

PRESS

PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

London Video Arts Show

How do you begin to unravel the work of the nine different artists at this show? Seeing the mood and atmosphere change every quarter of an hour or so does not lend itself to the type of criticism this work requires. There is no way to stop and look at some small detail for a minute, no way of examining the image more closely.

This, of course, is the whole point. The only useful tool for examining the work seems to be when the artist deliberately repeats an action or makes an action so drawn out as to be superficially boring.

Jeremy Welsh's 'Elephant Rhythm's No.2' began the show. Welsh first triplicates himself by using two pre-recorded

performances and two monitors. Then, using an array of small toy instruments, he builds a soundtrack. The star of this performance is not Welsh but a small mechanical rabbit, a drummer. Welsh is a stooge, the straight-man, and there is a hint of the ventriloquist in his manner. Welsh successfully amazes us, both by the

Jez Welsh/ Image Action. Ikon, Birmingham.

Jez Welsh is a solo performance artist who used to work with Keith James and Marie Leahy. Like them, he is concerned with markings, performance as a human inscription on the environment, and it was appropriate that he should be working in a place with a name like Ikon. His installation, within which I and a smattering of Birmingham public filed for an evening, consisted of an assemblage of 'evidence' of a crime, possibly of the murder or sacrifice of 'Mr X'. A suitcase, containing some 'evidence' and clearly marked as such was opened and a series of alphabetical cards is hung along a clothes line. Laid on the floor was a sheet with the crudely etched outline of a crucified person. Yet more evidence, this time radio-dated, corny connections with the Turin Shroud. The artist, his face coated with red and blue paint, surrounded the outline with lit candles. Slides flashing on a wall of glossy female fashion images cut up in a vortocist manner. Signals, triggers, the word 'semiology' is being forced down your throat.

'Trouble with all this it's all a series of traps,' he said and went on to list them. 'The situation concerns a murder'. He qualified — 'theoretically'. Using a tape measure he reiterated the forensic nature of the piece in investigating the demise of Mr X. Weighing up evidence, balancing the facts, (physically as well as mentally — his performance took on the form of a tight-rope walker) following coloured ribbons (leads?) and opening boxes 'this' and 'that'. (As we were in ATV land, it was almost a temptation to shout 'take the money') The whole thing began to take on the feel of an intensively chaotic audio-visual display for a lecture in born-again semantics. And in the middle of it all lay the unfortunate 'Mr X'. Was Mr X responsible for all the symbols and power structures represented in the acres of triangularly slashed lip-gloss? The road signs, the system of signals, the triggers that motivate the inhabitants of a media-ravaged landscape?

Jez Welsh himself, in the supporting

text, poses similar questions: 'Does he exist or has he ever existed?' 'Is it possible to determine his identity?' 'Does it matter?' Questions are asked, and asked, and asked. Jez Welsh attempts to indicate the direction of our answers in his actions, eventually by taking the place of the late 'X' by lying down in the burnt imprint. A red device emits bleeps, like a life support machine in a bad movie. When the bleep becomes continuous, there is a death. Culture dies, the artist is sacrificed, and the public are left with a static installation.

The artist has become integrated with the work and has become a reflection, a memory of its making. The art-maker is the murderer/murdered, Mr X. In creating and extinguishing the live nature of the installation the artist, X, has simply committed the capital crime of Alice in Wonderland — 'Killing Time'. But do we still sacrifice artists?
Rob La Frenais

style of the performance, and his apparent ease of delivery. The repetition of himself, and of the action allows us to see the construction of his performance; it's a skill that can't be imparted through this review.

PERFORMANCE, MAGAZINE

THE SUNDAY TIMES, SEPTEMBER 11 1977

line Gallery is taken up by the Aershot art performance group. Six exhibitors are involved, though not all of them in anything so tangible as paintings or sculpture. They include a young man who makes images by shining a pen torch on to different parts of his face and another young man, even more dextrous, who can give his body the shape of each letter in the alphabet.

Art performance groups have one invariable question asked about them. Should the taxpayers' money be wasted on this kind of thing? Memory is still fresh of an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London where used sanitary towels were displayed in the interests, paradoxically, of lessening the distance between art and the beholder.

No taxpayers' money has been spent on the Aershot group, save in unemployment benefit.

Philip Norman

They are gentle, sympathetic young men, pursuing an extreme of art with the minimum of ostentation. Thus it is only the village of Rodley which has seen figures capering beside the canal, passing messages on poles to each other across the water, and crawling and jumping mysteriously on the bank.

Aershot is led—if that be not too strong a word—by Rob Worby, a turnip-headed experimental musician with a large reproduction of the Mona Lisa pinned to denims as neat and formal as a business suit. Worby's visual contribution to the present show has been to send the gallery a postcard every day with a thought typed on it, or perhaps a shopping list or even a single word that catches his fancy. 'We write postcards,' he said. 'And poles. We used 20 of them in the canal performance we did for Trevor.'

'Twenty!' said Trevor, impressed. 'I thought it were only seven.'

'It was 20,' said Rob Worby firmly. 'We like poles. They're poles.'

The group moves constantly about the country, merging and diverging, now assembling once more for a special cabaret performance at the Breadline. Worby had appeared from the source of his last postcard — Grantham. Jez Welsh, the alphabet man, was rumoured — he is usually rumoured — to be in the Winchester district. David Wright had come down from Newcastle, although ill able to afford it. No one before gave his space to show his three-dimensional paintings—like unstrung longbows, as slender as the artist himself — until Trevor devoted a whole room to three of them upstairs.
Peter Hatton, a bony, spas-

THE GUARDIAN

RODLEY

Waldemar Januszczak

Postcards

But just to let you know that the group does actually perform, Jeremy Welsh has recorded some of their former activities in a series of film stills. There was the time that he, masquerading as Enzo Raphael, contorted his body

into all the letters of the alphabet. Or the occasion when the audience were treated to a striptease, from Enzo again, seductively dressed in a boiler-suit. He does enough to suggest that in full working order, Aershot Performance must be an entertaining and exciting spectacle.

THE HAMPSHIRE CHRONICLE
WINCHESTER

ART ON SHOW IN SOUTHAMPTON

There are a number of figurative works, including two detailed and amusing drawings by Howard Goody and five colourist acrylics of primitivist animals (early Hockney influence?) by Andrew Thompson, one of which sports the best title in the show: "Yeah, I had one, but the legs fell off"—the predator's nightmare. Outside either of these two tendencies is the work of Enzo Raphael, characterised by a light wit and a literary quality. Of his four showings, the best is "Enzo Raphael: An Anthology." This outrageous visual pun — a drawer full of images and drawings—transcends its dada influence and is the finest joke in a serious exhibition far from short on humour.

The exhibition is open every day and it continues until May 13th.