

***THE MIRACLE FILTER***  
***Audio Recordings (Tapes 6 - 11)***  
***February – April 1994***

The FLAT recordings until now had all been straightforward unaltered audio-cassettes documenting social interactions at the gallery. There was little, if no manipulation of either the tape (physically) or the content being recorded, until the recording of the *Miracle Filter* series.

**Horsburgh:** [Peter Styversant] founded New York in 1653. King-size, rich choice tobaccos, and the miracle filter, make Peter Styvesant the international passport to smoking pleasure.<sup>55</sup>

“Miracle Filter”, was a phrase taken from a box of *Peter Styvesant* cigarettes which described the quality of their filters. The choosing of this phrase was in a sense, a word play on the notion of the ‘filter’. The tape-deck used for our recordings was then referred to as the ‘miracle filter’, in that it ‘filtered’ out all our ‘jargon’.

On the evening of this first recording, Barry, Horsburgh, and I were sitting around at the FLAT. I mentioned a game that a friend, Kearn Bamber and I used to play. We would take a text and read it in a tone or voice that was divorced from the content of the text. For example – one would adopt an angry voice while describing the mechanics of a car engine. In this way the signifying voice would be out of phase with the signifying text. The secret to the game was to try and sound as serious as possible; to make one’s words seem believable.

With what, for me, had been a rather arbitrary reference to the game; Horsburgh hurriedly got the tape-recorder and a pile of books. We passed out the books randomly and began to read arbitrarily in a ‘conversational tone’. As Horsburgh had trained to be an actor, he slipped into the mode with greatest ease, sounding authentic yet irrational. But all three of us participated, and as each individual spoke, our readings began to develop into ‘conversations’. Amongst us, an audio *exquisite corpse* materialized.

**Horsburgh:** Thomas! Every passenger of oriental traditional medicine

**Barry:** was a failure. And because of German counter attacks

**Horsburgh:** I discovered ash.

- Barry:** If only an operation may be explained by the mistakes made in planning the cases  
**Allen:** or by use of Matisse cut-outs.
- Barry:** What do we know? The reasons they left  
**Horsburgh:** the three kinds of bladder  
**Allen:** was to continue working as a ticket examiner  
**Horsburgh:** toward the discharge of toxins  
**Allen:** on trains.<sup>56</sup>

Five tapes were recorded with this process, and during the course of making these audio-tapes we included such improvisations as the insertion of Afrikaans and mock arguments. Significant was the fact that we used old books as sources for our ‘scripts’.

In writings for the *Situationist International* publication, French writer, Guy Debord, the leader of the Situationist movement, described the revival of ‘bad books’ to produce a new kind of ‘literature’. He distinguished this practice from that of the Surrealists ‘automatic writing’ and spoke to the idea of ‘unintentional participation’ of those authors whose words were appropriated.

The first visible consequences of a widespread use of détournement, apart from its intrinsic propaganda powers, will be the revival of a multitude of bad books, and thus the extensive (unintentional) participation of their unknown authors; an increasingly extensive transformation of sentences or plastic works that happen to be in fashion: and above all an ease of production far surpassing in quantity, variety and quality the automatic writing that has bored us so much.<sup>57</sup>

At that time, Horsburgh had introduced the group to the writings of Debord, and we regarded our game at that time as an act of détournement. Defined by Guy Debord in his writings for the *Internationale Situationniste #3*, détournement was:

...the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble. The two fundamental laws of détournement are the loss of importance of each détourned autonomous element - which may go so far as to lose its original sense completely - and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect.

...practical because it is so easy to use.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Horsburgh, Barry, Allen, Matoti; ‘The Real Miracle Filter’, *Flat Recordings*, Tape 10, Durban, FLAT, Apr 1994.

<sup>56</sup> Horsburgh, Barry, Allen; ‘Miracle Filter 2’, *FLAT Recordings*, Tape 6, Durban, FLAT, Feb-Apr 1994.

<sup>57</sup> Guy Debord, Gil Wolman; ‘Methods of Détournement’ (1956), *Situationist International – Anthology*, Venice, Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Guy Debord; ‘Détournement as Negation and Prelude’ (1959), *Situationist International – Anthology*, 1981, p.55.

***EXCERPTS from THE  
MIRACLE FILTER  
February – April, 1994***

*The first four tapes are constructed by Horsburgh (H), Barry (B) and myself (A).*

***MIRACLE FILTER 2  
Recording (Tape 6)***

**H:** Thomas, every passenger of oriental traditional medicine  
**B:** was a failure. And because of German counter attacks  
**H:** I discovered an ash.  
**B:** If only an operation may be explained by the mistakes made in planning the cases  
**A:** or by use of Matisse cut-outs.

**H:** Stalin [...] with his top officers  
**B:** causing the Soviet headquarters to give up using [...] which I suppose is similar  
**H:** to the illness that the Southern Chinese consume themselves with in the [...] parts of his body.  
**B:** The inadequate numbers of the heavy support of weapons, notably tanks and artillery were used for exploiting success  
**H:** and led to the advent of Buddhism in China.  
**B:** Also, an unfortunate consequence of the operation.  
**H:** Like lightened salvation!  
**B:** Exactly!

**H:** In essence the teachings are about man and his dependency on  
**B:** the Soviet Defensive in the South [...]  
**H:** which is nothing other than the voice of nature tied down to the German army group  
**H:** and they had the last word for the reverses at the front. Stalin had dealt mercilessly with his top offices.  
**B:** The Soviet forces disrupted this plan and [...] set free their  
**H:** twenty-two thousand aircraft and up to twenty thousand tanks

**A:** to work on the docks for a year to save money.  
**H:** The missing word is there engraved in stone and fused in glass.  
**B:** The unsuccessful actions  
**H:** of the figures of self  
**B:** was another reason  
**H:** why the autonomic nervous system under the direction of the triple [...] diffuse organ...

**B:** What do we know? The reasons they left  
**H:** the three kinds of bladder  
**A:** was to continue working as a ticket examiner  
**H:** toward the discharge of toxins  
**A:** on trains.

**B:** The man who blows [dealt] can actually  
**H:** call it back to the sweat glands  
**A:** reflected in garish pastel images  
**B:** and an auxiliary blow  
**H:** to subdue the pain.

**B:** And there was nothing with which to replace them  
**H:** when faced with a particularly painful localised pressure point all life on planet earth breaks down.  
**B:** The defenders began to feel the shortage of glass,  
**H:** air and food  
**A:** and gravel-chips. And gravel-chips were leading to the work of road gangs imbedded in the resin block  
**B:** growing pressure  
**H:** in the human metabolism  
**A:** witnessed many times before took on a new meaning.  
**H:** This helpful advice still remains  
**A:** making sculpture rather than functional objects.

**H:** But only he[...] in the trunk  
**B:** had taken globalisation  
**H:** bug-eyed.  
**A:** All of this  
**B:** wealth of military equipment [...] not only based on the size of the production in the mountains  
**H:** but on tracing this scar of the ears

**A:** creates a supernatural aura that demands a religious silence  
**B:** to meet the needs of  
**A:** post-medieval  
**H:** sexual sensitivity.

**B:** In those great times the fur in the front and the rear was revealed  
**H:** to the internal government's massage.  
**B:** The rear did more than supply the front  
**H:** and pressed the eyeballs together toward the inside.  
**B:** It inspired the front with lofty ideas  
**H:** and all of these were meant to receive the widest publicity [...]

**H:** Lack of urine flow  
**A:** Shirtless in the reaction  
**H:** Considerable vulnerability  
**A:** to the defined attitude of swelling bellies.

**B:** Electricity  
**H:** caused ceaseless laughter,  
**B:** mass production,  
**H:** continuous anger,  
**A:** a pair of old Lebanese,  
**H:** perpetual frowns on the mouths of swords

**H:** Bad breath belonging to the absence of feeling and hands  
**B:** or 100 railway stations  
**A:** Scoring projectors, psychedelic  
**H:** army force  
**B:** to win the war with a lightning stroke  
**A:** or smoking a big cigar.

**B:** While these forces were strong enough to attack  
**H:** Buddhism in Europe.

**B:** Preserve the secret of  
**H:** the seat of spiritual faculties  
**B:** in the new offensive.  
**H:** This was the heart of insufficient circulation  
**B:** as these quotations show.

**H:** All the diseases of the eye  
**A:** have given up some press-club issues.

**B:** However Stalin, instead of a whole series of local offenses,  
**A:** was excruciatingly ambivalent about both his fame and his physical attractiveness.  
**B:** These were the main aims which governed his decisions.  
**A:** He had girl's pounding on his bedroom door all night  
**B:** in the first days of the offensive. OK.  
**A:** He did rather encourage this behavior to a certain extent.

**H:** Anglo-phones  
**B:** experience all sorts of killings.  
**A:** Superfluous!  
**H:** What is the function of this organ?  
**A:** To move back to Cambridge!

**B:** Hy het verwys na die sware leenskap van 1878 op die ramp uitgesak het en toegeskryf aan die groot skeepse [...]  
**H:** all serve chronic indigestion  
**B:** van die Republiek is nooit om die Volke geskiet nie  
**H:** and alone it ensures the chemical transformation of food and its absorption.

**H:** Thomas, you are full of shit! When a shipwrecked man is found clinging barely alive to flossam, any tender loving care or pampering is sure to terminate him.  
**B:** By [...] het Moshesh  
**H:** Ingelepe!? The initial trial is thus followed by [...] where all upper hands are put to the test!  
**B:** Een keer het die Basuto opperhoof [...] wat hy het gese. Besef jy Venter dat jy op hierdie oomblik in volle en [...] kan maar besluit omgestaan op sy borsel en dood en [...] gese: Hier staan ek, Moshesh  
**H:** in Hawaii  
**B:** Neem jou assegai en steek hom deur hierdie hart van my [...] Die barbar het die wit man se houding bewonder en sy [...] afgesien  
**H:** for the repopulation of enzymes.  
**B:** Well exactly! So what's the point here?

**B:** From whatever angle we look at these comment they manage to presume  
**H:** the highest category.  
**A:** But,  
**B:** it's a Miracle Filter.

**MIRACLE FILTER 3**  
*Recording (Tape 7)*

**B:** I wouldn't be surprised if I died like a boxer.

**A:** I have friends!  
**B:** Five or six new ones show up every week.  
**H:** What is striking about this story?

**A:** Excuse me, I was probably the first English hit. OK!

**H:** You are the most advanced stage of the liver, Siemon. You are diseased!  
**A:** I was simply affected by Brown's colleagues.  
**B:** Unless you are initiated.

**A:** Satanist!  
**H:** Satanist? The complicated symbolism of expression is remarkably similar to nakedness. Look! Ok, listen. To be naked is to be oneself.  
**B:** That's a personal thing.  
**H:** No, to be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not be recognizable.  
**B:** It's a personal thing.  
**H:** It's a naked body!  
**B:** I like to go with four people at once.

**H:** You also like to go with a painting that has been sent as a present from the Grand Duke of Florence to the King of France.  
**B:** Who I know can handle the element of danger.

**H:** Thomas, compare the expressions of these two women. Compare the expressions of these women.  
**B:** I'm always hoping that I am making things look better. I never set out to destroy anything.  
**H:** The absurdity of your male flattery reached its peak... Well the absurdity of this male flattery reached its peak in the public academic art of the nineteenth century. Many state

of business discussed in paintings like this.  
**B:** Ja, but they don't meet the stereotype of a drop-out.  
**H:** Because when one of them felt he had been unwitting he looked up in consolation. No thanks!

**MIRACLE FILTER 4**  
*Recording (Tape 8)*

**H:** I have a question. Is the wall often presented as a myth?  
**B:** No, it's a type of mental disorder marked by delusion.  
**H:** OK, granted that, does graffiti art try again and again to break through the wall; and open its plaster to give you a panoramic view?

**B:** No, it's a natural method of sexual intercourse between males.  
**H:** No Thomas, the phenomenon of the wall exercises a fascination for the art, while as a source of inspiration.

**A:** I cannot deny, it was my finger.  
**H:** The finger of the past no longer exists as it once did.  
**A:** It's gone?  
**H:** The allegorical figure becomes a portrait of a girl. Your finger is behind bullet-proof perspex, Siemon!

**A:** Bursting with sexual energy... but plagued by bad skin!

**MIRACLE FILTER - "LOVE & MONEY"**  
*Recording (Tape 9)*

**H:** Plots of ground in dying Christianity. Colours of my enemies.  
**B:** I am starting to loose you. Can I just respond?  
**H:** OK, go ahead.  
**B:** The spirit of pathological condition and inability to avoid using certain drugs.  
**H:** Sweet zealous contemplation.  
**A:** I agree. Shall we now partake in actions that we have so wholeheartedly waited for?

**H:** Its like making a diebag.  
**B:** That's right.

**H:** Dreams are the conventions of chance  
**B:** a type of galvanometer.  
**A:** We have been soiled by unknown substances and activities.

**A:** I propose a toast...  
**H:** To swallows in old bridesmaid's clothes...

**A:** No...no...no... We will never match the perfection of the mass-produced.  
**H:** We will only be the webs and pins in the splits of the eye.

**THE REAL MIRACLE FILTER**  
*Recording (Tape 10)*

*This is the fifth tape in Miracle Filter series. Although called the "Real Miracle Filter" it does not feature any read text as performed in the earlier tapes (6 to 9), rather it consists of general social interaction Samkelo Matoti, Aliza Levi and Tamlyn Martin join Barry, Horsburgh and Allen in conversation at the FLAT. With Brian Eno's "Music for Airports" as a backdrop, a gentle mood is littered with discussions about "Paris-Texas", Waco-Texas, the "raisin-bun theory" and other topics. The section below is quite interesting only because the Miracle Filter tape that followed this one is called "Heaven" (Tape 11).*

**H:** There was this guy in New York, in 1920, who called himself God. He was this black preacher living in Harlem. He called himself God and his headquarters "Heaven".  
**M:** I think its true.  
**B:** Imagine if he really was God.  
**H:** He was an absolute ruthless [...] monger and he had this 8-block commune which he called "heaven"  
**M:** [...] monger! What did he do, man?

**H:** He would extort everyone in the neighborhood and say: "Hay God's getting itchy."

**M:** Crazy!  
**H:** Ja, I think he was a little off. After dinner every night they would have wild orgies in "Heaven". All of the angels would get stripped down first and that was when everyone would get drunk and would have sex.

**M:** So they reckoned they were in Heaven?  
**H:** Ja and people would send in letters addressing them to God, Harlem, NY. And they would get to him.

**B:** And what happened?  
**H:** I think he might have killed someone.

**M:** I think it is quite an interesting story that... But what do you think about people with influence like that?  
**H:** A lot of those things are built around personality. The cult of personality... About cultivating an ego which sustains itself.

*Here Barry, Levi, Matoti, Martin and Horsburgh discuss going through keyholes in time. This is also the last track on the first FLAT CD compilation.*

**B:** ...what each song means though because the whole tradition is really being lost. As much as the recording is actually capturing the tradition, it actually signifies the...

**H:** disintegration.  
**B:** Ja, the disintegration.  
**M:** Fuck. Did you hear stories about black magic?

**H:** Tell us about some.  
**L:** Ja, tell us some stories.  
**M:** You know things about witchcraft? It is very strange that people can [...].  
**TM:** What kind of things are you thinking of?

**M:** Well like... actual realities that people can go through holes. Keyholes.  
**H:** Ja, I've heard of that.  
**M:** You know, like vanish... vanish in front of the eyes of the people.  
**L:** So do you believe them?  
**M:** Ja... and I think I've seen a ghost. It's strange.

**H:** Ja I have to, when did you see a ghost?

**M:** A few years ago. It was at night. We were sitting at my dad's place. And there was this huge mountain. There was this light. I know that... because I didn't confront the whole situation...

**L:** [...] go into that walk.

**M:** What I've heard from people in very distant places. Apparently these guys were ready for circumcision... This dude told me it was like this sun like shoes that dragged him on the ground. It was really like it was going after him...

**L:** There is such a fine line between what people call hallucination... and reality.

**M:** I don't think so Aliza...

*At this point Barry puts on the "Kenya and Tanzanian Witchcraft & Ritual Music" CD and begins to read from the CD cover. Horsburgh, reading from a cigarette box, joins in and another "Miracle Filter" commences. Sections of this recording also appear on FLAT CD 1. Regular conversation continues after a few minutes, however some texts are read randomly throughout the entire interaction.*

**B:** The illnesses are expelled from the bodies in a dramatic finale heard here

**H:** and founded New York in 1653. King-size, rich choice tobaccos, and the miracle filter, make Peter Styvesant the international passport to smoking pleasure.

**B:** The initiation of a Taita girl into the tribe includes a secret ritual at night, during which the girl expects to be eaten alive by an animal in front of the elders; she has been led to believe that her remains will be reassembled at dawn by sacred crows who come down from the Taita hills. In the morning, the uninitiated are shown the girl's "remains", which are simply bones that the elders have thrown out during the night after feasting. Thus is the mystery of the ceremony

kept alive through generations. The "animal" is very realistic: as "secret" songs are sung, an elder, dressed up in skins and chained to a man, crawls along the ground and approaches the terrified girl. An instrument, which is supposed to sound like the hungry animal thirsting after the flesh of the initiate, is played by another elder hidden behind a blanket in the gloom of the hut. The elder rubs his fingers up and down a stick resting upon a pot which has a skin drawn tightly across it: the vibrations that result produce a sinister tone. The Mwari rite has now almost entirely died out.

**H:** Thomas, where is that from?

**B:** In a way the true function is still there. But that doesn't mean that its not working - that the function isn't happening. Because even if it were happening, you wouldn't know. You can take a rugby ball if you don't know what it is supposed to do. You don't know what you supposed to do with it and you can use it for the wrong reasons.

**M:** Thomas, do you know when you are going to get married?

**B:** No, never.

**M:** Don't you ever think about that?

**B:** No, I don't really think about marriage.

**M:** Do you know when you are going to get what you want - what you have chosen as your destiny?

**B:** Probably after death.

**M:** Because you seem like this whole certain creature.

**B:** Do you know what "umkundwabenta" means?

**M:** What?

**B:** *Umkundwabena*. It's "dog-face", "dog hair". What is that? What is your perception of it?

**M:** *Othlogo genjani*...

**B:** What is your perception? What does it mean to you? It means "the bare-footed one". It's the spirit of the city. It's the spirit of the city.

**M:** You can call it like in many ways.

**B:** You can call it anything. I know that but what does it mean to you? It's the one with the ragged clothes.

**M:** Ragged clothes?

**B:** Ja.

**M:** Hay, have you seen that dude.

**B:** name... I've given him a name... He's the man who lives in himself.

**M:** Have you seen that dude? Have you spoken to him?

**B:** Ja, he keeps a dead cat around. Its so that the lizards don't crawl into his body when he is sleeping.

**M:** He eats raw eggs.

**B:** He lives in himself. He doesn't need the city. He doesn't need anything. All he needs is himself.

**M:** It's strange. The other day I met him and he can't feel any pain you know. He's got like this ring stuck onto his finger. And the rest of his finger is swollen. It seems sore, painful. But he's stuck into that.

**B:** Because it doesn't matter.

**M:** But to me, to my eyes...

**B:** Because you are on the one side of reality and he is on the other side of reality. You can't understand his reality and he can't understand your reality because you are too removed, you are too far away.

**M:** But still...

**B:** When he gets hungry and you get hungry, he doesn't eat food.

**M:** [...] He thinks of himself as these bells above, from the bible...

**B:** He lives in himself.

**M:** No, I'm talking in terms of how he goes about...

**B:** He's our shadow.

**M:** Our shadow. To me he's like you.

**B:** Yes. But the fact is that you still recognize him apart from everyone else.

**M:** To me, he is like that dude I saw in Hillbrow. Like something that is not supposed to exist within my circles.

**B:** Because he lives in himself. He is his own entity. He needn't exist for us. But he

also doesn't need us to exist. He's removed.

*This section appears on FLAT CD 1*

**H:** I had to get rid of that idea that haunted me all the time. Why didn't I kill bed-bur the very day that we had doubts about that ugly game he was playing. Starting from that point I argued with myself: why do you have the right to kill? My conclusion was that end justified means. My end was to make a successful break. Stretched out between the bow and the mast and I slept and slept and slept and slept and slept and slept.

**B:** Isn't anything more important?

**H:** I slept and slept and slept towards the sea under my fingers. I slept and slept and slept and slept on the surface where the river met. And I slept in the middle and it was strong and I slept like a big bruise.

**B:** Shoot low with the matches. Pushing them idly into powerful patterns with their long fingers and watched a beautiful mouth pushed up...

**H:** And I slept and slept and slept and slept and slept into a stiff quart of rum and a sky sail in a jib. And I slept into the bows in the name of God. And I slept and slept and slept and slept and slept.

**B:** Not savagely?

**H:** No, the flood tide lasted six hours.

#### **THE MIRACLE FILTER – HEAVEN** **Recording (Tape 11)**

*This is the sixth tape in the Miracle Filter series. This cassette consists of mainly ad-libbed free speech and indeed is the most confident and focused of all the tapes. But then again it does mark a shift in the process and therefor it can also be seen as a transitional recording. Here, Horsburgh takes on the persona of God and conversations between Eve,*

*Gabriel and Michael Landon take place. Extracts found on FLAT CD 1.*

**A:** God, is that you?  
**H:** Er... yea, who's this? Who is it?  
**A:** Its me, Eve.  
**H:** Eve? Oh, what are you doing?  
**A:** Oh, I'm just hanging around.  
**H:** I think the telephone is ringing. Just go check.  
**A:** Me, we don't have a phone.  
**H:** Of course we do. Gabriel installed one last week. Would you please just go and check.  
**A:** No, no, no, we don't have a phone, I'm sorry.  
**H:** OK, just ten seconds. OK here I am. Its me in the person, can't you tell? Oh shit! I'm sorry I am assuming the form of a tree.  
**A:** I just wanted to find out if Adam and I were married, officially? Do you know?  
**H:** Eve... are you aware of the burden of holy matrimony?  
**A:** No.  
**H:** Do you have the slightest idea of what it means to devote your life, your entire life, in economic, social and religious bond.  
**B:** [Enters, after finding out what happened to the FLAT's telephone.] He installed it in the wrong apartment. It's next door.  
**A:** Adam, please help me. I am talking to God and he won't tell me if we are married or not.  
**H:** What do you mean he installed it in the wrong compartment? What do you mean by that? You are telling me... the telephone... he installed it... What are you telling me? What is this?  
**B:** He installed it in Linith's apartment.  
**H:** You mean he installed it in the wrong apartment? What the fuck is Gabriel doing? Would some one please tell me what the fuck Gabriel is doing? Peter...Peter...  
**B:** Is this reverse-charges?  
**H:** That's a good question. Is this reverse-charges?

**A:** This is a radio!  
**B:** Don't ask me you should know these things, omnipotent one.  
**H:** Look, I attend to seven hundred million galaxies a day. Not only that I have to contend with the fact that scientific evidence is accruing against me. Have you heard about the fact that the big-bang theory had been discredited? That was the last outpost of every religious bastard on the planet.  
**H:** Look Eve, go... go...  
**B:** To Hell...  
**H:** Gabriel, it's not necessary at this point, would you please... do you mind? Look Eve, go down to Adam, and tell him you want to feed him something. OK, seduction is an art which you must learn.  
**B:** He's already had the apple.  
**H:** He's already had the apple?  
**B:** He swallowed the whole thing. In one bite.  
**H:** Why the fuck didn't anyone tell me? Here I was attending to the destruction of large portions of earth with floods and plagues and boils and things and no one tells me that he has eaten the apple! This is central. This is absolutely central to everything that is going to happen for the next four billions years on earth.  
**A:** Well we were hungry.  
**H:** Michael! Where's Michael? Have you seen Michael?  
**A:** Michael Landon?  
**H:** No! Michael the Angel of Death.  
**A:** Oh well, Michael Landon is right here.  
**H:** Where is the Angel of Death?  
**B:** He's digging graves.  
**H:** He's digging graves. Well could you get him on the telephone. Could you locate him by means of radio-active-triangulation? Do we have triangulation devices in heaven?  
**H:** [Over a speaking device] Michael! Come down to heaven, for a couple of minutes. Come here.

**B:** How did you get past the gates?  
**H:** Is that you Michael? Michael come closer, I can't see you, the light is obscuring your features.  
**A:** Hi, I am Michael Landon. I am auditioning for a play here.  
**H:** Wait a minute, weren't you in that thing about the angel... Heaven... *Heaven Doesn't Want me or Heaven & Hell*, or something. What was it called?  
**B:** I think you should send him back.  
**A:** No I was in *Little House on the Prairy*.  
**H:** Are you really Michael Landon?  
**A:** Yes.  
**H:** Wow, its really great to meet you. I mean you're famous. My stature is falling. I mean what I think I need to do is brush up my image.  
**B:** No kidding, you are spending your prime time talking to Michael Landon.  
**H:** Of course, I'm talking to Michael Landon. The man knows how to sell himself. The man has got contacts in the world of show business. Which I feel as though I require in order to reclaim my position as a superior being on this planet.  
**A:** Hi, I'm Michael Landon's wife.  
**H:** Are you Mich... Oh I am very glad to meet you. Do you feed him anything special? Do you give him vitamins or anything?  
**A:** On special evenings I can speak with a forked tounge.  
**H:** Jesus, this is Michael Landon's wife.  
**H:** What do you think? We need this Jesus character. What is he going to do? He need's to do something. He needs a gimmick. Love! You know I like that, its fresh, its original, it hasn't really been used yet. There was Plato, there was Socrates. Moses didn't really talk about love.  
**B:** Make him a revolutionary.  
**H:** Yea, a revolutionary who preachers about love. It's got a damn nice ring to it, hasn't it?

We should write poetry, Gabriel, you and me. I think we should just sit down and write some poetry, one day. We can be poets! Gabriel, you've done what!?  
**B:** I've done a few cut-ups.  
**H:** What are cut-ups, Gabriel? I'm, I'm thinking about, like about Shakespeare. You know? Like bad verse. And you're talking about cut-ups? God, you're in anti-art already, Gabriel? Fuck, Gabriel should be running this show!  
**B:** Is that what you suggest?  
**H:** Gabriel, you don't have the voice for it. That is what it boils down to... is the voice. Look I am telling you. Look at Plato. Look at Socrates. They all talked about the primacy of speech, you know. Self present speech. That's what we are about. We are about talking. We are about people talking. You know, people getting in touch. We want a better standed of living for the entire planet, OK. And you could not pass that off with your piddley little voice.  
**B:** You know what will regain your popularity?  
**H:** What's that Gabriel?  
**B:** I think you need a sex change.  
**H:** A sex change. Hermaphrodism. Do you mean hermaphrodism? Personally, first of all, we need to get rid of this illusory Luciferian. And then we can talk about the possibility of me exchanging genders at random because that interests me. I mean doing it once a week interests me, you know, I mean keeping people on their toes, so they don't know whether they are addressing he or she, or whether they are going to be hit by lightening, because they are doing something... I mean that... that to me is power. You know. Not telling people the rules, and waiting till they fuck up cause they didn't know them and then hitting them with the lightening bolt. I mean that, that's true power. You know!  
*[Tape starts breaking up. Tape wobbles.]*

And declared that:

the cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery that breaks through all the Chinese Walls of understanding.<sup>59</sup>

In our interpretation of the process, *détournement* maintained a strong linkage to the Burroughs ‘cut-up’. And indeed, in *Methods of Détournement*, Debord and Wolman described how the bringing together of independent expressions could be used to create a new form:

Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations. The discoveries of modern poetry regarding the analogical structure of images demonstrate that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed. Restricting oneself to a personal arrangement of words is mere convention. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces synthetic organization of greater efficacy. Anything can be used. It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one, one can also alter the meaning of those fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish presentation of ‘citations’.<sup>60</sup>

It is worth noting that the use of the ‘appropriated’ text did not originate with the notion of *détournement*. Such operations could be seen in the strategies of re-contextualization in the ‘production’ of the ‘ready-mades’, and Lautréamont, in the late nineteenth century, had coined the slogan:

Plagiarism is necessary, progress implies it.<sup>61</sup>

Considered to be a precursor by the Surrealists, the Count of Lautréamont or Isidore Ducasse died in 1870 at the age of 24. He was acknowledged by Debord for creating work “whose appearance [was] far ahead of its time”<sup>62</sup> and he provided the classic definition for the surrealist project by describing the “chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissection table.”<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Debord, Wolman; ‘Methods of Détournement’, *Situationist International – Anthology*, 1981, p.9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> William Rubin; *Dada & Surrealist Art*, New York, Harry Abrams, p. 36.





Horsburgh using the 'Miracle Filter' recordings as source material for his writing, 1994. In the background can be seen the "Miracle Filter" (the tape-deck) itself.



Barry, 1994



***CRUSADERS FIGHTING ART'S DEMISE***  
***Natal University Newspaper Article***  
***February 1994***

The perception among many young artists was that a general apathy hindered the development of a vital art scene in the Durban. Primary among the FLAT's motivating principles was the desire to combat this apathy. We were also trying to work in an area of cultural production not supported by the mainstream galleries. For these aims and efforts, we had received some recognition in the mainstream press. This coverage although much-needed, was not particularly extensive. Indeed Meijer, art writer, for *The Daily News* had claimed in her column that "the gallery aims to create a platform for more experimental art, such as performance, installation, and video, media the more established galleries may shy away from."<sup>64</sup> And this was echoed in the funding letter for Durban Arts, that Jeff Chandler assisted us in writing, where he articulated through our 'voices' that, "there simply does not exist a support structure of any significance for the visual arts."<sup>65</sup> Owen in *The Weekly Mail* had pronounced that the gallery was "definitely working as an alternative to the more established galleries".<sup>66</sup> And it was Meijer again who drove this point home in her March 4 column, when she said, "...the gallery proved once more it's ready to give a much-needed injection of alternative subculture into Durban's dwindling mainstream."<sup>67</sup>

Although not in a mainstream newspaper, it was a Natal University article, *Crusaders Fighting Art's Demise*, which gave the FLAT the most significant coverage at that time. The article, though not attributed to any one writer, was written in part due to the efforts of Nina Saunders, an architecture student at Natal University. It began with a statement that affirmed our efforts:

Moe, Siemon Allen and Thomas Barry decided to do something about the lack of alternative art space in Durban.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Marianne Meijer, Art Beat, *The Daily News - Tonight*, Durban, Feb 11, 1994.

<sup>65</sup> Moe, Barry, Allen; Letter to Durban Arts, Feb 9, 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Terése Owen, *The Weekly Mail*, Johannesburg, Feb 18, 1994.

<sup>67</sup> Marianne Meijer, Art Beat, *The Daily News*, Durban, Mar 4, 1994

<sup>68</sup> 'Crusaders Fighting Art's Demise', *Natal University Newspaper*, Durban, Feb 1994.

It then not only addressed some of the FLAT's policies, but also its mission, and included quotes from Barry and Moe, where they expressed the FLAT's motivations and aims:

“The Durban Art Scene has become dead and boring”, according to Ledelle Moe, one of the founding members of the FLAT Gallery. The FLAT was initiated in October of 1993 to create a vibrant space for student and professional artists to experiment with their work.

“It's basically a place where anyone can do anything. It's an alternative to what's happening at art school or in the gallery system which is very limiting financially and in the kind of art you produce” says Barry. “We want to create a free environment and then see how people respond to it.”<sup>69</sup>

The need for a site that would allow for more experimental approaches was expressed by Moe:

This freedom that they speak of involves a multitude of media that can be creatively transformed. “We want to introduce theatre, music and art as a combination - we just hope to get this place established as an experimental art place,” says Moe.<sup>70</sup>

Barry, in the article, outlined a basic FLAT policy:

We want to create an environment where people can all interact on the same level. We don't only focus on art but on any issue that people want to raise and want a response to.<sup>71</sup>

Barry's statement that the FLAT was open for “all” and would focus “not only on art but issues” was radical in two ways. First, we were, at that time, taking a political stance that ran contrary to the then still empowered apartheid government. In the shifting political environment of the time, our ‘open’ policy spoke to an inclusiveness for participants that crossed racial boundaries.

Moe echoed the importance of community:

“Artists as individuals are often scared but together you encourage each other to do all sorts of things.”<sup>72</sup>

Second, in the declaration that our space would not operate within the conventions of a traditional art gallery, Barry emphasized the fact that the FLAT was a place for the engagement

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

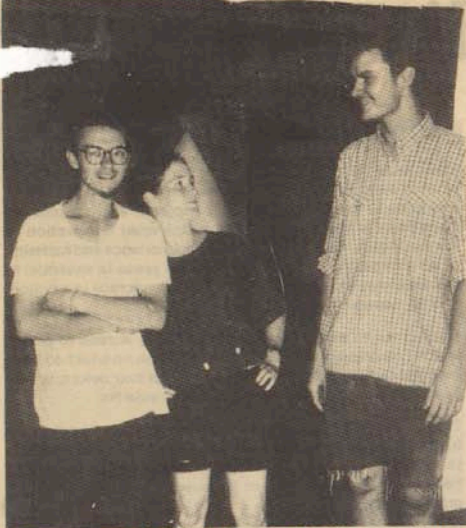
<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

and interaction of 'everyday life'. This was in contrast to what we regarded as the safe (empty) white box; the stance we saw as being that promoted by more traditional venues. This also asserted the FLAT's policy of 'non-censorship', where through discussion or through art forms any issue could be raised.

*Crusaders Fighting Art's Demise*, Natal University Publication, Feb, 1994

**CULTURE**

## Crusaders fighting art's demise



**THE DURBAN** art scene has become dead and boring," according to Ledelle Moe, one of the founding members of the Flat Gallery in Mansfield Road. The Flat Gallery was initiated in October 1993 to create a vibrant space for student and professional artists to experiment with their work.

Moe, Siemon Allen and Thomas Barry decided to do something about the lack of alternative art space in Durban. "It's basically a place where anyone can do anything. It's an alternative to what's happening at art school or in the gallery system which is very limiting financially and in the kind of art you produce," says Barry. "We want to create a free environment and then see how people respond to it."

This freedom that they speak of involves a multitude of media that can be creatively transformed. "We want to introduce theatre, music and art as a combination - we just hope to get this place established as an experimental art place," says Moe.

Barry elaborated on the concept. "We want to create an environment where people can all interact on the same level. We don't only focus on art but on any issue that people want to raise and want a response to. But I suppose that artists generally deal with the environment and the response to it."

Artists can exhibit in the flat free of charge - it is a non-profit project.

However, the future of the gallery depends on whether the three founding members will be able to get funding. Moe explains, "We want it to run on quite a small level until we get funding. Then we can move out of the flat and make one room into an office, one into a video room, one into an installation room and so on.

"Ultimately it would be ideal to have a big workshop where people can work together with a side exhibition room - like a community centre. Artists as individuals are often scared but together you encourage each other to do all sorts of things."

Barry also said, "If people respond, if there's an interest, it'll grow and we can move to a different venue."

George and Janine Holloway will be exhibiting with Walter Hayn on 18 February at 6pm. Adrian Hermenedes will be transforming the flat with his installation on 25 February.

The Flat Gallery is at 4 Manor Court at the corner of Mansfield Road and Botanic Gardens Road.

**The crusaders in the gallery: Thomas, Ledelle Siemon**

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

**WALTER HAYN, JANINE HOLLOWAY, GEORGE HOLLOWAY  
& SARAH**

***Act***

***February 18, 1994***

This was a group installation by Walter Hayn, Janine Holloway and George Holloway (who would later take over the foundry at Technikon from Etienne De Kock.) All three had been students at the Technikon in the late 80s. (“Sarah” refers to the Holloways’ child)

In this collaborative installation, the three artists hung paintings, drawings, sculptures and found objects, which included a pair of jeans, ‘here and there’ from floor to ceiling. The divergent works on the walls were unified in some sense formally by the artists’ common decision to coat the floor with a layer of white salt. As gallery visitors viewed the works, their footprints made marks leaving the black traces of the floor beneath. The pattern created was a record of where each viewer had ‘traveled’ through the exhibition.



Left: Janine Holloway preparing work for 'ACT', 1994. Right: 'ACT' during the opening showing the "salt-floor", 1994. Also in the image, Paterson has Moonlight in some sort of 'grip'.

**ADRIAN HERMANIDES**  
***Forecast of Human Trembling***  
***February 25, 1994***

Installation could be seen as a kind of counter strategy to painting and sculpture. The openness of the FLAT programming, which gave an opportunity for an artist or artists to control the space in whatever way the work demanded, led to the extensive exploration of this art form. Indeed, many of the students and other artists who exhibited at the FLAT came to the space with a history in more traditional genres and soon began to stretch their work in the face of these open possibilities. This ‘stretch’ interestingly involved not only expanding the sculptural object ‘in space’, to create environments or site specific displays, but also ‘in time’ through the medium of video and performance.

An interesting experiment in combining **both** was explored in the exhibitions of Adrian Hermanides and Ledelle Moe. The two had begun a conversation about the possibility of bringing ‘live people’ into their work, and this led to two separate solo exhibitions, scheduled within a few weeks of each other. Here, the artists used these ‘live people’ (as they described them) as ‘figurative’ elements in their respective installations, but in two very distinctly different ways. Of concern to each was not merely the idea of using a human figure as a formal device, but as a possible means to express their frustration with the lack of confrontational, political and sexual issues being made in much of the art in Durban at that time.

Of course this idea of expanding the format of art making was not a new one. Kurt Schwitters, working in the 1930s, built his *Merzbau*, which is seen by many historians as a precedent for installation. Indeed it is mentioned in the ‘genealogy’ of two important books both: *Performance - Live Art 1909 to the present*,<sup>73</sup> and *Installation Art*.<sup>74</sup> However, this ‘grandfather of expanded sculptural space’ also conceptualized the idea of the *Merzbuhne*, or total theater. Though unrealized it is important in that he suggested the possibility for the **human figure** to also behave as a formal element in installation. He says:

---

<sup>73</sup> RoseLee Goldberg; *Performance – Live Art 1909 to the present*, New York, Harry Abrams, 1979.

<sup>74</sup> Oxley, Petry, de Olivera; *Installation Art*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1994.

All solid, liquid, gaseous bodies such as white wall, man barbed wire entanglement, blue distance...surfaces that fold like curtains, or shrink...everything from the hairnet of the high-class lady to the SS leviathan. Even people can be used – people can even be tied to backdrops.<sup>75</sup>

Hermanides' interest in installation and 'live sculptures' produced *Forecast of Human Trembling*. Accompanying the exhibition were five full colour and numerous black and white posters, which included not only the suggestive title, but the even more provocative question:

For some, sex before marriage is immoral. What do you call sex before kindergarten?<sup>76</sup>

The poster shows two photos of a young boy, with a red strip covering his eyes and a center image of pots and pan.

The installation was a kind of 'still-life', which utilized the entire room, and spoke of boys' schools and adolescent male sexuality. It was constructed with a number of elements. Hermanides painted the entire room blue (to the dismay of our landlord) and divided the space with six or seven school lockers, also painted blue. Inside each locker were articles of clothing. These transformed clothing items included a jacket, which had been covered with slices of polony, making it pink with the appearance of flesh, a hat carefully covered in mincemeat and boots covered in mashed potatoes. Frost, who came to the exhibition, commented on these elements, in our recent interview.

Well as you were talking about the mash-potatoe on the hat, I couldn't help but think of spunk. Semen! That's my thought for the day. But I have to say that Adrian's work always has this devious excess. I always get excited about his work. But it was always an understated camp... I can't help but see these things on clothing as bodily productions. And all that mash-potatoe and mince-meat has a lot to do with school dinners. Which is to situate the boys within an institutional framework and bodily ingestion, and by extension, bodily expulsion.<sup>77</sup>

A tight space was formed by the placement of the lockers. Near the door was a lit *Cadac* gas burner continuously boiling a pot of eggs; cooking these until they burst. The only lighting was a red globe, which lent an eerie hue to the 'scene'. The stove with the boiling eggs raised the temperature of the room. Hung on two walls were chairs bolted at heights of approximately 2 – 3 meters, and on these raised chairs sat 16 year old, blonde-haired boys dressed in their school

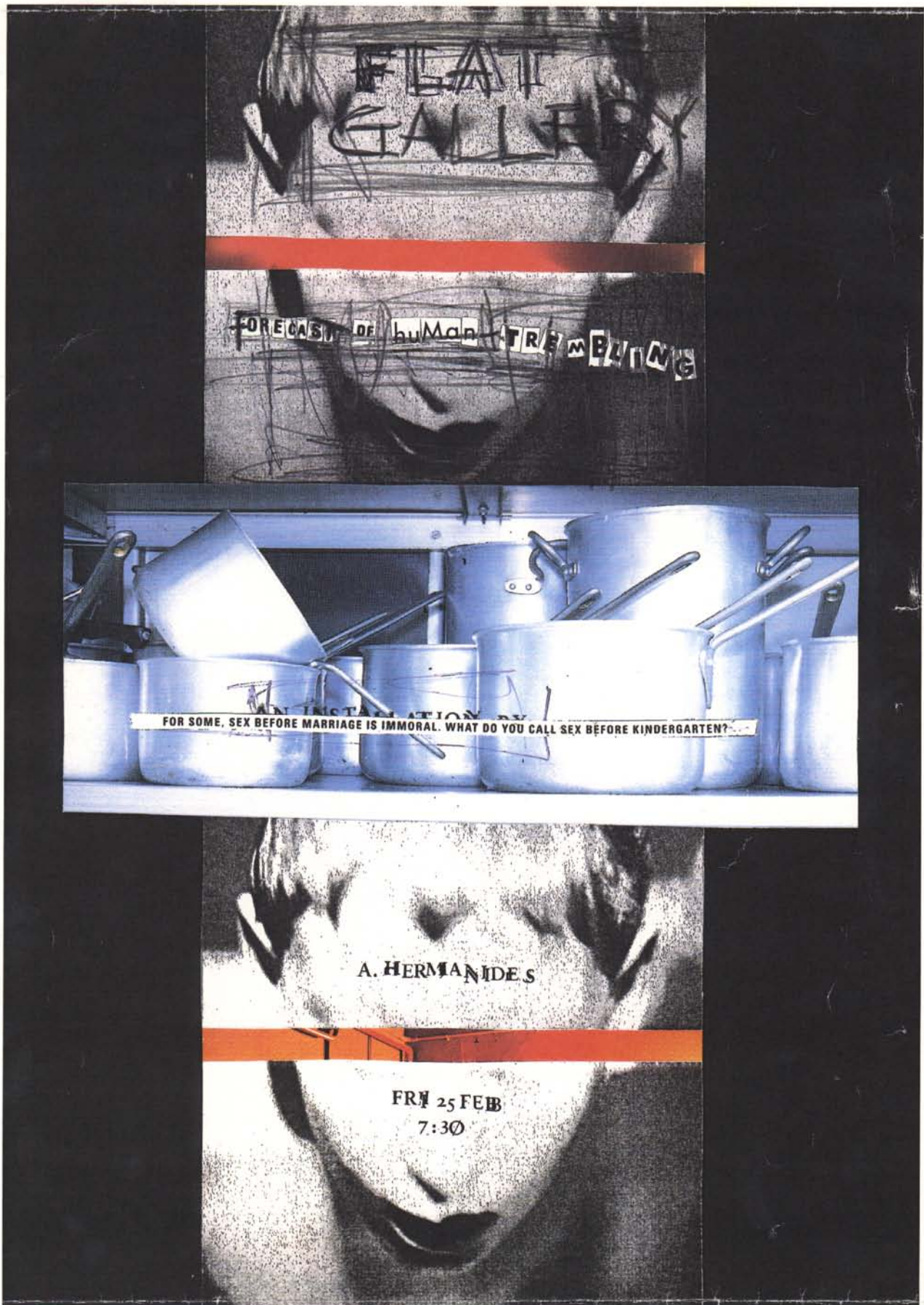
---

<sup>75</sup> Kurt Schwitters. This quote is taken from a photostated copy of a book on Schwitters. No other information is available.

<sup>76</sup> Hermanides; Poster for *Forecast of Human Trembling*, Durban, FLAT, Feb 25, 1994.

<sup>77</sup> Frost, Allen; Interview 12, Richmond, Feb 18, 1999.





ADRIAN HERMANIDES, Exhibition poster, 1994



uniforms. They sat silent, eyes looking ahead. The red light, the hot stove, the smell of meat and the immobile figures all contributed to an uncomfortable, oppressive environment.

MacKenny and Moe, who also attended the exhibition, spoke about their impressions in our later discussion:

**MacKenny:** I think you judge the value [of a work] by the experiential response that you have to it. I remember walking into Adrian Hermanides' exhibition and it was an extremely hot night. And I remember the heat of whatever he was boiling and I remember feeling that it was oppressive.

**Moe:** The blue walls were pretty intense too.

**MacKenny:** I remember being impressed by the boys - by the fact that they had obviously been instructed and they were willing to follow the instruction and not make a joke out of it. I think it must be a most difficult thing to be up on the wall and not giggle and they didn't. Not to mention the fact that they sat there obediently for heaven knows how long on a Friday night in their school uniforms. Somehow they had been convinced by whoever had set them up. So they reinforced the seriousness of the event even though the event was obviously absurd - which was the language that was set up. I seem to remember the heat being oppressive. I had a feeling of oppression. And then kind of going and finding the other objects. To me, I was convinced of the seriousness of that particular one because... my first impression was not to say anything. My first impression was to see what was there. And I think... in terms of how you judge, I think you wait, you look around, see what is there and you see what it feels like. And then maybe you still don't get it but if you are convinced enough by the complexity of your response then you...

**Moe:** Do you think your response was formal or emotional...

**MacKenny:** I think in this case, both. I think the figures and the school lockers had been placed in such a way that I was convinced of the formal articulation of the space. But at the same time there was a content which I was trying to feel my way towards. And because you had shows like that... not all the shows were strong... some I just walked in and out pretty quickly. But because there were quite a lot of shows that just stopped me. For me there is a judgement there, because if I don't talk then I'm thinking and therefore the stuff that is coming to me has enough depth or resonance. If it is just confusion, you pick up confusion pretty quickly. An articulation of confusion is one thing - this kind of piece really convinced me. And because the whole gallery changed, I mean he painted the whole bloody place out. I find that very powerful. The ones I remember the most are the ones where the space was articulated in some kind of way. Like Melissa's piece with the string. There were other ones where you did have works on the wall and were more traditional - prints and things - and I remember being disappointed by those. I thought those could be anywhere else. I enjoyed Adrian's work generally. I think he did things easily, perhaps sometimes too easily and he was certainly a man who went in for effect. He tried to manipulate effect. I'll tell you that there is one other work that I would use as a way of perhaps



trying to find my way into that particular piece. I was thinking about the Rebecca Horn piece in the 1992 *Documenta*. The one with the school tables on the ceiling. For me the parallel is something about the fixity - the fact that the kids are on the walls. In the Rebecca Horn piece the desks are on the ceilings. But the sense that the figure is displaced, it is out of its natural habitat, it is not on the ground. In that sense, despite the fact that they are not bound, they are trapped in some kind of way. And this comes back to the feeling I had of oppression. It was very hot in there, the locker evoked the kind of army locker, the fact that you opened these things and found...meat. For me there was a very strong sense that the boys were being processed. Process - processed meat. That would probably be the strongest analogy through out that piece. Containment and the idea of cooking. Preparing and oppression. People being placed into these hot, narrow spaces and the products – the blazers, the hats... I think whether done consciously or instinctively the major metaphor there seems to be some kind of processing in an oppressive way.

**Moe:** I think something interesting about the experimental approach of having two days to set up and work with a project – the opening becomes the third day extension of what you have been working with for two days. After Adrian had painted the walls, and then screwed the chairs to the walls, there was an element of time to it, the meat started rotting, the eggs were boiling. The boys couldn't sit up there for two long. So time was an essence. Instead of "you make the object, crate it and send it somewhere" there's this fleeting moment of stuff.

**MacKenny:** Except the fleeting moment makes you feel like it is interminable.<sup>78</sup>

It was significant, that although Hermanides was not a performer, the installation had a distinctly autobiographical tone. The boys were invited by him from his old school, Westville Boys High; the uniforms they wore were like ones he had once worn. The symbology, although personal and obscure, made reference to adolescent male sexuality, with such loaded signs as coats that transformed the wearer into 'meat', cooking 'eggs' (testicles) and boys held in suspension. All were part of a 'still life' brimming with sexual innuendo.

RoseLee Goldberg, in her book on Performance Art, describes the use of performers as live sculptural elements in formal poses as *tableaux vivants*. She describes how the artist, Jannis Kounellis, presented works which "combined animate and inanimate sculpture":

*Table* (1973), consisted of a table strewn with fragments from an ancient Roman Apollo sculpture next to which a man sat, an Apollo mask held to his face. According to Kounellis, this and several other untitled 'frozen performances' - some of which included live horses - were means of illustrating metaphorically the complexity of ideas and sensations represented in art throughout art

history. He considered the Pantheon frieze as such a 'frozen performance'. Each sculpture or painting in the history of art, he said, contained 'the story of the loneliness of a single soul' and his tableaux attempted to analyze the nature of that 'single vision'.<sup>79</sup>

*Tableaux*, as a performance genre, though avant-garde in its contemporary applications, is rooted in tradition. Indeed there existed in the nineteenth century a performative genre known as *tableau vivant* (literally "living pictures"), where popular masterpiece paintings or sculptures were enacted. Even earlier 'performances' took place in eighteenth century Italy where poses of classical statuary were mimicked.<sup>80</sup> It is a genre which can be unexpected when encountered in a sculptural installation, like Hermanides' *Forecast for Human Trembling*, and yet it is familiar within the realm of popular culture.

In an ordinary South African community one might encounter a 'Nativity Scene' cast not with plaster statues, but live performers. Or the 'scenes from the Gospels', where members of a congregation pose and personify the characters from religious text.

This traditional 'play with one scene' was explored by many performance artists working in the 70s. In *Real Dream* (1976), the artist Colette lay naked in a luxurious crushed silk environment for a "sleep tableaux lasting several hours" at the Clocktower in New York. British artists Gilbert and George, stood on gallery pedestals as part of their *Living Sculpture* works (1969 - 71).<sup>81</sup> Another, Scott Burton's *Pair Behavior Tableaux* (1976), is described by Goldberg:

...two male performers, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, was an hour long performance composed of approximately eighty static poses held for a number of seconds each. Viewed from a distance of twenty yards the figures looked deceptively sculpture-like."<sup>82</sup>

In an essay on the work of Ann Hamilton, an artist who often employs a human element in her complex installation, Buzz Spector uses a term - *witness* - to describe the function of live performers and goes on to write about her use of 'live people' in her installations:

Standing still or otherwise engaged in repetitive tasks, this human element encourages viewers to more fully experience the circumstances of the installation. The people in Hamilton's installations often suffer their situations in silence.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> MacKenny, Moe, Buster, Allen; Interview 9, Washington, Aug 1998.

<sup>79</sup> RoseLee Goldberg; *Performance – Live Art 1909 to the Present*, New York, Harry Abrams, 1979, p. 110 - 111.

<sup>80</sup> Jennifer Fisher; 'Interperformance', *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Winter 1997, p. 28 – 33.

<sup>81</sup> RoseLee Goldberg; *Performance – Live Art 1909 to the Present*, New York, Harry Abrams, 1979, p. 108 – 111.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

# Art Beat

MARIANNE MEIJER



## 'Alternative' venue for artists

THE Flat Gallery is now well established as a place for young artists, who are dead serious about their work. With last week's installation piece by Adrian Hermanides titled "Forecast of Human Trembling" the gallery proved once more it's ready to give a much-needed injection of alternative subculture into Durban's dwindling mainstream.

Tomorrow, coinciding with the visit of the international curators to Durban, the Flat Gallery (4, Manor

Court, 6 Mansfield Road) opens at 7 pm with works by Nkosinati Gumede, Thomas Bary, Carol Gainor, Adrian Hermanides and Siemon Allen.

The Flat Gallery does not take any commission from artists' work and artists are not required to pay a gallery fee. Instead funding is provided by the Bartel Arts Trust.

Ledelle Moe, who is also a member of the Flat Gallery group, exhibits her work at Natal Technikon Sculpture Department. The exhibitions are open to the public.



**LIVE SCULPTURE:** A view of the installation at the Flat Gallery by Adrian Hermanides, which opened last Friday. The work incorporates live sculptures (two Westville Boys' High pupils in school uniform) and dead meat.

Indeed Hermanides included 'actors' in an installation that behaved like a single scene from a dramatic production. They were still and silent like statues. Significant was the fact that the boys did not interact with the public, or for that matter acknowledge anyone around them, and therefore created a dramatic tension.

The show was well attended<sup>84</sup>, and Marianne Meijer would write in her column the following week these words:

'ALTERNATIVE' VENUE FOR ARTISTS

The FLAT Gallery is now well established as a place for young artists, who are dead serious about their work. With last week's installation piece by Adrian Hermanides titled "Forecast of Human Trembling" the gallery proved once more it's ready to give a much-needed injection of alternative subculture into Durban's dwindling mainstream.<sup>85</sup>



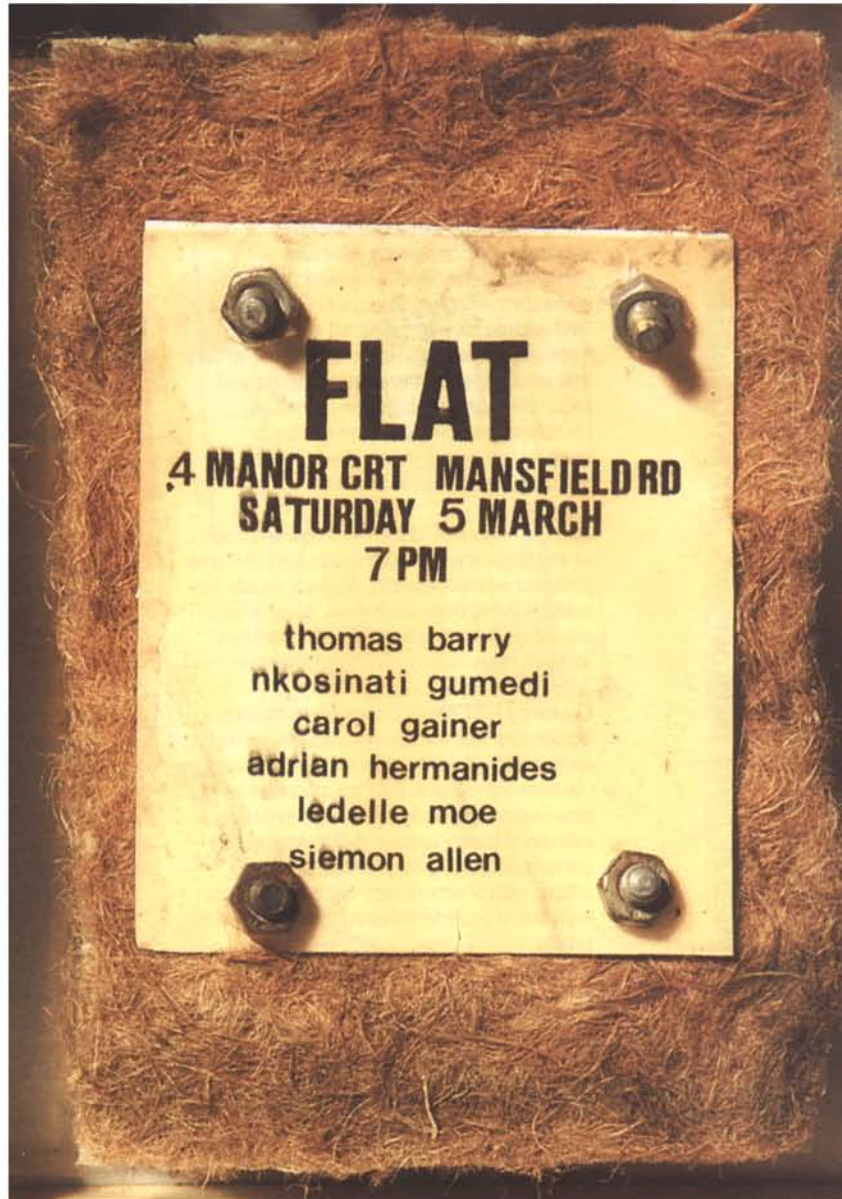
Hermanides taking a bath at the FLAT, 1994

---

<sup>84</sup> On a humorous note: Andrew Verster tried to come, but mistakenly went to Bonamour Court. This was Hermanides' flat, where he had mounted an exhibition two months earlier. He later sent us a note. In his words: "We went to the wrong FLAT Gallery!"

<sup>85</sup> Marianne Meijer; "Alternative' Venue for Artists', *The Daily News - Tonight*, Durban, March 4, 1994.





Exhibition invitation, 1994. Photo: Peter Engblom.



**CAROL GAINER, NKOSINATHI GUMEDE, THOMAS BARRY,  
LEDELLE MOE, ADRIAN HERMANIDES, SIEMON ALLEN  
March 5, 1994.**

In March of 1994, a group of international curators came to Durban to look at artists for the upcoming *1<sup>st</sup> Johannesburg Biennale*. Among those who came to the FLAT were Benjamin Weil (writer for *Flash Art*, based in New York), Tony Bond (Sydney Biennale Curator) and two visitors from the SOROS centre.

To coincide with this visit, the FLAT Gallery organized an exhibition of six artists. The blue wall, left over from Hermanides' previous installation remained. This room, along with the other two rooms not usually set aside for exhibitions, was used and involved a mammoth cleaning project, but was completed in time for the opening. Hermanides was joined by Carol Gainer in the blue room. Nkosinathi Gumede and Thomas Barry exhibited work in the second front room. I showed my work in the third room, while Ledelle Moe installed her work in corridors in the building and on the street below.

Revisiting earlier experiments with off site placement of her sculptures, Moe installed a number of works in various locales outside the gallery. These included a pair of life sized seated figures in an alcove downstairs, as well as two groupings of animals outside on the street. One resembled a pack of dogs. Constructed crudely with jutting steel rods and ripped fabric dipped in concrete, the tangled mass of bodies seemed rough and aggressive. They spoke of the violence of a 'thing turned in on itself'.

Gainer continued her work with mixed media on panel, and the paintings on exhibit included a self-portrait where a partial view of her face emerges from a blue field. Exhibited with Hermanides in what was now the 'blue room' (for he had failed to paint it white after his installation), Gainer's work continued the explorations begun in work that she had exhibited in her FLAT exhibition of November of 1993.

CAROL GAINER  
Mixed-media  
1994





THOMAS BARRY, Untitled, life-buoy soap, matchboxes, wood, clay, other stuff, 1994



NKOSINATHI GUMEDE, 2 trucks, oil cans, coke bottles, other, 1994





SIEMON ALLEN, 'Stamp Collection', stamps, display-case, 1993



SIEMON ALLEN, 'Stamp Collection', detail, 1993

Barry and Gumede installed work in what was usually Moe's bedroom. Gumede was one of the many artists without permanent homes, who came to the Technikon, through the encouragement of Andries Botha, to work in the Sculpture Studio 'unofficially'. Though not a registered student, like many of these artists, he contributed greatly to the creative dynamic of the Department. Gumede also became a regular visitor at the FLAT, but as we did not have a common language - Gumede did not speak English and Barry and myself did not speak Zulu - our conversations took place via an invented strange sign-language. Relatively well known in South Africa, his works were included in various collections such as the Durban Art Gallery and the South African National Gallery in Cape Town.

Gumede had been working for some time at the Sculpture Department, making elaborate trucks which included everything from, lights, breaks, storage, radios, steering wheels and hooters. He presented at the FLAT a number of these large-trucks made from oil cans and other found metal containers complete with logos still visible. These were arranged in a row, with small trucks on a large wooden plank on the wall. Adjacent to this were two of his large trucks, one hanging on the wall, the other on the floor.

Gumede's sculptures were both mechanical and interactive. One was equipped with a radio, and many had steering mechanisms, that allowed him to 'drive' them through the city. It was then common for one to see Gumede out on Warwick Avenue, driving these same trucks and 'performing' their functions for the audience on the street. This shift of work into the gallery was indeed an odd change in context.

In the same room, was Barry's sculpture. On a bed of matchboxes, rested a large seahorse made from softened and cast red *Lifebuoy* soap, a recognizable common product to South Africans. Embedded in the seahorse was a strange wooden construction which resembled a jetty or crate. On top of this crate were small objects. The red seahorse on the yellow bed of matchboxes echoed the red lion on the *Lion* matchbox.

In the third room, I exhibited a small woven panel of VHS video-tape and my *Stamp Collection* (1993).<sup>86</sup> The woven videotape was one in a series of experiments in which I made use of 'high-tech' materials with a 'low-tech' process. I hand-wove used (encoded) videotape to create a kind of minimal canvas. Of interest to me, at the time, was the fact that the video was 'rendered mute' by its use as a raw material.

---

<sup>86</sup> Although shown previously in Johannesburg in 1993 at the ICA, and later for the *Vita '93* at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, this was the first time that the *Stamp Collection* had been shown in Durban

The *Stamp Collection* was part of a series of ‘display’ sculptures where I re-contextualized ‘found objects’ from my white South African youth. Using the display case as a device to present both found and handmade objects, I sought to explore shifting context. Though these icons included *Hardy Boys* books, model airplanes, and even *Doc Marten* shoes, it was the *Stamp Collection* that spoke to the ‘constructed identity’ of South African history.

Weil, who attended the exhibition, addressed these issues when he spoke about the *Stamp Collection* in his article - *Out of Time - South African Art* - for *Flash Art*:

In the work of South African artists, one finds strong formal ties to Western art produced over the last thirty years. However, there is a strange sense of citation and appropriation, rather than of a spontaneous identification, as if living in a state of complete isolation had the effect of re-creating the world as it is in the homeland. That particular issue can be found in a work by Durban based artist Siemon Allen, who completed a display of his family’s South African stamp collection depicting the country from a deliberately biased point of view.<sup>87</sup>

Also included was a work placed at the entrance gate to the FLAT downstairs. Situated near the postbox, this was a series of six chipboard boxes containing old letters sent in the 1930s, stamps and all. Each box was screwed to a section of rubble that I had found on a demolition site. Originally shown at an exhibition for the National Arts Coalition meeting in Durban that year, it was meant to reference Donald Judd’s stacked box sculptures from the mid 1960s. It was my intention to present these ‘boxes’ as if they were ‘rescued’ remains from a destroyed gallery – hence they still remained connected to the wall fragments.

In the end, it was Hermanides who literally ‘stole the show’. He constructed a farmyard scene by sitting toy animals, covered in mincemeat on a huge block of dry ice. The ice exuded a cloud of smoke, and when this fell to the floor, it gave one the sensation of walking into a smoky landscape. The curators were completely enamoured with Hermanides piece and took many photographs.

For this exhibition, we also produced lavishly made limited edition invitations. These featured on one side our list of names, bolted through a piece of felt, and on the other side an old photograph of Cecil John Rhodes, and his ‘conquest’ map of Africa.

---

<sup>87</sup> Benjamin Weil, ‘Out of Time- South African Art’, *Flash Art*, Milan, Jan – Feb 1995, p. 74 – 75.





Above: LEDELLE MOE, concrete & steel, 1994.  
This work was installed in the street below the FLAT Gallery.  
Bottom Left: SIEMON ALLEN, Untitled,  
woven VHS video-tape, 1989  
Bottom Right: SIEMON ALLEN, 'Postbox (After Judd)',  
chipboard, letters, rubble, 1994  
This work was installed in the downstairs entrance near  
the postbox.







Barry and Gumede at the Sculpture Department, 1994