of human life."

### **Aesthetic Origins of Light Shows**

The aesthetics of 60s light shows are rooted in significant art histories and movements of the early 20th century. Italian Futurists who produced theatrical performances in the 1920s with projected lights were inspirational to the inventors of light shows. Early Russian Constructivist filmmaker Dziga Vertov and the European Surrealist films of Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp also played a significant role in the creation of light shows. The montage aesthetic of non-verbal, non-linear and non-sensical images first pioneered by these early 20<sup>th</sup> century artists and filmmakers was reinvigorated through the creative use of cheap multiple media technologies like slide and film projectors that allowed for the instantaneous layering of images, still and moving, to be projected one on top of the other. This collage aesthetic continues to dominate new media-based artwork.

### **A Brief History of U.S. West Coast Light Shows**

According to Haight-Ashbury historian Charles Perry, light shows were "discovered" in 1952 by a San Francisco State College art professor named Seymour Locks who wanted to revive the European Futurist theater experiments of the twenties and thirties that used projected images on scrims with live dancers and performers. Locks experimented with Viewgraph overhead projectors, the kind used by teachers in many large

classrooms. In his experiments Locks found that paints could be stirred, swirled and otherwise manipulated in a glass dish with slightly raised edges to keep the liquid from spilling.

One of Locks' students, Elias Romero, became the real Johnny Appleseed of light shows. As San Francisco's beat movement paved the way to psychedelia, Romero took his projection ideas and used them within this new context. Romero would use liquid projections and film to create an environment for poets, dancers and other performers to work within. Together with Bill Ham, they are generally recognized as the true creators of the traditional SF light show. Ham started doing shows similar to Romero's, eventually emerging as a part of The Family Dog parties. Light shows began to pop up everywhere, becoming inseparable from San Francisco's acid-laced dances and happenings.

Around the world, artists were inspired by San Francisco and began experimenting with projections. In New York, Andy Warhol created shows revolving around the Velvet Underground. In the UK, Pink Floyd's performances were heavily light show based. Clubs began regularly hiring light show artists and installing complicated lighting systems. The light shows are too numerous to mention, but groups and individuals such as SF Lightworks, The Brotherhood of Light, The Joshua Show, Fly By Light, Single Wing Turquoise Bird, and Headlights (Glenn McKay, Jerry Abrams, Marilyn Ashman) are among those pioneers of early light shows.

### **Seattle Light Show Histories**

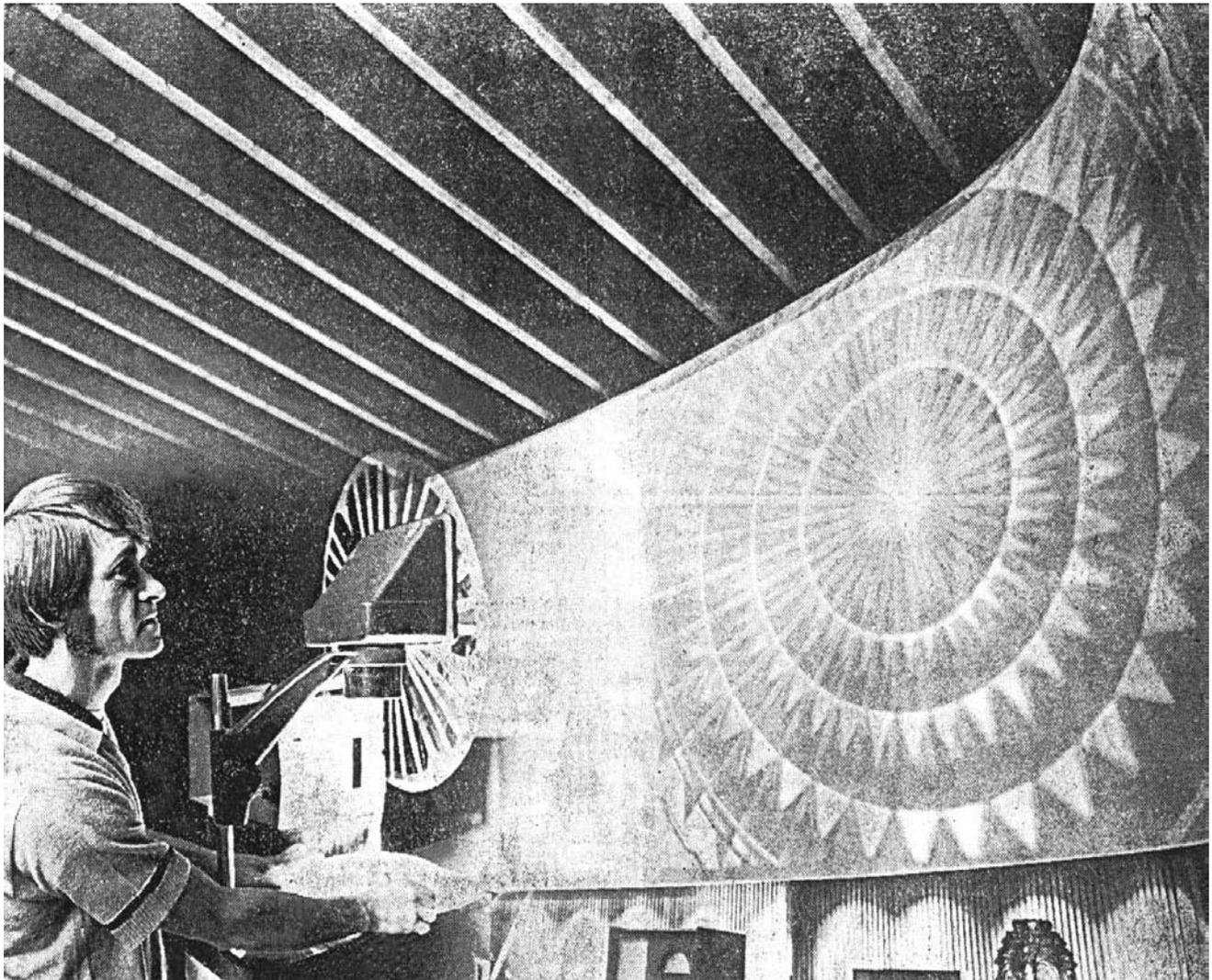
THE UNION LIGHT COMPANY (1966 - 1968)  
The Union Light Company (ULC) was at first a fictional name for a non-existent light show that then formed spontaneously around the 8 to 10 people who showed up to jam together and present their own images and colors, using their own unplanned mix of film, overhead, and slide projectors. It consisted of six artists who lived and worked together during the time of the light show's short run in Seattle and New York City, and they each performed different aspects of creating, producing, and presenting the light show. Carol Burns likens the ULC lightshow to a jazz performance. It was not a series of random images and colors thrown around in a room. It had themes with variations, based solely on the band's music and the uniquely spontaneous interaction the company felt with the audience and the music that night.

Their time in Seattle was short, lasting from their first coming-together in November, 1966, to late July 1967, when they left Seattle with Country Joe and the Fish to be their light show in New York City. After an adventure-filled trip across the country in an old hearse, the ULC performed at the Café Au Go Go with Country Joe and the

Fish. The band was not well-received, being too political and too laid-back for New York audiences. But the ULC attracted all types of artists, questionable entrepreneurs, and a true financial Angel named Michael Mayerberg, who had also supported off-Broadway Theater of the Absurd productions and Walt Disney. They played with performers like Tiny Tim, The Mothers of Invention, and many others.

ULC stayed in a rent-free loft in lower Manhattan and worked with a group called The Group Image that Carol Burns described as “a tribe like only New York could produce – they own a club, have their own Band (The Group Image), do commercial

advertising for hip Madison Avenue companies, work with magazines on psychedelic layouts (they designed the TIME cover on hippies).” ULC and The Group Image moonlighted at the Cheetah, at Broadway and 53rd, and at the Palm Gardens near there. Ron McComb adds that “I would not want to leave out Wavy Gravy and the Hog Farm at the Palm Gardens. The Group Image were hip businessmen but had no clue about how to make the Palm Gardens happen the way it did. Without the ULC and Wavy Gravy as MC it would have been just another boring New York business venture.”



Don Paulson with his light show at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle probably in 1968

The ULC soon realized that The World dancehall where they performed was run by the Mafia, and three of the members returned to Seattle in late 1968 as the commercialisation of the hippie culture ended “the dream”. “We all believed that there was going to be a new world, a new consciousness. It was a transformational time” says Ron McComb, that soon degenerated into automated lightshows and discos in the early 1970’s run by organized crime.

#### LUX SIT AND DANCE (1967 - 1970)

Lux Sit and Dance was founded and organized by visual artist and Experiments in Art and Technology Seattle chapter member Don Paulson in January 1967. As he writes in his unpublished personal history, “Lux Sit probably did more to acquaint the public at large than any other light show group, especially the so-called Establishment.... Lux Sit never considered themselves hippies although they agreed with the

good that eventually came from the movement... Due to our combined contacts with the Establishment we fell right into their needs for a piece of the counter culture."

#### DON PAULSON AND ANDY WARHOL'S FACTORY (1966)

Don Paulson was born in Seattle. He became a Pop Art painter and moved to New York City in 1966. He was befriended by Ivan Karp (who discovered Andy Warhol and was the Director of the Leo Castelli Gallery), who encouraged him to continue painting, and introduced him to Warhol at a Thanksgiving dinner. As he writes, *The Factory was outrageous, far from the mellow hippie lightshow concerts beginning to happen on the west coast. This hard edge, Eastern approach to art was the reason San Francisco hated the Velvets and Andy Warhol. Some felt however that the hard edge east coast best reflected the social/political climate of the day and that the San Francisco hip scene was on some kind of fantasy trip and more geared to Folk than Rock...I hung out at Andy Warhol's Factory and attended Warhol's and the Velvet Underground's first public gig together at the Cinematheque (February 8,*

Robin Oppenheimer is a nationally-recognized media arts consultant, historian, curator, writer, and educator who has worked in the field since 1980. She was the first Media-Arts-Historian-in-Residence at Bellevue Art Museum, near Seattle, and co-produced an Experiments in Art & Technology (E.A.T.) Reunion symposium at the University of Washington on 25-26 October 2002 ([www.eatreunion.org](http://www.eatreunion.org)). As Manager of the Seattle Art Museum's Open Studio project, she oversaw Web production and literacy training for almost 60 Seattle artists and arts organizations. She is a former Executive Director of 911 Media Arts Center in Seattle, and IMAGE Film/Video Center in Atlanta, where she also directed the Atlanta Film & Video Festival. As part of her work as an independent scholar and media arts historian, she moderated a panel on regional media arts

1966), *New York's underground movie theater a la Jack Smith, Jonas Mekas, Brakhage, etc., and Warhol's new career as filmmaker. This event was a prelude to the "Exploding Plastic Inevitable" at the Dome...The multi-media experience was just beginning to be identified along with the 'Environments' of Claus Oldenburg and Allan Kaprow's 'Happenings' etc.*

#### Conclusion

After researching the historical origins, technological components, and aesthetics of light shows on the U.S. West Coast, I have come to believe that they represent an historically significant phenomenon. I propose that light shows are nothing less than primitive beginning attempts by artists at blending many of the mid-20th century communications media technologies – photography, film, audio, television, computers – and then adding the beat of contemporary rock and roll to invent an immersive, interactive audio-visual language and sensorial environment where artists and audience communicate together to filter and make sense out of the media chaos that invades our senses and dulls our psyches.

histories at the College Art Association's national conference in Seattle in early 2004. In March, she was invited to present her research about U.S. West Coast light shows at the FuseLeeds New Music Festival in Leeds by Lumen media arts center ([www.lumen.net/#hereandnow](http://www.lumen.net/#hereandnow)). Also in March she presented her light shows research at Birkbeck in London to the CACHe program in a joint meeting with the Computer Arts Society.

Robin is continuing to research the '9 Evenings' event that started E.A.T. and planning to produce a book and DVD with a colleague in the next year or so. MIT Press have expressed an interest in publishing the book. She is applying to the Langlois Foundation to view all the films from that event that have just been donated by Billy Kluber's widow.

## Memories of My Time with Herbert Brün and the Performers' Workshop Ensemble

### University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, Spring-Summer 1989

#### Virginia Firnberg

In 1989, I was lucky enough to win the Lloyd Webber prize for composition at The London College of Music. This enabled me to have six months of study at a location of my choosing. Because of the nature of various creative projects I was involved with, Annetta Pedretti, a cybernetics specialist, recommended I travel to the University of Illinois to work/study alongside Herbert Brün (HB) and the Performers' Workshop Ensemble (PWE). The PWE were a group of composers, musicians, computer engineers, mime artists others. who came together as a result of HB's various projects.

I was 24 and had never been to the USA before so this was all a big adventure. Plane to Chicago, Greyhound bus at the dead of night from Chicago bus station to Urbana Champaign, Illinois. Waking up jet lagged in a beautiful, dramatic springtime in March at the campus of the U of I. Massive snow, then white

sun, then purple tornado clouds and birds crashing into glass. The smell of the lilac blossom on the lilac trees... It was all rather intoxicating and a bit Alfred Hitchcock.

I was warmly welcomed by Sara Wiseman, a fine cellist, writer and on and off member of the PWE. She introduced me to everyone and I was immediately made to feel welcome and part of all that was going on. Fairly quickly I realized that the PWE and HB refused to let sleeping music traditions lie. This led to a healthy antagonism coming from the rest of the music department. This antagonism was exemplified by the name 'The Brünettes' which, as far as I could gather, was a name given to the PWE by the more traditional members of the music department.

The PWE describe themselves in the following way:

We are a troupe of musicians and actors who have been working with each other since 1978. In order to establish connections between art and society, we take as a point of departure the desirability but insufficiency of making concerts. Therefore we create not only compositions and concerts, but also projects that question in art the status quo of society.

Members of the PWE include: Susan Parenti – prolific composer, writer, vocalist, actor, poet; Mark Enslin – bassoonist, composer, writer, actor; Lesley Olson – flautist, composer actor; Arun Chandra – guitarist, composer, actor; Jeff Glassman – mime artist, actor, writer; Mark Sullivan – writer, actor, composer, now director of composition at Michigan State University where I subsequently went to study.

I attended the weekly seminar which was presided over by HB and the PWE as well as other interested people. The titles of the seminars include titles in Herbert's description of himself below. I remember the verbal debate being very challenging, lively, edgy, heated and punctuated with commentary by Herbert. At first, it was hard to speak, as every word was broken down, but gradually words came out of my mouth, which were broken down, reworked and returned, and I had to swallow them whole, feeling their full texture and weight!

While I was at the University of Illinois, the PWE in association with HB were involved in many dynamic performance and presentations projects. I attended several 'House Theater' performances. In a PWE booklet I have, the house theatres are described in the following way:

**if** you find a home  
with space enough for 35 people  
to sit; **if** you build 8 small  
tables for people to place their  
drinks on; **if** already three friends  
live in that home and pay rent;  
**if** you plan a program which  
"mixes neighbourhoods", putting  
political satire next to new music  
and a bawdy poem next to a  
highbrow dance; **if**, inside this  
semi-nightclub atmosphere, you serve  
wine and cider and food during  
two intermissions; and **if** this  
week-end of 5 performances  
is responded to and followed up  
two months later  
by another program - -

**then** you have a House Theater

The PWE also offered presentations on various issues including:

**Technology and Composition: Computers, but Thinking!** Presentation of three computer-generated music compositions: *I Told You So!*, *The Ivory Tower*, and *A Mere Ripple*. Statements to be discussed with the audience: Thinking with computers ought to be against the computer. Not the composition of art, but the art of composition links with programming. Artificial intelligence is needed when there isn't any: and it is needed now.

As you can imagine, being around this group and the PWE was a very inspiring atmosphere, and as a result of this I generated several pieces, one of which was *the ..AIR the CH...* an opera in one long curtain. Several composers associated with HB took part. After watching the performance, Herbert called me the 'Granddaughter of John Cage', which, naturally, I have remembered.

The PWE's 'composed rehearsals' were:

brief theater pieces  
which allow the audience to eavesdrop  
on musicians rehearsing.  
Under the pretext  
of showing how musicians deal with  
conflicts,  
composed rehearsals also focus  
on a few elusive moments in the music,  
and, in effect,  
let listeners rehearse their listening.

I have in my possession a graphic score plus instructions of Herbert's computer generated graphic score for the trio of his 'Quartet no 4'. The instructions require each musician to create a separate 'dictionary' of sounds representing the symbols on the graphic score. Then the musicians come together, and in each section, one musician's decisions about speed = duration, takes precedence over the others. As yet, I have not heard this piece performed, but I would like to. If anybody has funds to pay musicians to play this piece, let me know.

As the person I came to know in those six months, Herbert Brün was compassionate, perceptive, edgy, inspiring, restless, and full of life and intellectual vigour. I loved it that he brought his particular political, historical and cultural perspectives into such a contemporary American situation.

I remember being at Herbert's apartment one day when he was waiting for a ride. He had on a pink short sleeved shirt, brown trousers, open toed sandals and had a leather purse, slung diagonally across his chest. His eyes were very bright. For some reason I was struck and moved by this moment and remember his anticipation of whatever it was that he was going to. He always seemed excited and very engaged with even the smallest events.

In the same PWE booklet I have, HB describes himself as follows:

My name is Herbert Brün.

Born in 1918 in Berlin,

I left Germany in 1936 for Palestine.

I left Israel in 1955 for France.

I roamed in Europe from 1956 to 1962.

I live since 1963 in U.S.A.

I compose Music, Prose, Poetry, Projects.

My projects generate Groups of People.

as for instance  
the performers' workshop ensemble,  
with whom I collaborate  
in composing seminars  
on subjects like:  
the power of the respondent  
distinguishing description  
retroactive correction  
floating hierarchies  
retardation of decay  
drummage.

The Groups of People compose

Music, Prose, Poetry, Plays, Projects.

I teach people, the language, the relationships.

I have friends, students, pupils, opponents.

I read books, newspapers, events.

I know what I have done,

I know what I did,

I know what I am doing,

I know what I do,

and I sure know where I am and live.

So why should I,

How could I,

and if I could, why and how would I

compose, do, write, sponsor, generate, teach anything

that might threaten to please a paid critic,

a journalist, a businessman, a connoisseur, a collector,

and their students?

My brief time with Herbert Brün and the PWE left its mark on my work as a composer, sound poet, teacher and initiator of projects. I am indebted to Herbert for many things, including his 'Floating Hierarchy' concept, his playfulness, for his wonderful, jazzy/music hall piano improvising, for his creative generosity, for his political and cultural perspective. Above all I am grateful for the way in which he linked so many art forms, art media and aesthetic ideas into one career which inspired so much creativity all around him.

Virginia Firnberg studied composition at London College of Music with Brian Elias, then at Michigan State University in the USA with Mark Sullivan (protégé of Herbert Brün), back to England to study for one year with Sir Harrison Birtwistle at Kings College, London. Currently arranging for and directing the *a cappella* group 'Ekhoz'; teaching harmony, counterpoint and keyboard at Morley College and various schools; doing cross-cultural workshops for 'Cultural Cooperation' and, when she's got the time, her working as sound/performance poet.

See page 11 for details of Virginia's talk in December.

## More Texts from Herbert Brün

I met Herbert Brün in London in 1968 or early the next year. He came to and may have spoken at a CAS meeting. Thanks to him I arranged to spend three months in the autumn of 1969 at the Computer Music Studio in the University of Illinois, by which time he was having a year in Cleveland, Ohio, and we did not meet again. The sense of his ideas and his clarity of expression stayed with me.

For a small exhibition of my work in Wokingham in 2001 I wanted to give an idea of how I saw things. I decided to make small posters of two quotations from Brün's writings, decorated and obscured by random noise: plain versions appear below.

The headings I gave the texts indicate the importance I attach to these statements. I commend them to your study. They shine with a characteristic intensity, captured so well in Virginia's portrait.

Herbert Brün died in 2000.

*Alan Sutcliffe*

### MANIFESTO

**It is one thing to aim for  
a particular timbre of sound  
and then to search for the means of  
making such sound and timbre audible.**

**It is another thing to provide for  
a series of events to happen  
and then to discover  
the timbre of the sounds so generated.**

**In the first case one prefers those events  
that one wishes to hear;  
in the second case one prefers to hear  
those sounds one wishes would happen.**

**These are not only two different  
approaches to the composition of music  
but also two different political attitudes.**

**Herbert Brün in *Music by Computers*, 1969**

### CREDO

**So that language may not become  
a fossilized fetish,  
let it be praised  
for the thoughts it expresses,  
but ruthlessly criticised  
for the ideas it fails to articulate.**

**Language is not the standard  
against which thinking is to be measured;  
on the contrary:  
language is to be measured  
by a standard it barely reaches, if ever,  
namely the imagery of human doubt  
and human desire.**

**To measure language,  
with imagery as a standard,  
is the function of art in society.**

**Herbert Brün in *Music & Technology*, 1970**

## Digital Art Museum [DAM] Berlin

[DAM] Berlin is presenting, for the first time in Europe, an exhibition in collaboration with (art)n from Chicago. The show consists of 3-D lightboxes, so called PHS Colograms, a unique technology.

21 September – 5 November 2004

[DAM] Berlin  
Tucholskystr. 37  
D-10117 Berlin  
Fon. +49 (0)30 280 98 135  
Mobil +49 (0)177 75 28 354

[www.dam.org/berlin](http://www.dam.org/berlin)

## Letter from Olga Ihnatowicz

[ Over the past few years I have gradually been compiling a website ([www.senster.com](http://www.senster.com)) devoted to Edward Ihnatowicz's work, particularly The Senster. My work wouldn't have been possible without the help of Olga, his widow, to whom I sent the last issue of PAGE, in which Nick Lambert wrote a piece about Edward and his work. She replied with the following letter.  
Alex Zivanovic ]

Twickenham  
Sunday 18 July 2004

Dear Alex,

Thank you so much for sending me the copy of PAGE 57. Of course, I am terribly interested in anything about Ed and I am very grateful to you for keeping me posted and for all you are doing with the web site. I shall be especially interested in the talk you are going to give. It's wonderful to know that people are being influenced by his work.

I enjoyed Nick Lambert's article very much. There were a couple of things I should correct. Ed didn't study sculpture at the Ruskin, which only taught painting. He had to go somewhere else in Oxford for classes in sculpture – and he never worked for or with Henry Moore. He did act as cameraman on John Read's film about Moore for the BBC, which is presumably what caused the misunderstanding.

Thank you again - & very best wishes

Love

Olga

[ Details of the talk by Alex are on page 11 ]

## Update on the CACHE Project

1 September 2004

*Nick Lambert*

The CACHE Project continues apace at Birkbeck and other locations around the world. Our Senior Research Fellow, Paul Brown, hosted a Histories session at SIGGRAPH in Los Angeles which was well-attended and stirred debate on the pioneering phase of Computer Art.

## Our Origins - in Leonardo

Paul Brown and Catherine Mason are guest editors of a Special Issue of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac (ISSN No: 1071-4391), due to be published in February 2005. Entitled "RE:SEARCHING OUR ORIGINS: Critical and Archival Histories of the Electronic Arts", this issue will focus on the history of computer-based, digital and electronic arts and will seek to report on international projects and initiatives working to recover, document or construct critical and historical contexts and will include contributions from artists, practitioners, curators, theorists and historians.

Robin Oppenheimer is contributing an article about her work on regional media art histories

Meanwhile, Catherine Mason and myself travelled to the shores of the Baltic for the Inter-Society on Electronic Art (ISEA) meeting 19 – 21 August in Helsinki. This is a combined conference and exhibition that draws together many luminaries from the world of Net Art and new media.

We were unsure how such contemporary figures would react to our session, entitled "Re:searching our Origins: Critical and Archival Histories of the Electronic Arts", especially as it was scheduled for 9.30am, but in the event it was well attended. Catherine hosted the four speakers, of which I was the first, followed by Christopher Lindinger of Prix Arts Electronica in Linz, Annick Bureau of the Leonardo Pionniers et Precurseurs project in Paris, then Alain Depocas of the Langlois Foundation Research and Documentation Centre in Canada. All were well received and the questions were very useful. Many attendees also signed our email list for future updates.

The next morning, Catherine presented her own paper on the development of computer arts courses at British art schools from 1960-1980. This was at another early session, "Histories of Time-Based Art", and proved popular with its listeners. We also learned some interesting history about Iannis Xenakis' interactive architectural projects from the 1960s-70s.

The ISEA conference as a whole brought together a great mixture of people and interests from across the spectrum of electronic arts, but we were especially pleased to find they wanted to know more about the history of this area. There are already plans afoot for a conference on this very subject in Canada in 2005; more when we get it.

As always, CACHE welcomes contributors with historical material relating to Computer Art, including personal experiences from the pioneering period of c.1960 to 1980. Anything from reminiscences to actual artworks will be gratefully received by ourselves at Birkbeck. Please contact myself, Nick Lambert, or any other member of the team at: [info@cache.bbk.ac.uk](mailto:info@cache.bbk.ac.uk), or see our website at:

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hafvm/cache/>

## ARCHIGRAM Exhibition

Baltic, Gateshead

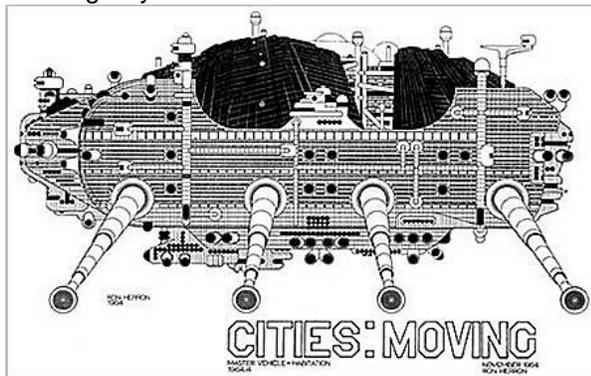
To 31 October 2004

[www.baltic.org](http://www.baltic.org)

Archigram was formed in 1962 by six young London architects, Chalk, Cook, Crompton, Greene, Heron and Webb. They were weary, as Cook said, of the 'continuing European tradition of well-mannered but gutless architecture' and disappointed by modernism already become routine. They saw events as more important than buildings and set out to change British architecture and the world.

This lovely exhibition is in one large room and shows many of their stylish graphics – a few too high on the walls to see in detail – models, publications and short films. They were fascinated by the new technologies of the time, though I saw little reference to computing, and drew on the contemporary pop culture and sci-fi. Yet few of the graphics seem dated and many are timeless gems; clear, precise, effective.

Walking City Credit: Ron Heron



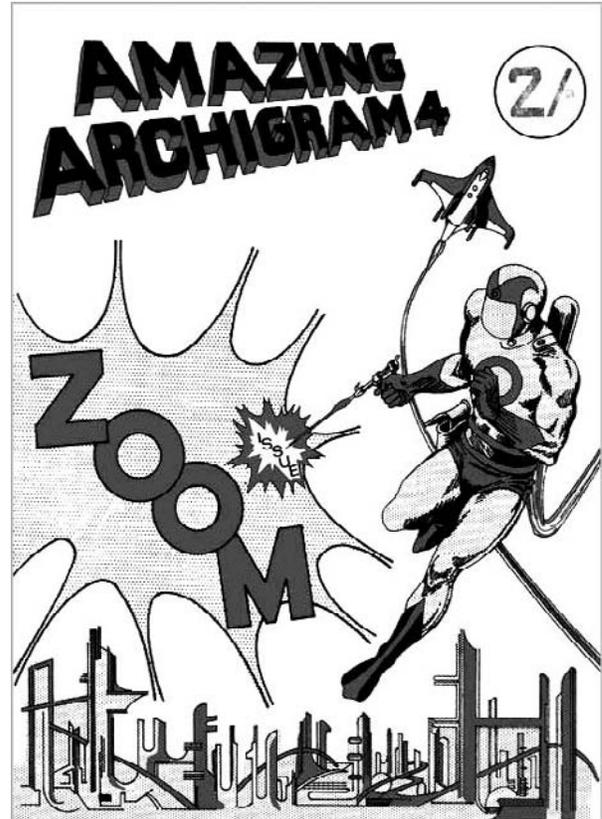
Their love of rounded forms comes from the possibilities of plastics and inflatables. Such shapes are now possible for large structures, thanks partly to advances in computing for design and engineering. The Sage, aka The Snail, new home of the Northern Sinfonia, next to the Baltic by the Tyne, is an example in glass and metal.

Reconfigurable buildings, to be realised by assembling, rearranging and growing structures of prefabricated modules were too influenced by a culture of planned obsolescence and disposables. One domestic module had a planned life of three years. Now we adapt, restore, recycle and reuse, as the Baltic flourmill turned art house illustrates. In this age of conservation we produce more waste than ever.

As for performance, Archigram were hardly put to the test: a swimming pool for a pop star and an adventure playground in Milton Keynes. The world changed and their influence continues. This exhibition goes to Japan next year and then to Australia and New Zealand

**Alan Sutcliffe**

Cover illustration of the fourth issue of Archigram magazine Credit: Archigram



The original is in black, red yellow and grey, with the price of two shillings in green

## Announcing the DASH list

**Paul Brown**

Following on from the recent meetings at SIGGRAPH 04, Los Angeles and ISEA, Helsinki, the DASH list has now been established and is active.

The Digital ArtS Histories list is a venue for exchange of information about the field of Electronic and Digital Arts Histories.

It is:

- 1 Moderated to maintain focus and exclude SPAM
- 2 Intended to cover all the arts
- 3 Archived

You can join the list by sending email to: [listserv@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:listserv@jiscmail.ac.uk)

with the subject blank and the content:  
JOIN DASH your-first-name your-last-name  
and you can leave the list with the content:  
SIGNOFF DASH

You can send email to the list:  
[DASH@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:DASH@jiscmail.ac.uk)

Alternatively you can go to  
<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk>

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## Archive Editorial

from the first issue of PAGE in April 1969

### OPINION

The Computer Arts Society's EVENT ONE at the Royal College of Art 29–30 March 1969, attracted 700 visitors. The key to the impact and success of EVENT ONE lies in the computer-linked equipment presented. A PDP-7 computer with visual display unit (Imperial College); 2 Teletype terminals plus graph plotter (Time Sharing Limited); 2 Teletype terminals and graph plotter (G.E.I.S. Limited); a telephone link to Peter Zinovieff's PDP-8; the Visual Display Unit by International Computers Limited.

The introduction of this working equipment within a fine art context represents a revolution in the British art world. After years of theoretical work, and isolated contacts with technology, here was the major COLLECTIVE step forward. It is important to remember that the men who with exceptional skill and energy engineered this, are primarily professionals in the fields of computing and architecture.

The event was apprehended by the visitor and participant as a continuum of activity and sound. Having passed Brower Hatcher's programmed sculpture that was being erected in the foyer throughout the week-end, and the few exhibits at the entrance to the Gulbenkian Hall, the visitor was immediately caught up with the terminals, and the PDP-7 under the charge of Chris Jones, whose display was often surrounded by up to 15 people watching the light-pen in use.

The central area was used for performances and discussions. Moving beyond this, one entered the screened-off stage. Here more visitors, aided by technicians were working terminals and plotter, whilst the light structures including Adrian Nutbeam's Object-Text-Light Interval, and The Folder by John Bucklow, were seen (and heard) at their best in the occasionally darkened space.

Some of the performances suffered from sounds carried across the hall, but this mobility of sound and people added to the excitement and sense of integration. Films made by computers, or dealing with the subject, were screened in the lecture theatre in three daily sessions.

***Gustav Metzger***

## Current Editorial

### OPINION

The new manifestation of the Computer Arts Society is well established. Our programme of meetings started in February and is now set for the rest of the year. The CAS website is filling up. This is the third edition of PAGE in the new era with another due in December. The committee currently has ten members, seven with specific posts. We meet for a couple of hours each month, often before one of our public meetings.

Achieving this has been – to take a word from Gustav Metzger's first editorial alongside - a collective effort. Our alliance and overlap with the CACHE project at Birkbeck has been a big part of this.

But if you read the CAS Aims & Objectives on page 12, and compare them with the content of our meetings and PAGE, you will see that so far our activities are predominantly in the history and archiving of computer arts. The scope of CACHE is a clear influence and the fairly high average age of the committee may be a factor too – as the oldest member I can mention this.

At the September committee meeting I said that it would not worry me if history, and the closely related role in education, were to be the future of the group – not a view I held a year ago. Our newly elected vice-chairman, Robin Shirley, said quite correctly, that we should be active too in the area of the original CAS – the current creative uses of computers in the arts. It will take effort to do this.

On behalf of the committee, you are invited to become active in the group. Come to one of the committee meetings to see how we work, and if you wish, stay on to help to realise our wider aims.

If you would like to contribute to one of our public meetings please contact CAS chairman George Mallen or another member of the committee.

PAGE is open for your contribution, words or pictures, criticism or proposal, news or history, plea or plug. I would like to start a reviews section, covering events, books and websites: please let me know if you could set up and manage this task.

Partake and take part.

***Alan Sutcliffe***

## CAS Meetings Autumn 2004

**Edward Ihnatowicz – Cybernetic Sculptor**  
Dr Alex Zivanovic

7pm Tuesday 19 October  
Room 542, Mechanical Engineering  
Imperial College Exhibition Road  
London SW7 2BX  
Directions at: [www.imperial.ac.uk](http://www.imperial.ac.uk)

Edward Ihnatowicz was a Cybernetic Sculptor active in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His ground-breaking sculptures explored the interaction between his robotic works and the audience, and reached their height with The Senster, a large (15 feet long), hydraulic robot commissioned by the electronics giant, Philips, for their permanent showplace, the Evoluon, in Eindhoven in 1970. The sculpture used sound and movement sensors to react to the behaviour of the visitors. It was one of the first computer controlled interactive robotic works of art and remains unparalleled to this day. The talk will focus on his cybernetic sculptures and explore his ideas about Artificial Intelligence and embodiment.  
More details at [www.senster.com](http://www.senster.com)

There is a letter from Olga Ihnatowicz on page 8

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**Painting with Tools which can't Exist**  
Tom Kemp

7pm Tuesday 23 November  
System Simulation Ltd  
Bedford Chambers The Piazza  
Covent Garden London WC  
Directions at [www.ssl.co.uk/content/map.html](http://www.ssl.co.uk/content/map.html)

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**Recollections of Herbert Brün**  
Virginia Firnberg

7pm Tuesday 14 December  
System Simulation Ltd  
Bedford Chambers The Piazza  
Covent Garden London WC  
Directions at [www.ssl.co.uk/content/map.html](http://www.ssl.co.uk/content/map.html)  
See Virginia's article beginning on page 4

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## Computers & the Arts in Society

## CAS Committee

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## In future editions of PAGE

The work of Steve Willets  
Peter Zinovieff on his music methods  
More about Edward Ihnatowicz  
and his interactive sculptures  
Josef Albers and Monte Albán  
News from the CACHE Project  
Extracts from early issues of PAGE  
And why not a contribution from you?



## COMPUTER ARTS SOCIETY

British Computer Society Specialist Group

Bringing together artists and technologists  
Exchanging techniques and ideas  
Formulating needs for support  
Helping to get works known  
Exploring new forms

### ABOUT THE COMPUTER ARTS SOCIETY

#### Aims

The Computer Arts Society (CAS) promotes the creative uses of computers in the arts and culture generally

It is a community of interest for all involved in doing, managing, interpreting and understanding information technology's cultural potential

#### Membership & fees

Membership is open to all who are interested in the aims and activities of the group

There is an optional annual contribution of £10 (\$20 overseas) for which members receive a printed copy of each issue of PAGE

#### The British Computer Society (BCS)

The CAS is a Specialist Group (SG) of the BCS

The CAS receives funding from the BCS

Each CAS member who is not already a member of the BCS automatically becomes an SG Affiliate member of the BCS

#### Website

[www.computer-arts-society.org](http://www.computer-arts-society.org)

#### Publication

PAGE the Bulletin of the Computer Arts Society appears quarterly and can be downloaded from the CAS website

#### Archiving computer arts

The CAS was active from 1968 until the mid 1980s

There are significant archives of material from this era, mainly stored in homes and offices of people then active in the group

The CAS is working closely with CACHe, a project in the Art History Department of Birkbeck, University of London, which is documenting UK computer arts in the years to 1980

See page 8 for the latest update on the CACHe project

The collection, identification, collation and handing over of material to the CACHe team will continue in 2004 & beyond

This leads to a wider interest in the archiving, study and presentation of computer arts from earlier years

#### Present & future computer arts

With so many novel and exciting developments in the creative uses of computers in the arts the society will continue its original aims of bringing together those active in this area

#### Collaboration

The society plans to hold joint events with other BCS Specialist Groups and hopes that this might develop into wider collaboration

#### Education

The CAS plans to have an educational role in making students more aware of early work in computer arts and in helping artists to use computers creatively

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