

***THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL THEATRE OF COMMUNICATION  
Audience Participation Event  
& Audio Recordings (Tapes 17 – 19)  
May 20, 1994***

The philosophy that “anyone could do anything” was the guiding principal at the FLAT, and this was reflected in the audience-participation-performance, *The First International Theatre of Communication*. This call for all to participate began with the printing and distribution<sup>133</sup> of an **open** invitation from Horsburgh and Barry (see opposite page), and embraced in a single night a broad and all encompassing range of FLAT activities. It was conceived by them to “allow anyone to do anything in the space”, and evolved with very little plan, except to bring people together with the catalysts of an open microphone, two tape recorders, some provocative wall texts and a space to interact. The only goal was to allow for open expression and to ‘see what would happen’. Meijer and Owen then wrote in their respective art columns these reports reiterating Horsburgh and Barry’s words that the event would allow for ‘anything whatsoever’ and be ‘open-ended’

Durban’s only alternative gallery, The FLAT Gallery, will be hosting an evening of communication interaction. The aim is to gather as many people as possible in a single space providing them with a unique context in which to in vocal, written or active form express any information about anything whatsoever.<sup>134</sup>

The format of expression is entirely open-ended. The only condition is that it does not prevent free expression.<sup>135</sup>

It is interesting to note, that though we did not then or with any of our other exhibitions or events stipulate that work must be ‘political in content or motivation’, the ‘political’ nature of the FLAT’s project was implicit in our openness to free expression to all participants and our blurring of lines between ‘art’ and ‘life’.

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<sup>133</sup> Barry recalls: “I remember that we sent flyers, advertising the event, all over - including the *Green Door*, a club or restaurant in Maritzburg. That was the furthest we went to disseminate the information.” Barry, Allen; Interview 10, Telephone call, AT&T, Feb 16, 1999.

<sup>134</sup> Therese Owen; *The Weekly Mail*, Johannesburg, May 1994.

<sup>135</sup> Marianne Meijer, Artbeat, *The Daily News*, Durban, May 20, 1994.

In a recent telephone interview with Barry, he pointed out that, at that time, Horsburgh was inspired by the 1968 student riots in Paris. “He was reading a lot of material concerning the Situationist movement in France.”<sup>136</sup> Indeed Horsburgh, in the credits at the end of this press release lists by name those involved with the Situationist movement as well as a number of other influential sources:

The evening is conceived and constructed by: Ralph Vanegeim, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze, Manuel de Landa, Felix Guattari, Peter Kropotkin, Jay Horsburgh, Pierre Proudhon, Hakim Bey, Thomas Barry, Isidore Ducasse, Toni Negri, Ronald Bogue, Rose Selavy, John Cage, Bill Godwin, Fourier, Tristan Tzara, Isidore Isou, Justin Evans, Alex Berkman, Octave Mirbeau, Uncle Bill, and others.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, this list read like a kind of personal genealogy for Horsburgh, and included many names, already cited earlier, as being historically significant to many of the FLAT projects at that time. The poetic strategies of Burroughs in the cut-ups, the Situationist tactics of Debord and Vanegeim or the absurdist non-linear theatrics of the Dadaists were all-important historical precedents. Perhaps most relevant to the *Internotinal*, was the Situationist concept of the *dérive*

<sup>136</sup> Barry, Allen; Interview 10, telephone call, AT&T, Feb 16, 1999.

<sup>137</sup> Horsburgh, Barry; *The First Internotinal Theatre of Communication*, Press Release, Durban, FLAT, July 1994.

**Ralph Vanegeim** and **Guy Debord** (1931 - 1994) were both members of the Situationist International, a literary, “political” organisation established in France (1957 - 1972). Their writings and activities lead partially to the 1968 events (riots/strikes) in France. Debord is the author of the book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) and Vanegeim of *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967). **Gilles Deleuze** (1925 – 1995) was a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris at Vincennes. English translations of Deleuze’s work include *Kant’s Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, *Cinema 1: Image/Movement and Nietzsche and Philosophy*. **Felix Guattari** (1930 – 1992), a practicing psychoanalyst and lifelong political activist, worked since the mid-1950s at La Borde, an experimental psychiatric clinic. He was an active participant in the European Network for alternatives to Psychiatry. Together, Deleuze and Guattari coauthored *Anti-Oedipus and Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and *A Thousand Plateaus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Mille Plateaux)* (1980). **Jay Horsburgh** was a member of the FLAT Gallery (1993 - 1995) in Durban, South Africa. **Pierre Proudhon** (1809 - 1865) an “anarchist”. **Hakim Bey**, anarchist of the occult political theories of the *Temporary Autonomous Zone* – “come together in secret, work fast, get out while the goings good”. **Isidore Ducasse** (aka Comte de Lautreamont) (1846 - 1870) is the author of the infamous *Maldoror and Poems*, heralded as one of the first Surrealist books *Maldoror* has been called an “oceanic text, a frenetic monologue, infantile, brilliant, a work of genius and above all EVIL”. **Toni Negri** is the author of *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons of the Grundrisse* (1991). The concept of “post-wokerist” Marxism would be picked up by Toni Negri and others in the 1970s in Italy. **Thomas Barry** was a member of the FLAT Gallery (1993 - 1995) in Durban, South Africa. **Rose Selavy** (aka Marcel Duchamp) foremost 20thC conceptual artist. **John Cage** foremost 20thC experimental composer. Often associated with Fluxus group but (he) claims no inclusion. Teacher at Black Mountain College. **Charles Fourier** (1772 - 1837), a utopian socialist. **Tristan Tzara** was a member of the Dada anti-art movement and co-founder of the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in Feb 1916. **Isidore Isou** (1925 - ), an anti-poet of Romanian origin, was the leader of the Parisian based group known as the Lettrist International. This group is often seen as a precursor to the Situationist International. **Octave Mirbeau** is the author of the macabre classic *The Torture Garden*. (1899) (ReSearch) which features a corrupt Frenchman and an insatiably cruel Englishwoman who meet and then frequent a fantastic 19thC Chinese garden where torture is practiced as an art form. **Uncle Bill** (aka William Burroughs) author of *The Naked Lunch*, was involved with the Beat movement in the USA in the 50s. Also involved with Brion Gysin and ‘cut-up’ theory. Interestingly Horsburgh and Barry, in what could be seen as a pretentious act, included themselves in the company of this ‘who’s who’ of avant-garde and theoretical writing and practice.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL THEATRE OF COMMUNICATION

On May 20 the **Flat Gallery** will be hosting an evening of communicative inter-action. The purpose of this evening is to gather as many persons as possible in a single **space**, providing them with a unique context in which to express, in vocal/written/or active form, any information about any thing whatsoever.

The format of expression is entirely open-ended. The only criterion is that it does not prevent another participant from freely expressing themselves. When we speak of **things** (information to be expressed) we mean any **thing**: concepts, principles of any kind, your dreams, hobbies, plans, memories, observations, art, science, horizons, work, play - anything.

**The principle is that it does not matter what you have to say - but it is vitally necessary that you say it.**

To this end we invite participation from any and all: architects, flower arrangers, students of anything, sky-divers, poets, the dispossessed, religious people, men, stone-cutters, teachers of anything, the possessed, women, metal workers, philosophers: absolutely everybody qualifies!

Anyone interested in participating or finding out more information is encouraged to contact the **Flat Gallery** at 4 Manor Court, Mansfield Rd. Or Jay Horsburgh, at #3 - 31 Halford Rd, Berea. Telephone: 221-131.



The evening is conceived and constructed by: Ralph Vanegheim, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze, Manuel de Landa, Felix Guattari, Peter Kropotkin, Jay Horsburgh, Pierre Proudhon, Hakim Bey, Thomas Barry, Isidore Ducasse, Toni Negri, Ronald Bogue, Rose Selavy, John Cage, Bill Godwin, Fourier, Tristan Tzara, Isidore Isou, Justin Evans, Alex Berkman, Octave Mirbeau, Uncle Bill, and others.

or ‘drift’. Though the *Internotional* took place in a designated space, the spirit of the event, the ‘sense that anything might happen’, was perhaps informed in some ways by this notion.

*Dérive*, a Situationist method, also known as literally ‘drifting’ was a technique described by Debord as a “transient passage through varied ambiances...” entailing “playful constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects”.<sup>138</sup> For example, one might just decide on a given day to catch an unfamiliar bus, go to a place never before traveled, and enter a bar in that area to interact with a stranger in a chance meeting. The idea of drifting through urban geography was to experience new things by chance interaction rather than by set conditions, thereby disrupting normal social patterns. In fact some time later, Horsburgh, Levi, Matoti, Barry and myself embarked on such a ‘drift’. We filled a car with petrol and went with an obscure plan into the Natal midlands. We drove into unfamiliar towns and got lost.

Though it refers specifically to a kind of ‘urban journey’ without a map, the concept can be applied to a more expanded notion of ‘drift’, that simply involves letting things happen without plan or intention. The ‘political’ implications of such an action could be seen in the resistance it offered to what one might perceive as the ‘commodification’ of life. They suggested that in order to be released from the “jail of consumer society”, the process of the ‘drift’ was indeed necessary.

In many ways, the idea of the ‘drift’ and the manner in which the evening evolved was also resonant with certain improvisational theater tactics. One particularly significant example is described by director André Gregory in his conversation with actor and playwright Wallace Shawn. Here in Louis Malle’s film, *My Dinner with André*, Gregory tells his friend Shawn of his experience with a respected Polish director, Grotowski:

**André:** - to find the theme through action. And that the action was created by impulse, by somebody having an impulse. In a way its going right back to childhood, where simply a group of children enter a room or are brought into a room, without toys, and they begin to play. Grownups are learning how to play again.

**Wally:** Yes right. So you would all sit together somewhere and you would play in some way - but what would you actually do?

**André:** Well, I can give you an example. You see, we worked for a week in the city before we went to our forest, and of course Grotowski was there in the city too, and, you see, one of the

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<sup>138</sup> Guy Debord, ‘The Theory of the Dérive’, Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley, Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p. 50.

things I asked Grotowski was that I be kept as far away from him as possible so I couldn't be influenced by him in any way, because his whole group was leading workshops. But I did hear that every night they conducted something called a 'beehive'. And I loved the sound of this beehive, and a night or two before we were supposed to go to the country, I grabbed him by the collar, and I said, "Listen, this beehive thing, you know, I'd kind of like to participate in one, just instinctively I feel it would be something interesting". And he said, "Well, certainly, and in fact, why don't you, with your group lead a beehive instead of participating in one?" And I got very nervous, you know, and I said, "Well, what is a beehive?" And he said, "Well, a beehive is, at eight o'clock a hundred strangers come into a room" And I said, "Yes?" And he said, "Yes and then whatever happens is a beehive."<sup>139</sup>

The beehive, where people arrive and 'whatever happens is the performance' indeed describes the events that took place on the night of the *Internotional*. For the event, Barry and Horsburgh had pasted on the walls, in a rather chaotic fashion, a large body of written and printed information. This material included some drawing and 'artworks', but was primarily text; both photocopied and hand written. Hannalie Coetzee from Jam & Co, an Afro-Jazz club in Durban, came and put up pictures and writings that were rough idioms around the topic.<sup>140</sup> Also set up were two open microphones and two portable tape recorders.

In the beginning much of the audience came with the expectation of 'watching' a performance and stood waiting to be 'entertained', not realizing perhaps they were in fact the ones who were 'performing'. In a sense, this kind of 'passive viewer as consumer' was the very thing that Horsburgh and Barry were seeking to explode in such an event. The *Internotional* was an attack on the passive 'watching', letting others do the work, and not getting involved with one's own cultural exploration of life.

The audience at first acted on the old habits of gallery going, reading the texts on the wall as if they were paintings at an exhibition, and waiting to 'see' the performance. Urged by Horsburgh and Barry to speak, people slowly began to approach the open microphones. Those who came to express themselves on various topics, interestingly included comments on the event itself, as well. As the evening evolved, more came and went, performing, conversing, looking at the text on the wall, occasionally coming to speak into one of the two tape recorders. Martyn, who spoke almost continuously into one of the portable recorders, made free association poetics

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<sup>139</sup> Wallace Shawn, André Gregory, *My Dinner with André*, Screenplay for film by Louis Malle, New York, Grover Press, 1981, p. 26 – 27.

<sup>140</sup> Barry, Allen; Interview 10, telephone call, AT&T, Feb 16, 1999.





through soliloquy, citation and exchanges. One such exchange with Horsburgh is transcribed below:

**Horsburgh:** Generate an audience.

**Martyn:** Generate organs? Jay wants to generate organs. Jay! Jay is an organ-generator... Ah false.

**Horsburgh:** I open up parentheses in your falsehood, in order to say the following: To sleep in a butterfly is an epic abdication of a moral territory. To let a butterfly sleep in one's hand is a secret theft of that territory of morals. The first is a surrender allowing oneself to be seduced by illuminous channel. An intuition that flees from maps. The map is not the territory, after all. The second is criminal. It's to seek out those points at which moral landscapes buckle. To crawl into that space and plot, using the techniques of sorcery for an epic seduction. We will be making a sleep to fit the contours of one hand. Neither can be recognized without the other, so here I close the parentheses at criminal seduction.

**Martyn:** Whoever paints his face taking the marks of an arbitrary characterization of a future people. Whoever appropriates in the exhaustive way of all possible terms and threats language as a science of imagery solutions. Whoever refuses to explain himself and despite the emission doesn't stop robbing nor in fact engages in any collective practice. Such a person is the agent of subversion which... have great significance. The alchemy of the word, information requires uncertainty. The person that can predict a message knows it in advance. Then that message is not information hence meaningless. That part of the message that is not unpredictable is redundant. Redundancy is productive because redundancy guarantees the primacy of certain messages to the exclusion of all spurious information, which is called noise. The greater uncertainty of the message, the more noise it will contain. The loss of productivity in the system is called entropy. Entropy is the information and meaningful step taken with the full weight of the body on a plump and rounded ball of the foot... down the conclusive and dangerous brick road to chaos.<sup>141</sup>

What was perhaps most significant about the evening was the odd simultaneous occurrence of so many actions. Though this was reminiscent of the *SWANS* performance, here the events were even more random and un-scripted; the 'collaboration' more open ended. Some, like Paterson who worked in his sketchbook, sat quietly throughout the evening. Others engaged in conversation, read from texts or bantered with *non sequiturs*. Much was made about those who had not attended, Martyn criticized the gallery for being elitist, and Barry spoke at length to university English lecturer, Rob Amato, about his philosophy around both the event and the

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<sup>141</sup> Martyn, Horsburgh; 'Internotional I', *FLAT Recordings*, Tape 17, Durban, FLAT, May 20, 1994.

FLAT. Amato had run an alternative theater space in Cape Town and spoke about the experience.

Barry and Amato discuss the *Internotional*:

**Barry:** Basically what we are doing is recording anything that people are saying or doing and we are going to be compiling that or just keeping it as some kind of record.

**Amato:** Storytelling?

**Barry:** Yes.

**Amato:** Events and histories.

**Barry:** And we haven't really tried to define what will be taking place. In that way people will shape what does happen. But at the same time we are trying to create some kind of break in... communication. A shift!

**Amato:** A communication break is deeply desired. Give us a break in communication. Ja, I can see that's lovely stuff but what I am most intrigued by is the degree to which we could have a theatre which frees itself of Sneddonism!<sup>142</sup> Which has had a thirty-year scourge in this area.<sup>143</sup>

The evening grew raucous with various people 'performing' simultaneously. Horsburgh and Barry singing a song, while Tione Scholtz, a Natal University Composition student, 'rudely' interjecting some 'theory' about something. Interrupted conversations and disjointed exchanges flowed. In some ways, as the evening 'warmed up' it brought to mind the stories around the Cabaret Voltaire.

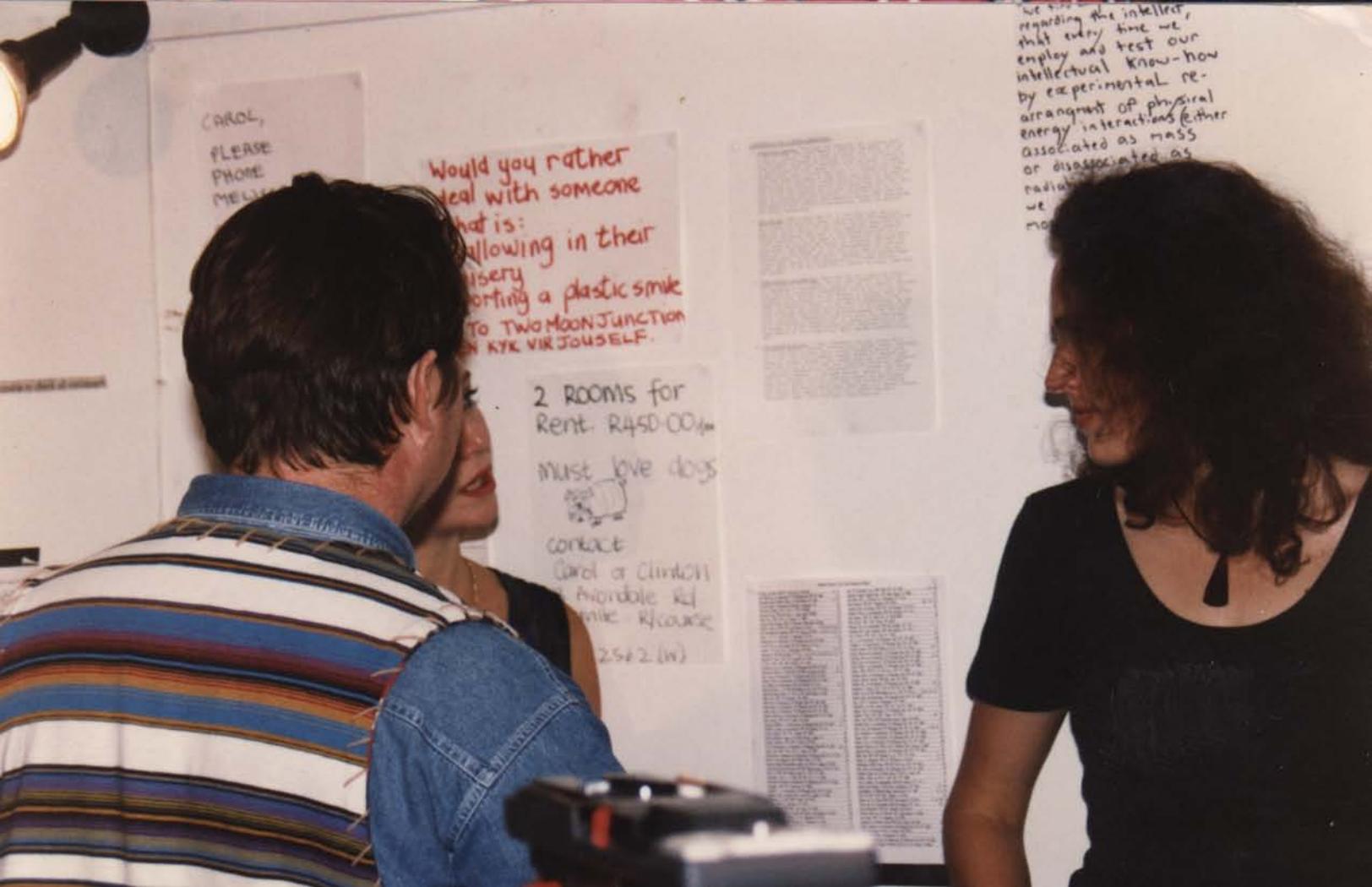
Cabaret Voltaire was founded in 1916, by Hugo Ball and is seen historically as being the beginning of Zurich Dada. Created when Ball arranged for 'artistic entertainments' at a local café, which Ball along with Tristan Tzara, Jean Arp, Marcel Janco and Emmy Hemmings performed nightly. These were staged with a great deal of improvisation with simultaneous disjointed 'acts'. Using Janco's famous painting *Cabaret Voltaire* to recollect, Arp describes a typical evening:

On the stage of a gaudy motley overcrowded tavern there are several weird and peculiar figures...Total pandemonium, The people around us are shouting, laughing and gesticulating. Our replies are signs of love, volleys of hiccups, poems, moos, and miawing of medieval Bruitists. Tzara is wiggling his behind like the belly of an Oriental dancer. Janco is playing an invisible violin and bowing and scraping. Madame Hemmings with the Madonna face, is doing the splits.

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<sup>142</sup> Professor Elizabeth Sneddon was an established theater lecturer at the University of Natal, who was well known in Natal for her involvement in the theatrical arts.

<sup>143</sup> Amato, Barry; 'Internotional I', *FLAT Recordings*, Tape 17, Durban, FLAT, May 20, 1994.



CAROL,  
PLEASE  
PHONE  
MEL

Would you rather  
deal with someone  
that is:  
allowing in their  
misery  
sporting a plastic smile  
TO TWOMOONJUNCTION  
BY KYR VIR JOUSELF.

2 ROOMS for  
Rent: R450.00/mo  
Must love dogs  
  
contact  
Carol or Clinton  
Ariodale Rd  
Mie - R/course  
2542 (w)

We also  
regarding the intellect,  
that every time we  
employ and test our  
intellectual know-how  
by experimental re-  
arrangement of physical  
energy interactions either  
associated as mass  
or dissociated as  
radiation  
we mo

Huelsenbeck is banging away nonstop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano...<sup>144</sup>

As with Cabaret Voltaire, the evening at the FLAT was a theatrical mix of concurrent but unrelated performances that created a strange ‘collage’ of overlapping dialogue, action and music. A ‘free for all’, where the audience became performers without a script. It was fitting that Cabaret Voltaire happened not in a museum, or institution, but ‘in the street’, in this case, in a pub, and that the FLAT event resembled a typical evening in a club, where the usual social restraints are loosened.

**Bahktin**, mentioned earlier in relation to the *SWANS* performance, speaks to this notion of creating an ‘alternative social space’ through his exploration of the ‘carnival’. Michael Gardiner in his book on Bahktin, *The Dialogics of Critique*, writes about the notion of carnival as observed through the eyes of Goethe, pointing out the importance of this eyewitness account in Bahktin’s work. Goethe in witnessing a New Year’s carnival comments that, the carnival is not an occasion of state, but rather something that people “give themselves”. Described as a “tumult of people, things and movements” that can only be “experienced firsthand”.<sup>145</sup>

According to Gardiner, Bahktin observed how a carnival is “the free and spontaneous combination of formally self-enclosed and fixed categories, that brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid.”<sup>146</sup> As a “symbol of communal performance, it can only occur in the streets and the public square, where social relations are free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred...”<sup>147</sup>

This breaking of rules and this “creation of a new social space” is possible in a carnival, because “there is no barrier between actors or performers and those who witness it.”<sup>148</sup> An event, where people become participants rather than observers, was seen by Bahktin as having profound political implications. This is addressed specifically when he observes that the carnival effectively breaks down formalities, “replacing the established traditions and canons with a ‘free and familiar’ social interaction based on the principles of mutual cooperation, solidarity and equality”.<sup>149</sup> Gardiner adds that “It demonstrates that other, less rigid and hierarchical social relations are

<sup>144</sup> John Elderfield’s introduction to *Flight Out of Time – A Dada Diary by Hugo Ball*, New York, Viking, 1974, p. xxiii .

<sup>145</sup> Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique – Bahktin and the Theory of Ideology*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 44 – 45.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129 – 130.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

possible and indeed desirable, through the utopian enactment of an integrated, egalitarian community.”<sup>150</sup> The spirit behind the *Internotional*, and indeed the mission of the FLAT, was to create such a social space.

Explicitly stated in the *Internotional* press release was: “**the principal is that it does not matter what you have to say, but it is vitally necessary that you say it.** The only criterion is that it does not prevent another participant from freely expressing themselves”.<sup>151</sup> This echoes Goethe’s words that “in the carnival proper everything (except violence) is permissible.”<sup>152</sup>

However, this also speaks to another concept central to Bakhtin’s notion of the creation of a social space and that was the importance of ‘polyphony’. The polyphonic model implies that all voices are valid and that the resultant dialogue is richer by way of such inclusiveness. Free and familiar interaction by necessity requires an openness to many viewpoints. Gardiner speaks to Bakhtin’s use of the term ‘polyphony’ in reference to a discussion of Dostoevsky’s novels. Here the narrative is developed without a singular point of view. For Bakhtin, the implication is that a polyphonic voice is more democratic in that it operates beyond a ‘dominant’ singular voice. Gardiner says:

Through the structural dissonance of polyphony - the interplay of unmerged voices and consciousness - Bakhtin argues that we can become more aware of our location in the dense network of discursive and ideological practices.<sup>153</sup>

In the carnival, social constraints are thrown off. By becoming active creators rather than passive consumers, individuals are empowered. In a sense, by creating an opportunity for an audience to become performers, many voices are brought to the conversation, and the passive role of the art viewer is also challenged. Anything can happen. This is significant, for such events are not separate from life, or ‘bought’ like an evening at the theater (or in front of the television). Rather they are lived, experienced, and transformed into life itself.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Horsburgh, Barry; *The First Internotional Theatre of Communication*, Press Release, Durban, FLAT, July 1994.

<sup>152</sup> Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique – Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 44 .

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

Not all of the events were completely spontaneous, and the *Internotional* included a number of ‘performances’ with prior preparation. Brendon Bussy came early, played his viola for a short time and left for another ‘gig’ across town. Scholtz played recordings of some of his experimental electronic compositions. In conversation that evening, he spoke about this work:

**Scholtz:** That was a piece based on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange data converted into real time midi data and put into a computer and played back through a synthesizer.

**Allen:** Not to mention our tape deck. Thanks!<sup>154</sup>

Etienne De Kock, declaring that he “didn’t like to listen always to the clamor of 100 *saartjies* [or softies] trying to discover themselves” read several ‘nonsense’ poems including one on “youth”:

**De Kock:** The first poem is... quite an old poem. It talks about a college and college-students, right. And now there is a college called Milton, or something. And a freshman is someone new who arrives at university and this was written very long ago. Milton is obviously a literary college of some sort and literature and art are very closely linked. It’s called “After sending freshmen to describe a tree”:

Twenty inglorious Milton’s looked at a tree and saw God.  
 Noted its clutching fingers in the sod.  
 Heard Zephyrs gentle breezes wafting through her hair.  
 Saw a solemn statue, heard a growing woody prayer.  
 Saw dancing skirts and the Lord’s desire.  
 Green arrows to God instead of pyre.  
 Saw symbols and squirrels, heard musins indeed.  
 Not one of the Miltons saw any tree.  
 [Laughter]  
 If you must see a tree, clean, clear and bright.  
 For God’s sake and mine, look outside your heart and write.<sup>155</sup>

He dedicated this reading to “all you middle earth, third eye, politically correct people.” And after reading four more poems, closed with the remarks that “it’s been a long time since I’ve had such a captive audience.”<sup>156</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Scholtz, Allen; Internotional III’, *FLAT Recordings*, Tape 19, Durban, FLAT, May 20, 1994.

<sup>155</sup> De Kock; Internotional II, *FLAT Recordings*, Tape 18, Durban, FLAT, May 20, 1994.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

For some weeks before the *Internotional*, I had been toying with a sound work. This piece called *Conversation* (and discussed earlier - Tape 16) seemed appropriate for the *Internotional* as it was about “communication interaction”. Indeed, I was utterly absorbed at that time with how people communicate with each other, whether across gender or cultural lines. I was interested, not only in the way in which two people of different language groups, race, or gender, always communicate with some kind of implicit power relations but also how one relates to different people in different contexts. In talking to a male friend, my mother, or a strange woman in a nightclub, each would bring from me a different ‘voice’.

For the *Internotional*, Elmin and I presented our ‘communication performance’. Though it was only our intention to face each other across the room, later observation showed that we seemed to reference images of “Adam and Eve” from religious paintings. We stood silently as speakers above each of our heads re-broadcast our voices, the ‘banal’ conversation that we had recorded earlier. We ‘communicated’ only through our ‘preprogrammed’ conversation, and so, in a sense, the piece was a parody of an interaction between two people at a gallery function. As we stood on display, our taped conversation echoed the typical boring exchanges that one might endure at such an event.

The idea of presenting a critique of human interaction at an event that called for any human interaction was interesting to me. The concept behind the presentation of this audio-piece at a public function was the notion that we come to these events with encoded information. By presenting banal conversation, I wondered if I might evoke in the audience a self-consciousness towards their own interactions that evening.

Though the event asserted itself as being open and inclusive, some of the criticism of the event addressed the problem of ‘exclusivity’. All interaction was allowed, even silence as performed by Paterson, who remained quiet throughout the early part of the event, choosing to draw in his book instead. He spoke about this later in an interview:

**Allen:** Please describe and comment on your involvement at the *Internotional* when: a) you remained quiet, drawing in your book; and b) when you and I recorded our conversation about screaming.

**Paterson:** a) I was well within my rights according to the aims of the *Internotional*. Through drawing I was able to observe the process of liberating ideas and the eradication of censorship.



The drawings still exist and they continue to inform me. With this in mind I think *The Internotional Theatre of Communication* is still on the go. b) You scream, ice-cream, we all scream together.<sup>157</sup>

But later in conversation he had this to say about the event:

**Allen:** Would you try to make the point that the *Internotional* was significant in terms of the shift in the South African political situation at the time? That is it occurred twenty days after the elections and to a certain extent the *Internotional* embraced ‘freedoms’ which up until that point were forbidden to most South Africans.

**Paterson:** I feel the *Internotional* failed to realise the magnitude of the event. People have been saying what they liked for centuries, how do you think apartheid came into being.

**Allen:** What else can be said about the *Internotional*!?

**Paterson:** The *Internotional* had a limited audience, which hindered the aims of the event.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed Carol Gainer, another FLAT regular, was quite critical of the *Internotional* and of what the FLAT Gallery had become; she had these comments in an e-mail discussion on December of 1998:

**Allen:** On May 20 (1994), 20 days after the ‘historic’ SA elections, Jay and Thomas organised *The First Internotional theatre of Communication*. They advertised it with a flyer stating that “this event will provide a unique context in which to express, in vocal / written / or active form any information about anything whatsoever”. In one of the recordings taken at this event, you expressed some criticism about the event (and/or the FLAT) [“*Well once again I have to tell you that I think it’s really fucking pathetic!*”]. Could you articulate why you felt this way?

**Gainer:** The reason why I felt as strongly as I did at the time i.e.: “*fucking pathetic*” and “*masturbation*” was because I felt as if the FLAT was becoming a “boys own club”! I seem to remember feeling that the lack of boundaries during this time was not a problem for me but... the exhibitions/performances did start to move into something else, which I did not really think of as art. The element of debauchery seemed to shift the pieces into more of a ‘jolling’ category. I do know now, that on reflection, I was also feeling left out in the sense that if one did not hang out continuously at the FLAT drinking etc, then one did start to feel alienated. It seemed to me at the time that the major players at these events were the ‘boys’ who hung out and I guess that pissed me off in a way as the intensity on a very REAL level which I had previously experienced was not there for me! Also...the pieces started to become boring as there was no genuine discussion generated by them to anyone else other than the involved parties - trying to get some kind of sense

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<sup>157</sup> Paterson, Allen; Interview 7, snail-mail, April 1998.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.



out of you, Thomas or Jay at the time was VERY difficult and a little too "airy" - too many uhhms and aahs!!!

**Allen:** The *Internotional* occurred 20 days after the 'historic' elections. Given this context, would you say that it was significant that the event embraced certain 'freedoms' (aims) such as stated in flyer: "the principle is that it does not matter what you have to say - but it is vitally necessary that you say it"? This event also reiterated the FLAT's main aim and goal that, "anyone can do anything in the space". The event represented perhaps one of the FLAT's most seminal events. Would you agree with this? If not, explain why.

**Gainer:** Generally, though, the concept of "letting anyone do anything" was not in question as much as the actual presentation and follow through of the pieces. I feel that we kind of lost our contact with ourselves, and our audience, during this period and after all it was ALL meant to be about communication.

**Allen:** What are your feelings about the way programming at the FLAT was developing? Do you feel that the later exhibits at the FLAT had slipped into a kind of decadence?

**Gainer:** I started to detach myself from the FLAT around this time as felt that if I could not keep up with the general 'jol' then maybe I should just opt out! The so-called 'boys own club' has a very strong historical base in this country as you know and it, as far as I was concerned, became too exclusive and as far as I had understood the FLAT's mission statement was to be an INCLUSIVE experimental space.<sup>159</sup>

In spite of these valid criticisms, the *Internotional* still affirmed our struggle to redefine the function of a 'gallery'. We were not only an exhibition space, but also a 'cultural centre', a 'club' and a living place. The FLAT events reflected what we saw as being the potential for a new South African culture. It operated in a way that was difficult to define, in a manner which ran contrary to conventional notions of how one might live practically and how one might express oneself culturally. We questioned whether a gallery needed to be 'official' or if art needed to be exhibited in a particular way. We asked whether we could not make our actual life our art. For us, art production that operated through conventional means was limited, and we as artists could make radical art out of everyday life, when we established a gallery in our own home. When Horsburgh addressed in his statement the notion of freedom for all, he also spoke to the need to conflate art and life. The *Internotional*, as an event, was reflective of the ongoing exchange at the FLAT; the 'performance' created out of spontaneous interaction where audience and artists become one.

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<sup>159</sup> Gainer, Allen; Interview 11, e-mail, cyberspace, Dec 4, 1998.

*EXCERPTS from the FIRST INTERNATIONAL THEATRE OF COMMUNICATION Recordings. (Tapes 17 – 19) It is important to realise that these recorded conversations, only represent a fraction of the activities at the event. They only document the people that were near or used the recording facilities. Many other interactions remain unrecorded. The first tape starts with a conversation between Rob Amato (Am) and Barry (B) where they discuss the International. This interaction can also be heard on FLAT CDI.*

**B:** Basically what we are gonna do with anything that happens tonight is we are going to be compiling it into one kind of generalized set of information and re-disseminating it to anyone who is interested. Fax it out internationally or where ever. On tape, in terms of the information people bring, what we are doing is recording anything that people are saying or doing and we are going to be compiling that or just keeping it as some kind of record.

**Am:** Storytelling?

**B:** Yes.

**Am:** Events and histories.

**B:** And we haven't really tried to define what will be taking place. In that way people will shape what does happen. But at the same time we are trying to create some kind of break in communication. A shift!

**Am:** A communication break is deeply desired. Give us a break in communication. Ja, I can see that's lovely stuff but what I am most intrigued by is the degree to which we could have a theatre which frees itself of Sneddonism! Which has had a thirty-year scourge in this area. And then there are all sorts of other deaths in the town. It's very strange, why does the town have a bad acting style, for instance? Why? It's nothing to do with the teachers. It's got to do with something else. It's something else.

**B:** Something obscure?

**Am:** Something obscure. Something terribly obscure!

That nobody has defined. Maybe that's why you need breaks.

**B:** Jay is a good person to speak to in terms of that. I think he's got a lot of ideas but not necessarily the resources. That's also true...

**Am:** But that's a... This Space was run on... It works well on the blood of the actors... the old space in Cape Town. There was some money coming in for things like adds in the paper. Actually I've reminded Kenyan about 250 000 [Rand], the period that I was there. About 200 000, 180 000 [Rand] went into the Argus Company for advertising shows. It's one of the biggest expenses. It was the one thing we could not by-pass.

**B:** Ja, I think our aim is largely to create some kind of space. A kind of free open experimental space and we don't necessarily have the resources to provide [...]. What we are trying to do is, well we trying to disregard money as well to some extent. Because as soon as we start worrying too seriously about that... we are gonna basically...

**Am:** How've you covered the rent?

**B:** Beg your pardon.

**Am:** How have you covered the rent?

**B:** To a large extent we basically... through ourselves but we have received sponsorship for this room. However...

**Am:** What's your name?

**B:** It's Thomas, I'm Thomas

**Am:** Rob, Rob Amato.

**B:** We really just want anything to happen, you know.

*At some point, Horsburgh introduces the event to the audience/participants with a statement. After which interaction began within the 'audience'. Horburgh (H), Rhett Martyn (M), Paula Grundy (G), Walker Paterson (P), Elmin Engelbrecht (E), Etienne De Kock (DK), Barry (B) and Allen (A). A number of people who I did not know also took part. They are referred to as W1, 2, 3... if they were female, and M1, 2, 3... if they were male.*

**H:** In case you were wondering what I was doing, an introduction seems necessary. We would just like to welcome everyone who is coming down to our evening of communication interaction...

We are not entirely sure what is going to take place from now until then. But it is necessary that anyone who does have anything to say and who is interested in saying something respond to the situation. Now is the time! [\* Pun from Sekunjalo Ke Nako, the ANC logo.] It's spontaneous, it's evolutionary so anything you have to say about anything... please go ahead. Do it right now. Or in five minutes, or ten minutes and... enjoy.

Now everyone is focussing their attention on me and that sets up a dichotomy which everyone is aware of - subject, object and all of that. It's not very interesting. It's interesting only to a certain degree. And we would like to transcend that. So... please feel free to talk amongst yourselves. Feel free to write on the walls. Feel free to read everything and exchange understandings of what those things are about. It's entirely a human process. It's got to do with the information that you are willing to dispatch. It's probably gonna be sent to other countries and in a similar evening in another country this information that is compiled here [will be used.]

**H:** Generate an audience.

**M:** Generate organs? Jay wants to generate organs. Jay! Jay is an organ-generator.

Generalised transaction between the left ventricle and the right. Would obviously mean

**H:** cloud-busters while hand-cuffed to a smile

**M:** with an effervescent sparkularity of hundreds of different kinds of distinguished guests

**H:** of topography and rupture.

**M:** Ah false.

**H:** I open up parentheses in your falsehood, in order to say the following: To sleep in a butterfly is an epic abdication of a moral territory. To let a butterfly sleep in one's hand is

a secret theft of that territory of morals. The first is a surrender allowing oneself to be seduced by illuminous channel. An intuition that flees from maps. The map is not the territory, after all. The second is criminal. It is to seek out those points at which moral landscapes buckle. To crawl into that space and plot, using the techniques of sorcery for an epic seduction. We will be making a sleep to fit the contours of one hand. Neither can be recognised without the other, so here I close the parentheses at criminal seduction.

**M:** Whoever paints his face taking the marks of an arbitrary characterization of a future people. Whoever appropriates in the exhaustive way of all possible terms and threats language as a science of imagery solutions. Whoever refuses to explain himself and despite the emission doesn't stop robbing nor in fact engages in any collective practice. Such a person is the agent of subversion which... has great significance. The alchemy of the word, information requires uncertainty. The person that can predict a message knows it in advance. Then that message is not information hence meaningless. That part of the message that is not unpredictable is redundant. Redundancy is productive because redundancy guarantees the primacy of certain messages to the exclusion of all spurious information, which is called noise. The greater uncertainty of the message, the more noise it will contain. The loss of productivity in the system is called entropy. Entropy is the information and meaningful step taken with the full weight of the body on a plump and rounded ball of the foot down the conclusive and dangerous brick road to chaos.

**H:** Generate organs! The following typography has ruptured or [...] cloudbusters while hand-cuffed to a smile. Everyone is smiling so I assume you know what I am talking about. This is the intent at

describing the architecture of the essay itself, but simply the architecture. Those point to which various elements of the essay

**MI:** consist of  
**H:** converge, because the anatomy of language is rather melancholic. To sleep in a butterfly is the epic abdication of moral territory. To let the butterfly sleep in ones hands is the secret... [He continues inaudibly.]

**A:** I find that I am starting to walk like Jay.

**M:** Stetson Boots?

**A:** I'm Jay-walking in other words!

**M:** Interference.

**A:** But unfortunately I do not smoke.

**M:** Peter's project.

Alternatives to the new world order?

**A:** No, I prefer... I prefer to keep myself clean

**M:** Any euphoric people commemorating this theatre of

**WI:** and it is time that I had a voice in this

**M:** redundancy.

**WI:** I want to participate. I want to talk about the fact that you want to be clean.

**M:** Participants must interact.

**WI:** I want to talk about that and that you actually are holding

**M:** the Victoria Falls.

**WI:** Everyone has ulterior motives, hay?

**M:** is in a state of rupture.

**WI:** You know actually, mine wasn't ulterior motives.

**M:** Whether its rupture or whether its... finding a solution to an organic problem in which

**B:** I might have a gun

**M:** has never solved itself.

**WI:** Oh well, I have my flick knife.

**M:** Or whether it's just a recording of elements

**WI:** in my boots.

**M:** We don't need to be accessed by other people in order to access yourself. But in a situation like this access is vital

**M3:** because no one was

listening to me.

**M:** If you don't have access to a memory

**WI:** your own voice

**M:** then you are a useless pile of flesh reduced to a graphic medium.

**B:** Exactly, I agree with you.

**WI:** whatever it was

**M:** self perpetuating

destructive mechanism.

**B:** It's a matter of you've said what you have said.

**M4:** I didn't say it to make myself happy. I said it because I

needed to say it.

**M:** What are you writing?

**W2:** I'm writing a review for the newspaper.

**B:** Have you accepted the

**M:** Which newspaper?

**W2:** The Natal Witness.

**M:** Do you think that this event has been successful?

**W2:** I only just got here.

**M:** How do you feel?

**W2:** Fine.

**M:** Great

**B:** conversation.

**WI:** Yes, it does, definitely.

**P:** What is the significance of significant form?

**WI:** They can learn how to communicate.

**B:** Exactly.

**M:** Significance of significant form is

**H:** Beethoven was deaf and his music was

**M:** to theorize an emotional response to an artwork.

**B:** Wanting to

**M:** that's the only significance it has

**B:** and not being able to?

**M:** Because it was defined in order to theorize.

**P:** Who defined it?

**B:** Whose disability is that?

**M:** Clive Bell and Robert Fry, the modernist critics.

**M5:** They must communicate

**H:** because they haven't chosen context.

**P:** That's all very well, but how can you define significant form?

**WI:** Lets take the bottom line here and that is not good enough.

**P:** Say two aspects of a possible aspect of significant form.

**WI:** So they don't believe that they are good enough.

**P:** It is significant? How does it have any validity?

**WI:** They never came forward and voiced their opinions.

**M:** Well my Peugeot Bicycle has validity therefor significant

form must have validity too.

**WI:** So, why can't people communicate? Bottomline is that they don't like themselves and they don't believe what they have to say is good enough or acceptable.

**M:** The king and queen of howling indifference.

**B:** What I wanted to say is

**M:** the court jester is not a royalty.

**B:** It's just as much an insult to go up to someone and say:

communicate! Feel free!

**A:** Only if you want to record any of this information you've actually got to speak into this microphone.

**B:** It's very condescending to do that.

**W6:** Feel free? That is the whole question. It goes back to acceptable itself. So that you can actually be free to say what you want to say. It's that picture.

**H:** Alternatively there is a social context and there is other contexts which

**M:** I come back to David Byrne, who said: "Why say anything when you've got nothing to say?" Which goes back to access again. How do you access information which you don't want to access? And in a situation like this I feel that it is difficult to access information.

**M6:** Did Jay say right and wrong?

**M:** it's hard to access verbal information.

**M6:** Verbally?

**G:** Verbal and social masturbation!

**M6:** If you'd like us to get on to physical.

**WI:** You know what I've never thought of that before. I've never actually considered verbal masturbation. I've only considered physical masturbation. And that's great!

**M:** Does somebody want the microphone?

**WI:** Well, this is a new experience for all of us.

[Laughter]

**G:** It's a never ending special.

**WI:** Where have you been all your life?

**G:** I can only be where I am.

**WI:** Ja, but you can also climax if you want to.

**G:** Right here? How can I be anywhere else but right here?

**WI:** You talk about a verbal masturbation, you can also have a verbal climax as well.

**G:** Well, would you like to climax?

**WI:** Well, what are we on this planet for besides... you know... loving and experiencing and climaxing?

**G:** And the indulgence in nothingness. We are all loving each other, aren't we? But we need a mask.

**WI:** Somebody over here tell us the point of this conversation?

**G:** I'm not criticising, I'm not criticising pointlessness. There is nothing else but pointlessness!

That's not a criticism, its just an acknowledgement.

**B:** In terms of that, masturbation is an incorrect metaphor to use.

**WI:** This girl who had to talk about sex, because everybody is interested in sex.

**H:** Maybe you should tell her that.

**WI:** You are so bad. You are manipulative. [Laughter]

**B:** From one stranger to another.

**W6:** I have a comment to say and I am not taking sides. Is this on? When she says to you...

**G:** My name is Paula...

**W6:** Hello Paula. When Colette says to you that you are manipulative, you really shouldn't feel bad about it because at the end of the day we are all manipulative. The fact that you are not very subtle in your manipulation is your joy or your problem... or your choice, your choice. The point is we are all manipulative to a degree so the fact...

**G:** How do you define manipulation? I mean how and why am I manipulative?

**WI:** Because you came and interrupted this conversation because you wanted to have a voice.

**G:** It's not an interruption!

**WI:** You wanted to have a voice!

**G:** It's not a manipulative interaction!

**M6:** You insulted her. She said we were masturbating.

**WI:** So, what is wrong with masturbation?

**G:** But why is that an insult?

**WI:** Do you have a problem with masturbation?

**G:** I've now decided to masturbate with you. That's why I am here.

**WI:** That's great.

**G:** It is not an insult that is your choice.

**WI:** Ja, but you see, you achieved what you wanted to achieve. And that was to have a voice and to be heard. And you were and that is fantastic. I think that is great.

**G:** Well, thank you.

**E:** What colour did you draw your little men when you were a kid?

**M:** If I drew them with a blue pen, they were blue. If I drew them with a black pen, they were black.

**E:** Really? What's the difference when you colour them, you've got a colouring in book and you've got to colour this little smiling guy. What would you make his face?

**M:** I would make his face skin colour.

**E:** Ja, but what was skin colour?

**M:** Skin colour was a thing that you got in a Crayola box and it said "skin colour".

**E:** Ja, but say you were poor and you didn't have a big, wide range of koki colours.

**M:** Then I would chop my wrist off.

**E:** And you've got a choice between brown, pink and white? You don't even have brown. You've got pink, orange and black. So what do you make him?

**M:** Brown, orange, pink and black? I would mix brown and pink.

**E:** Then it comes out black.

**M:** No, it comes out skin colour.

**E:** No, if you do it in koki.

**M:** With koki? What colour does brown and pink make?

**B:** Black!

**E:** You still haven't said to me what you would choose.

Because if you mix kokis, you don't get the colour you think you do.

**M:** I'd use...

**E:** No, but don't tell me what you would use now. I am asking you when you were a kid what you would have chosen.

**M:** I would have made it skin colour.

**E:** Oh, fuck, I don't believe you. I always had a conflict between which colour would be right. I always ended up drawing them brown and all my friends said no it is supposed to be pink otherwise they're black.

**M:** I don't believe in that kind of segregation.

**M:** I've got absolutely nothing to say to an anarchist except [...] is very alive very passionate, very intentional, and love is a void. Universal applauds action [...] and a trade union which will give you new dimension to the art of speaking. Speaking has become just one of the intentions of the new age. The new age will carry on into an infinitive process. And this infinitive process will carry on through the after-life. We will never be left; we will never be spared from this eternal reaction and this eternal return and it's much like a spider's web which will just go round, and round and eventually just come out of the ass of the spider. And then you will just go into the spider and, you know, play around with the spider's body a bit. And then you will leave the spider at the mandibles of the spider into the body of the fly which was actually caught in the spider's web which is significant in that what the spider generated out of its ass is eventually returned back to the product of the spider's ass.

**M:** [In American accent] Carling Black Label, the new brew from South Africa. The brew that made you 60 before you were 30. The brew that made Hong Kong famous. The brew that made Planet Hollywood and Hong Kong appear on the same T-shirt. The brew that made a star come out of the world.

The brew that made me grow a beard.

The brew that made you wear a string around your neck.

The brew that made other people put strings around your neck.

The brew that made you hang.

The brew that made you get a hard-on.

The brew that made your arms come out of your sleeves.

The brew that made your feet come out of your toes.

The brew that made your mother come out of your father.

The brew that made the first sonic, philharmonic orchestra.

The brew that made your paint peel.

The brew that makes your evangelical status seem absolutely appalling.

The brew that made you famous.

The brew that made you 450 ml of pure indulgence.

The brew that made your Caltex Guard seem green.

The brew that made Etienne de Kock feel privileged.

The brew that made the speaker speak before he had spoken.

The brew that made me talk in this American accent.

*There is quite a long break before Etienne De Kock takes up the microphone and recites some poetry.*

**DK:** I just want to read some poetry and make one little point about what I do, and what a lot of people make and that is art. And there's two things about art: what you do and how you do it. It's what you say and how you say it. And art limited into categories. Its not held down and put this way or that way. It's a very human thing. The first poem is quite an old poem. It talks about a college and college-students, right. And now there is a college called Milton, or something. And a freshman is someone new who arrives at university and this was written very long ago. Milton is obviously a literary college of some sort and literature and art are very closely linked. It's called "After sending freshmen to describe a tree":

"Twenty inglorious Milton's looked at a tree and saw God.

Noted its clutching fingers in the sod.

Heard Zephyrs gentle breezes wafting through her hair.

Saw a solemn statue, heard a growing woody prayer.

Saw dancing skirts and the Lord's desire.

Green arrows to God instead of pyre.

Saw symbols and squirrels, heard musins indeed.

Not one of the Miltons saw any tree. [Laughter]

If you must see a tree, clean, clear and bright.

For God's sake and mine, look outside your heart and write."

That's the first one and that just echoes some sentiments I have. [Laughter]

Because I don't like to listen always to the clamor of 100 saartjies [or softies] trying to discover themselves. [Laughter]

And then there is another way of saying things. Well, this is a way of being a nonsense poet.

"I cannot give the reasons, I only sing the tunes.

The sadness of the seasons, the madness of the moons.

I cannot be didactical, lucid, but I can be quite obscure.

And positively [...]

In gorgery and gushness and all that squishes by

My voice has all the lushness of what I try to buy.

And yet it has a beauty, proud and terrible.

Denied to those with duty is to be cerebral.

Among the infant mountains I make my vistas wade

And watch the sepia fountains throw up their lime-green spray."

That's the end of that one. [Laughter] And that shows a way of looking at things that I particularly enjoy. And then for all you people, you middle-earth, third-eye, politically correct people.

"Leave fibres on the wind, and if it bears your weight you are a daughter of the dawn. If not, pick up your carcass, dry your tears.

For that sweet open wind, forgerer was from the fairy-land

But coming rather flooded through the kitchen floor from where your uncle Yustus and his band of flautists

turn my cellar more and more into a place of hollow and decay. That's my theory on it, do your own." [Laughter]

And then finally...

Of barley corn and furrows  
Of farms and turtles  
About such ghostly burrows [...] Of [...] and pasteurs  
Of skies both peak and green  
I made these statements...  
And I have no more to say."  
[Laughter]

It's been such a long time since I've had such a captive audience. [Laughter]

### **INTERVIEW**

*During the evening, Martyn interviewed me about the Internotional and the state of the FLAT Gallery. This interview was spread throughout the later part of the evening on different tapes.*

**M:** Lets talk about this [FLAT] as an establishment. Do you see this as an establishment?

**A:** How do you mean?

**M:** How do you feel about this?

**A:** About this event, this gallery or what?

**M:** This event!

**A:** I feel in two minds, for one. [Laughter] In one way it is great that this event actually happened. The fact that it happened is great. But I feel in another way that it could have gone further. That's my own personal opinion. I think people could have relaxed a lot. I think people could have freaked out a lot. People could have done anything.

**M:** Why do you think they couldn't 'liberate' themselves?

**A:** I am not too sure about that. I really wish I could know the reason why people can not liberate themselves.

**M:** Don't you see this as having a particularly... [...] against its intentions? Does it have a particularly elitist philosophy?

**A:** Do you think this event was elitist?

**M:** To an extent, yes.

**A:** It probably was elitist in terms of the way it used the media. Or the way we disseminated information. It was

probably elitist in the first place and therefore that reflects on the number of people who came.

**M:** I was interested to hear the other night, when I asked Melissa Marrins whether she was going to come. She said: "No, because it was going to be just another masturbation."

**A:** [Surprised] That's really interesting.

**M:** Whether that reveals some kind of personal conflict with the organizers... or whether there was some kind of truth in that.

**A:** You know what? A body only functions... a chain is only as good as its weakest link.

What I mean to say is, if somebody wants something to be interesting, if somebody wants something to happen in Durban, they've got to fucken do it themselves. And I really stand by that. Because if everyone just sits back and thinks everything is going to happen around them, NOTHING is going to happen. And if somebody thinks that something is going to be a wank, then they are not getting involved themselves. I'm sick of people in Durban saying: "Ah, God, you are wasting your time!" or "You are being elitist!" or whatever. People just sit back and watch things happen, they don't actually do anything themselves. And there is no one who will try and change that.

**M:** This evening seemed to take on a very cerebral nature. How do you feel about that?

**A:** Tonight? I feel fine about it... I actually feel very impartial. I feel totally indifferent because I think... I think a lot of people will go away thinking that this evening was shit. But in another way...

If you and me can break down barriers tonight, then tonight was a success. But if we can't do that then maybe it wasn't. Maybe it was just a kind of wanking, as Melissa said. But why isn't Melissa here to 'penetrate' this 'wanking'? Why isn't she here to make 'sexual intercourse'? Excuse the metaphor, but it's true. If wanking is wanking then what is sexual intercourse? It must be something 'better', surely.

**M:** Perhaps what I was trying to say was... the stream that the Flat has tried to outline, events on a daily basis...

**A:** To a certain extent I must admit that this place is like a total fucken, shit-hole. If you ever want privacy don't come here. It's the worst place on earth to find privacy. There are always people here. You can come home after working at sculpture department, say about 9:30pm; come back here, and someone will knock on the door at 10:00pm guaranteed. It happens every fucken night. Its really great, but if you want to be on your own, don't be here. But its great, the interaction is great. I'm coming to realise that although I live here, this place is not mine, it belongs to the community. Not necessarily the community as a whole, but rather the art community. It belongs to those people who wish to interact with it and they do. I mean you do, everybody does. If you want to move in here, just move in.

**A:** Funny, it's been quarter to seven the whole evening.

**M:** How do you feel about Etienne De Kock's exhibition here?

**A:** I feel like it was a watershed exhibition.

**M:** What do you mean?

**A:** It was symbolic, I think, for non-student artists. Most of the people that have exhibited here have been students. There are exceptions, actually quite a lot of exceptions. But Etienne here, in a way, represented the "Old School".

**M:** This is where I am finding an establishment starting. In that if "Old School" comes here, "Old School" will be addressed to.

**A:** No, but I don't think that we should be aggressive towards the "Old School".

**M:** How does traditionalism play a role in the FLAT Gallery?

**A:** There is a mixture between both. The FLAT gallery's opinion that "anyone can exhibit here" means that if Etienne wants to exhibit here, that is great. We totally support that and he did exhibit here and it

was great. It was probably the biggest turn out we had at the FLAT. What I hope it will do is push, although nihilistically I don't think it will, other people... "the lecturers" or older artists or anyone who is over thirty in Durban; to actually put something on here with guts or with experimentation. Something unsafe and that would be great. Possibly what the FLAT should promote is unsafety.

**M:** I guess I'm just trying to establish whether the FLAT still represents what it did in the beginning – which was completely open-minded and completely open-ended. I still think it is open-minded, but I think everything is always worth watching. I saw a news documentary on Albie Sachs the other night and... as you know he was a 'radical' in the old South Africa... and he said how important it was to always watch with a cautious eye. He is going to keep people at bay and always question their values and always question that they are open-minded and open-ended. And I use Melissa's example to see whether there was a rift occurring within the FLAT Gallery. And I used Etienne as well, to try and see what your sentiments were.

**A:** Rhett, I want to say this. It might seem like, because Thomas and myself stay here, that we run the place and we do. We have to deal with all the fucken shit... we have to clean the place up... What I mean to say is... The Flat gallery is as only as much as those people are willing to put into it. Definitely! Always! And if it is SHIT it is because people aren't fucken putting anything into it.

**B:** Hear, hear!

**A:** If Melissa thinks it is shit, it is because she is not here doing her bit for it. If people have something to say, they must do something better.