

REVIEW

Survival Research Laboratories/ Einsturzende Neubauten/ Rhythm & Noise Club DV8



Not your typical night on the town: Witnesses to SFL's latest display of violence-as-art withstand the heat

Club DV8, SOMA's latest club sensation, found itself under siege this particular Saturday by Mark Pauline and his Survival Research Laboratory's

B. Neubauten left their power tools at home, and their show suffered for it. Predominantly conventional instruments and a standard rock stage

An excruciatingly long walk followed Neubauten's set, creating a feeling of mounting anxiety which enhanced the provocative effect of SFL's performance. At 1:30 a.m. a bomb detonation, the coughing of a diesel engine and the shattering of glass announced the start of the show, which for all its sinister implications closely resembled a Hollywood stunt set for *The Terminator Strikes Again*. The setting, outside the DV8, 25 feet beneath the Embarcadero Freeway overpass, was perfect: a concrete jungle of support pillars as backdrop for displays of mechanical carnage and robotic urban warfare.

A large four-wheel tracked robot with a giant rotating pirwhheel beating-ram was first to emerge—efficiently disposing of a kind of mirror-glass telephone booth with dead chickens mounted inside ultimately roared in a ball of flame. The remnants of the booth were left dangling from the highway above like a glass and steel hanging-man.

Enter another robot, a spectacular four-legged Gothic erector set lumbering precariously like a wounded dinosaur, a fossil-zombie lurching forward, calculated to appear on the edge of losing its balance and falling on the audience. This breathtaking moment

overhead?).

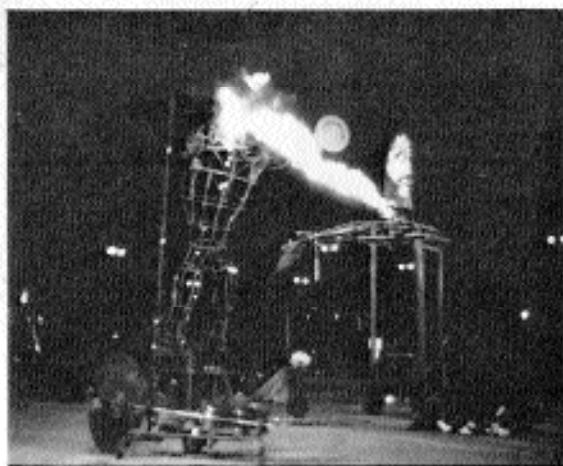
A streetcleaning truck with mirrors strapped to it was the final victim of the bone-crushing rotary-ram. Permitting all this was a percussive industrial soundtrack, the heartbeat of the machine overhead with elephantine squeals of mechanized pain and death. Fire and bombs and sirens in the night—it's a horror some people live with.

What was the message? The irony of destructive construction (creativity)? A gigantic portrait with Marilyn Monroe on one side, a manic dagger-wielding woman on the other, was suspended and rotated, illustrating the two sides of us and our culture. The very names of the group, Survival Research Laboratories, could be a metaphor for our whole civilization (Western man lives in a survival research lab).

The shattered remains of glass, steel and crushed trucks were left to the audience as the static sculpture we normally associate with art. Yet Pauline's work is anything but static. The audience gathered here for a bonfire, a pagan rite, a purging rite of excess (they even tossed albums into the rubble). Mark Pauline warned that

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ARTFORUM



Survival Research Laboratories, *Extremely Cruel Practices: A Series of Events Designed to Instruct Those Interested in Policies that Correct or Punish*, 1985, performance view. Photo: Steve Durand.

Los Angeles

Survival Research Laboratories

Rapid Transit District Parking Lot

The brightly lit parking lot in downtown Los Angeles throbbed with 2,500 spectators, each of whom had just paid eight dollars and signed a waiver absolving the event's sponsors of responsibility for injury or damage resulting from this piece of performance art. Following a ferocious drumroll of publicity, unprecedented in the history of local performance, San Francisco's Survival Research Laboratories was about to commence an hour of explosions, collisions, destruction, desecration, mayhem, and simulated murder titled *Extremely Cruel Practices: A Series of Events Designed to Instruct Those Interested in Policies that Correct or Punish*. Egged on by newspaper articles, a televised video, a write-up in *People* magazine, and posters showing tortured animals and volatile-looking machines, the audience showed up ready for a fearsome spectacle at the Rapid Transit District parking lot next to the Los Angeles River.

"Too bad it didn't work," observed one spectator. But it did work, even beyond SRL's hopes, according to the group's founder, Mark Pauline. And it

was profitable, too, according to Joy Silverman and Jack Marquette, directors of the two sponsoring organizations, LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) and the Anti Club. Those disappointed were looking for good theater with good timing, which was not necessarily the criterion of the artists.

There was a lot of waiting between action segments, but the violent engagements of the 20-odd machines proved noisy, comical, and impressive on a sculptural level. To an ear-splitting soundtrack of screams, groans, and clashing machines, SRL's mechanical creations threw firebombs and rocks, pecked, tore, gouged, pulled, crushed, and otherwise attempted to obliterate each other. The anthropomorphic constructions parodied human aggression, robbing it of any dignity to which it might pretend. Engaged in ludicrous combat were: Tower of Power, a 2,000-pound machine which swung whips and chains and had two ghoulish faces and an arm span of 25 feet; Sneaky Soldiers, 7-foot-tall creatures crawling on their elbows as if in combat; the Big Man, 25 feet tall with a buzz saw for one hand and a flame-thrower for the other; the Walk and Peck, a three-legged walker designed to peck its victim into a pile of rubble; the Catapult, which threw exploding firebombs; a tug-of-war device which pulled apart a pig carcass; and a motorized display of posters depicting torture and confinement. My favorite—indescribably comical and noisy—was the Screw Machine, a tank with pincer arms propelled on giant corkscrew spiral treads and liable to hustle off in any direction.

Images of violence and torture were

simultaneously satirized and ground into the memory as the loudspeakers belched, roared, and drummed. The two collaborators, Pauline and Matt Leckert, manipulated remote controls. Amid the smoke and noise of revving gasoline engines, excited, greasy volunteers dashed back and forth in a ragged choreography to free the limbs of machines entangled in combat. Another squad of helpers brandished fire extinguishers. For a grand finale, the artists set off flares which bathed the wreckage in a raspberry neon glow.

The audience exulted at any show of power and seemed most pleased with utter destruction. Pauline and his partner claim their purpose in this piece was to urge real contemplation of torture and its consequences. They perceive their society as one bent on pain, destruction, and violence; for them, this was a theater of reality. The title specifically addressed "those interested in policies that correct or punish"; Pauline claims, "everybody's interested, but few will admit it." Our ability to ignore man's inhumanity to man is typified, he says, in activist concern for animals; he scoffs at those who criticize SRL's incorporation of animal carcasses with machines. Their time would be better spent, he believes, in protesting the oppression and torture of human beings.

Little of this information was available in the work, however, and SRL relied on arduous esthetics to carve an impression in the viewer's memory. Most Los Angeles performance artists require a more definite clarity of purpose in their work. There is no denying that the SRL stance is problematic, especially in relation to the enthusiastic audience re-

sponse. I would hope that the audience was not applauding violent spectacle but rather offering violent appreciation for SRL's audacity, ludicrous anarchy, and powerful integrity.

—LINDA BURNHAM

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“ASSURED DESTRUCTIVE CAPABILITY”

“He's the James Dean of The Junkyard.” — Joseph of Fectrix
His manic machines are an Urban Nightmare; a modern day Dante's Inferno.
His menacing machines put together in ingenious fashion from salvage yard scraps are running wild . . .
For the past 18 months he's been staging public shows in the Bay Area of S.F., Mark Pauline of Survival Research Laboratories.

—Interviewed by Monte Cazazza/Tina Emmolo

SLASH: How did you get started building your machines?

MARK PAULINE: The whole business of making machines was a response to coming across a huge factory that was being disassembled and afforded me the possibility for an unlimited supply of mechanical components. I changed the lock so I could get in and out easily and started collecting equipment. I figured out the functions and what I wanted to do with the equipment, and ended up with that first big machine “THE SHREDDER.”

[THE SHREDDER — automatically demanufactures up to 5 small objects at a time, and ejects the remains. Equipped with noise making paraphernalia. Also with capability for self-locomotion, and electrical treatment of objects to be demanufactured.]

This was at the beginning of 1978, after I was trailing off on my altering of billboards. I came to the whole thing without any real kind of understanding of what I was doing, despite what you would think about how complicated the machines have become. I just had a basic understanding about how machines worked and I combined that with how my mind works, which is uncomfortable.

I've learned a lot from my involvement with the construction of these machines. I can get a better welding job now. I just rebuilt the transmission on my motorcycle last week. So I'm a new man.

SLASH: So you bettered your mechanical skills?

MARK PAULINE: Absolutely!

SLASH: Can you describe how you feel about your machines?

MARK PAULINE: I hate making them. It's awful. They really bother me when I have to make them. I like to do things with them. If I was as lazy as I want to be I would have rather bought them, but that's not the way it works. They're instruments that fit into the way my mind works. They enable me to get out ideas.

SLASH: Your machines evolve and go through personality changes like in your most recent performance, “THE SHREDDER” started doing that circular dance.

MARK PAULINE: They get more talented every time I do a show. I want to keep it that way. They have personalities.

SLASH: You've used the symbol of the cat a lot in your work.

MARK PAULINE: Yes, there was a 6' ft. by 6' ft. brick that I stuck on a two banks in the area that had some cats fucking on it. It was a response to my feeling that no one ever really sees cats fuck, because they always fuck in the dark, or they always hide when they fuck. I just wanted to involve banks in it in the daytime.

SLASH: Tell us about your mechanical cat.
MARK PAULINE: The mechanical cat was a stupid idea that ended up working.

[THE CAT — A metal facsimile of a cat, with capability of playing electric guitar or grasping with claw objects, and penetrating them. For purpose of penetration, with knife positioned in loin area, like a penis attachment.]

SLASH: He's a great guitarist.

MARK PAULINE: He is. He weighs about 150 lbs. Doesn't move too much. He's got perfect pitch. He can repeat a lick. He's so hot he burned out his insides at one show.

SLASH: Your shows all have elements of Sex Violence and Politics in them.

MARK PAULINE: I look at things in three different ways. The possibilities for violence in it. The possibilities for sex. The possibility for some type of political subterfuge. That's the one dimensional me. So the shows are the same way. Genet said: “That those persons who are truly possessed of genius speak seriously from the heart about two things — sex and death.” Maybe he was just trying to cover up his inadequacy too. Maybe he couldn't even get it up . . . Try Kraft-Ebbing you sexual psychopaths.

SLASH: How long has Survival Research Laboratories been in existence?

MARK PAULINE: Well the original S.R.L. was formed five or six years ago by some right wing radicals who advertised in *Soldier of Fortune*. I didn't make up Survival Research Laboratories; I stole the name from them. They stopped advertising around the same time that I needed people to think of me as an organization. It was important enough for me to steal someone else's name and con this stupid magazine *Blueprints* into giving me a full free page because I wouldn't pay to get into that piece of trash. I just did an ad for S.R.L. and from then on I tried to maintain the front/facade of being an organization and all the advantages that appearance has. In all the dealings I've had with the establishment and businesses you have to have that and someone's tax number or else you won't get answers to important questions, and you won't get response from people. As soon as you have real name, stationary, etc., it really helps. It also helps avoid the star thing. The name — I am the name. It defers things more to an organization which can be as impersonal as organizations can be.

SLASH: Do you think audiences appreciate your sense of humor?

MARK PAULINE: Well as that Avant Garde Filmmaker Gordon Stevenson said: “All that's really important is to make people laugh.” For me a person who is trying to extend himself beyond audience boundaries I think the only way to get people to swallow ideas that are unusual and not especially pleasant is to make them think they are funny. If you can shade anything with a hint of laughter then they can take it. They can take a lot more of a beating if one relieves the tension just a bit. I want to dive into people like a nail. It's going to go in a lot further if they relax. It's like trying to stick someone with a hypodermic needle when their muscles are tense. It's a lot easier to do when they relax. The laughter softens them up and lets me get

by their defenses so I want the most extreme effect possible. I like to make people unsure as to whether they did or didn't like it. Keep them off balance. People see these events and say “God It happened on feet.” “I don't even really know what happened.” I can't seem to make the events last more than 20 minutes anyway. If you can't rivet them in their place for 15 minutes then forget it. Most people run into problems, not because what they're doing isn't interesting or exciting. It's just that they try to make it last longer because there is something about time that means more, and it's better if it's longer and that's really crazy. A lot of things just shouldn't be long.

Let me get this in. “I need help because I hate to do the work. Willing Slaves apply at the address and phone number at the end of this interview. No experience necessary, except the ones they receive from the master. Just follow orders to the bitter or better end. Photo and S.A.S.E. required.”

SLASH: Well maybe this interview will be worthwhile after all. How many of your machine performances have you done?

MARK PAULINE: Eight so far. The first one was Machine Sex which was during the Gas Crisis. It was held at a gas station in North Beach. We chopped up live pigeons in The Shredder. They were dressed in little Arab doll costumes. It was all to a song by The Cure based on the book *The Stranger* called *Killing an Arab*. We had to bribe the gas station attendant. The second one was Food for Machines done in United Nations Plaza. The machines tore up and mutilated food. All kinds of food. It all got wasted. There was a big mess which we didn't even clean up. I forged permission to do that one. The third show was a little benefit I did when Jello Biafra of The Dead Kennedys was running for Mayor. We just defaced some of the other candidates running against him and some other political murderers from S.F. who had enough clout to kill the mayor — like Mr. Twinkie; defaced them with The Scabber.

[THE STABBER — device with mechanical arm featuring a hand for grasping objects. With variable speed settings and a system of rollers designed to pull a length of 7 dimensional images along and expose them for striking by the object held by the mechanical arm.]

Then was “Noise” done in Golden Gate Park, a real psychedelic show. Images, ideas and sounds all thrown together.

The fifth show was “ASSURED DESTRUCTIVE CAPABILITY” a stab in the face for Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union; where we did anything you can imagine to Mr. Brezhnev's body and image in Union Square. We invited people from The Red Chinese Trade Commission, but I don't know if they showed up. I hope they did. Then was “USELESS MECHANICAL ACTIVITY” which was at the Palace of Fine Arts and nothing worked. It was a flop. Then I did a show at Project Artaud with Fectrix, Non, and Zov. I came on with the machines, all mostly about sex and girls. That was the first time the Robot Pounder was used.

[THE POUNDER — remote controlled mobile platform, featuring six mechanical arms that are capable of holding and striking out with different objects. Also

survival research laboratories

San Francisco locals were grimly amused after experiencing Mark Pauline's explosive media extravaganza performed June 26th at the Cadillac parking lot on Van Ness. (A new R.O.T.C. concessions stand?) "Trash and Delete Giant Robots" was the theme of this brilliant demonstration of animated flesh on metal framed organic druids. We also focused our "viddies" on Monte Cazzaza's ten foot iron crossbow which torpedoned pitchforks into the gaping mouth of some oversized clown?? Some dart board.

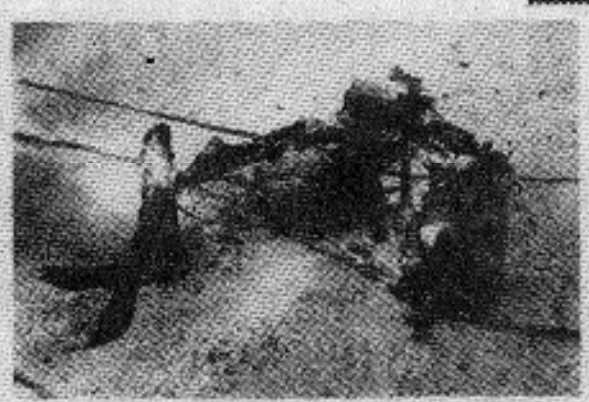
The "Bunk Borensic" did not shy away from the video eyeball which was beaming their enthusiastic grunts over the NBC airwaves on "SFO" hosted by Steve Jamison. Celebrities galore at this torching of automated non-beings. ***It was prime time group coverage gang! With not a moment to spare, an average youngster on roller shoes comes within seconds of being trepanated (look it up) by a full-ton toothpick gone astray.

Talk about inhibition tendencies. . . later I needed a new fix. I tried but couldn't quite simulate that audio sensation I needed by simultaneously exploding two M-80s in the sewer pipes. It wasn't loud enough, but I got quite a few complaints anyway.

Survival Research Laboratory (Pauline's Organization) has previously performed these mechanical military nightmares with a Los Angeles 'industrial' hand "Factrix" who has caught NASA's attention with their studies on sound waves. They are hoping to find the frequency which can produce human spontaneous combustion. Band member Joseph Jacobs stated that while performing Factrix intends to alter the listener's state of consciousness, an understatement I'd say.

Mark Pauline is one of the most impressive art performers in the Bay Area and I urge readers to see his past shows recorded on video tape. Personally, one of my favorites is "Machine Sex" which involves a giant exploding Leonid Brezhnev, a mechanical cat playing guitar, an automatic pigeon shredder and background Muzak is played at 120 decibals.

Pauline and Cazzaza provide an artistic outlet for those who hate to hope and hope to hate. They are due to reemerge from their dens of mental inclinations in early August, some of us will sell our blood to be there; I'll remember the N2O whippets. by Patty Wagon



MARK
PAULINE

✽ BURNT OFFERINGS
Photo by Michael Granros

LETTER FROM SAN FRANCISCO

David Bienn

I.

Mark Pauline and his cohorts at the Survival Research Laboratory are hard at work here in San Francisco, trying to make megacath the most popular cultural artform of the next century. A couple of weeks ago, Pauline staged one of his bread and circus affairs beneath a stretch of elevated interstate in downtown San Francisco's south of Market art enclave. There's really no way to compete with the masters of violence, exploitation and destruction that inundate contemporary society with endless gore, insult, and drivel, but for Pauline and crew, it's obvious that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

To set the scene briefly, we have five thousand or so darkly clad spectators waiting for two hours in anticipation of admission to the three bay staging area, which is cordoned off with barricades and steel cable. Inside the three ring circus, we see the massive square concrete columns supporting the highway above festooned with torches illuminating shelves laden with skinned and dismembered pigs, fish, goats and who knows what other unfortunate domestic companions. Vegematic jones. A glass fronted commercial cooler likewise displays butchered animal remains. Very nice. Let's see. There's a big piñata of sorts hung like a giant pustule from the underside of the roadbed. There's a score of dilapidated pianos stacked up around one of the square columns. There's a nicely executed backdrop-sized painting of a tidal wave at the end of one of the bays, and of course there's the famed cast of mechanical characters, a host of beautifully crafted machines poetically motorized into biomorphically animated puppets. There's no faulting the skill and engineering that go into the design of a set of devices like these; they are the handsome and talented actors responding to the stilted vision of a crackpot dictator. Only to the extent that Pauline was able to facilitate and produce these mechanical objects

does his craftsmanship and artistry deserve credit.

On to the script...Set the stage with military march music and bagpipe dirge. Overlay with stretches of white and grey noise. Throw in a few taped telephone conversations illustrating the meaninglessness and vapidness of everyday life while underscoring the boorish mentality of the speakers. Throw in an inflammatory racial diatribe by a black male speaker ranting that he doesn't want whites in his house, doesn't want to sit at the same table with them, wants nothing to do with them, ad infinitum. Put this dreck on a tape loop and run it throughout the entire performance, which consists of: the flamethrowing machine blasting the keyboard instruments into a mute bonfire, the screw machine wrecking the garbage filled pinata, the commercial cooler knocked over thankfully doors side up by the giant magnet machine, the trash spitting machine vomiting its ammo out into the audience, the amputee machine endlessly performing its pitiful dance, all the machines and their keepers chasing each other around in a confused melée annihilating only the inanimate objects (Those toys are expensive!) Guys and gals are goosestepping around with headsets and walkie talkies, or officiously documenting the whole thing with the newest and hippest equipment. Pretty soon fire engulfs the performance arena and maybe somebody sighs deeply. That's all folks.

Commensurate with the level of mythic depth and cathartic efficacy displayed in the action of the piece, these guys should be issuing dance cards and throwing plastic beads at the crowd. That is to say that what we have here is auto-hype spectacle; it is not serious anything. The show is based on a let 'em eat cake mentality which exhibits base contempt for its audience and is intended to dull rather than enhance the field of human perception. This is art that does not question; it obeys. There's a snotty nosed adolescent rebelliousness in the air that disappears as soon as the

II.

Jean Tinguely's work as a sculptor, constructionist and theorist is sometimes invoked as a precedent and validation of the activity at SRL. The body of Jean Tinguely's work dates back to the mid-1950's, and is based explicitly on ideas about the kinetic motion of interrelated forces and materials as well as the dematerialization and transformation of spatial volume through movement and time. Here is an excerpt from a lecture delivered at the ICA in London early in Tinguely's career. The year is 1959.

Movement is static because it is the only immutable thing - the only certainty, the only unchangeable. The only certainty is that movement, change, and metamorphosis exist. That is why movement is static. So-called immobile objects exist only in movement. Immobile, certain and permanent things, ideas, works and beliefs change, transform and disintegrate. Immobile objects are snapshots of a movement whose existence we refuse to accept, because we ourselves are only an instant in the great movement. Movement is the only static, final, permanent and certain thing. Static means transformation. Let us be static together with movement. Move statically! Be static! Be movement! Believe in movement's static quality. Believe in change. Do not hold anything fast. Change! Do not pinpoint anything! Everything about us is movement. Everything around us changes. Believe in movement's static quality. Be static!

- Jean Tinguely "Art, Machines and Motion"

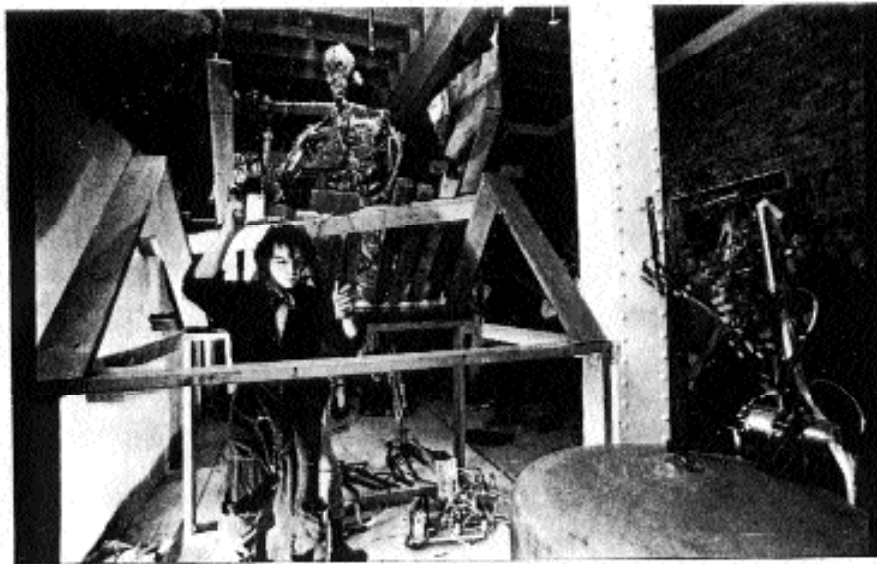
In terms of intention, context, and concentration, Tinguely's work is built solidly upon modernist inquiry and sensibility, preceded by the likes of Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner and Lazlo Moholy Nage.

Alexander Calder's influence as a contemporary practicing master was not unfelt or unrecognized by Jean Tinguely; the two men were, in fact, in direct contact and exploring related paradigms. Perhaps the closest working relationship during the early years of Tinguely's career was with chromatic metamagician Yves Klein, a dematerial theorist who departed in 1963. Throughout the years, the partnership of otherness undertaken with collaboratrix Nikki de St. Phalle has resulted in projects of rich formal and textural synthesis based on an open ended creative process.

The flexibility and discourse of the work invites experimentation with materials and symbolic variables. The use of animal bones and feathers is polyvalent. In some instances there is a superficial, formal resemblance between Tinguely's work and the frightshows staged by SRL, but by and large, the seminal ideas driving Tinguely's motors derive from qualities of improvisation and anarchy TRANSUBSTANTIATING elements of mass, time, and motion. Rather than being rigidly controlled through the electronic medium, Tinguely's claptrap motors powered machines with missing gear-teeth; complete eccentricity of dance resulted from the unpredictable trajectory and performance of the component parts. The primal machine was simply the wheel. In performance, the key principle was sense liberation: perfume was released from atomizing gizmos as business machines learned to play music while mechanical painting and poetry randomly gurgled from the claw of the Metamatiques.

When a piano was destroyed during the course of the 1960 performance "Homage to New York," so was everything else that had been constructed for that event at the Museum of Modern Art. That was the point. These machines were not precious. They were truly emblematic of the disposable civilization of modern technocracy, in that they themselves were annihilated in process. Posited as an outcry against the suffocation of the individual and the paralysis of chance by the extant and developing socio-political structure, Tinguely's work exhorts the delirious release of the human personality.

Jean Tinguely today remains an iconoclast and stands apart from the hyped world of consumerist art, publicity and packaging. His catalogue of projects is well documented, and recommended to anyone interested in kinetic sculpture and performance.



*Chico MacMurtrie in performance
photo: John Wilson White*

III.

It is worth noting that there are artists active in the Bay area who are responding to the challenge of contemporary humanistic and environmental issues working through the medium of robotic design and performance. For the past eight years or so, Chico Mac Murtrie has been making investigations into these areas, at first as a student in Arizona and later in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Mac Murtrie is evolving a mythos addressing socioecological dynamics modeling both the flexible planetary environment and the political and cultural dilemmas resulting from an onslaught of computerized depersonalization in relationship to the multitudinous levels of civilization existing now.

He has created a cast of characters capable of staging an object lesson or passion play: the Rock Thrower represents the retaliation of disenfranchised groups in world politics, from the Palestinians to the Indians of the Americas. He voices a primal protest against the dimensional separation from the nurturing relationship to native soils and their desecration by international commercial concerns. The Tumbling Man, Primitive Drummers 1&2, and Walking Woman, are some other members of the cast. The benign but troubled Spirit of the earth emerges from the interior of a welded steel globe like a chick emerging from an egg...a chicccck with an axe to grind. These steel humanoids are air powered by pneumatic pumps which create a gasping, breathing sound as they come to life. Mac Murtrie attaches the swinging panels to the various parts of his body which correspond to the

moving anatomies of his metal creations. As he triggers the buttons they mimic his motions like beginning ballroom dance students waiting for the approval of the teacher. The nature of this activity creates the very palpable illusion that there is really something going on here, that somehow these beings have a kind of intelligence and personality; this choreography induces the willing suspension that opens magical circuitry. The drummer drums forgotten cadences; the house flies apart.

In addition to the globe and human figures, the artist has created a small forest of trees whose root and branch systems move up and down to create an eccentric, erratic, walking motion. The ecosystem is in flux this is the waning frontier of the rainforest. In the course of the performance, MacMurtrie hands the controls over to members of the audience; they then have the power to guide the path of the ambient rainforest, in other words, they participate in its preservation or its annihilation.

This is the crux of the matter, the use or abuse of ability and responsibility with regard to the future of our delicate planet, ultimately much more fragile than one made of steel. This is the absolutely quintessential mandate which deserves all the serious attention that contemporary artists can muster. The methodologies and potentials of kinetic artforms are rich in the ability to explore a potent new synthesis capable of extending the realities of transformation pursued not only by the modern masters of the 20th century by those of preceding and future millenia. These methodologies and paradigms are strong tools when they are used by strong and attentive hands.

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"San Francisco Post, Hep", by Mo David, High Performance Magazine, Issue no. 16

In 1978, at the height of the Disco craze, when the masses of punks in S.F. could be counted on one hand, four art students organized a piece at a local motel. The Motel Tapes was a perfect example of Seventies sensibilities. Archaic Video Tapes set in between the regular tape of Pam, they were a cigarette, a pause, a chance to get it up again. The system existed. They merely plugged into it. This made sense. This was Seventies art. Almost a year to the day after the Motel Tapes, this guy from Florida dressed pigskin up like feathery little Arabs at a S.F. gas station, and staging what he called "Machine Sex," made Marilyn outta them. This was done to the accompaniment of a musical arrangement based on Carlos' "The Stranger." This was Mark Pauline. It was 1979 and, as far as I'm concerned, this was the beginning, or rather the re-emergence of "Hep" in "Bagdad by the Bay" Funk Park.

"Survey 1981, Artists, Writers, Curators, Poll."

"Issues and Images", Winter 81- 82.

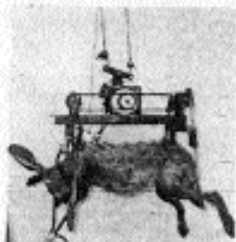
What was the best performance of 1981? Where?

The ongoing body of work of the San Francisco's Mark Pauline, notably at Kozzy Pavilion, Fort Mason, the Cadillac lot on Van Ness Avenue, and others. Homemade robot metal machines attack, blow each other up, suffer, and die. Sample title: Mysteries of the Reactionary Mind. The next great artist from the Bay Area.
—Penny Pitkin

"Performance Art in the Eighties, The Selling of the Avant-Garde", by Allison Cheek, Artbeat Magazine, Spring 82'

Take a look at Mark Pauline's performances. One of his pieces at this year's San Francisco's International Video Festival contained his typical machine animals: large constructions of scrap metal, powered by engines so that they flail mechanical arms, move menacing jaws and attack other machines in the parking lot. Monitors are constantly moving the crowd back, trying to keep them away from the flying rockets, the smashing machines and general destruction and chaos that accompanies Pauline's performances.

Mark Pauline at Kozzy Pavilion, December 1980. A rocket launcher opens slowly, and fires its rocket at a large, arched face situated across the stadium.



Pauline and Labat are good examples of '80s performance art. Pauline's use of the bigger-than-life machines and photos of major political figures and his emphasis on violence are all essentially political statements. But they're meant to be seen live, meant to cause terror, meant to question art as well as politics.



"Why Performance Art is So Boring", by

Michael Peppe, Storms of Youth, Issue No. 3

As you may have guessed from the creative vacuum here described, the writer currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Nonetheless I have lived in several other major cities in recent years, including New York (three of the last four), Los Angeles, New Orleans and Boston, and consider myself decently well-informed of developments in performance, and would submit that this unfortunate situation prevails nationwide. I have, however, in the last year or so witnessed at least in the Bay Area three exceptions: the work of performance artists Mark Pauline, Jeff Stoll and George Coates.

These artists are utterly dissimilar from one another and by no means constitute anything remotely resembling a movement, or even atrend. Jeff Stoll is a young visual artist who performs small-scale solo events in galleries and underground space; George Coates directs higher-budget, professionally-skilled ensembles in larger, more traditionally theatrical settings; Mark Pauline is New Wave who builds and operates physically-dangerous Performance Machinery at various outdoor urban locales. I do not plan to make the obligatory facile family concert that some kind of an empirical inventory will suffice to smoke out the physical wisdom of an event whose very purpose it is to transcend such inventory. Each deserves, indeed requires a separate article unto itself, or at least more than a few easily-misinterpretable cubbyhole-stickers from my mind's cultural trashroom. (In all honesty I don't believe any art should be reviewed, period, and that's why I have not done so; to any particular artist or work in this essay. Great art doesn't need my dry hand-outs, and bad art has already killed itself. That is, beauty is that to [which the heart opens, heedless of the assistance of my critical pounding fist, and non-beauty hammers incessantly in vain.) They risk, they labor, they have courage.

There it something they would like us to see; a kind of gift. They give it either because they love us or because they love the world we're in, though of course some of them would admit to such a thing (Who would admit to such an atrocity of judgement?). There's a psychosis which makes our own desperate suppressions appear mild and over-polite, but which at the core is generated by a volcanic sentence. Still, there are unquestionably the exceptions. What can be done about the rest of this halitotic idiom, this Thalidomide Muse with neither eyes nor ears but only a gigantic sucking mouth? Easy. Ignore it. Go to a movie, read a book, attend a concert, dance. Without witness, autonomously-clapping audiences like ourselves to feed on, performance art faces the same choice we do: mutate or die.

Review of "A Fiery Presentation of Dangerous and Disturbing Stunt Phenomena", by Kathi Norklun Artweek Magazine, Dec. 1981

Mark Pauline is known locally for elaborately conceived, self-destructive, machine-staged performances. His piece performed in the parking lot across the street from the Boarding House was tough, macho and fraught with a frenzied sense of purpose. High-tech, with an electronic score supplementing the noise of the machine-performers, the work repelled analysis by its hermetic nature. Sex, violence, destruction and liberation combined in a metaphor of contemporary existence.