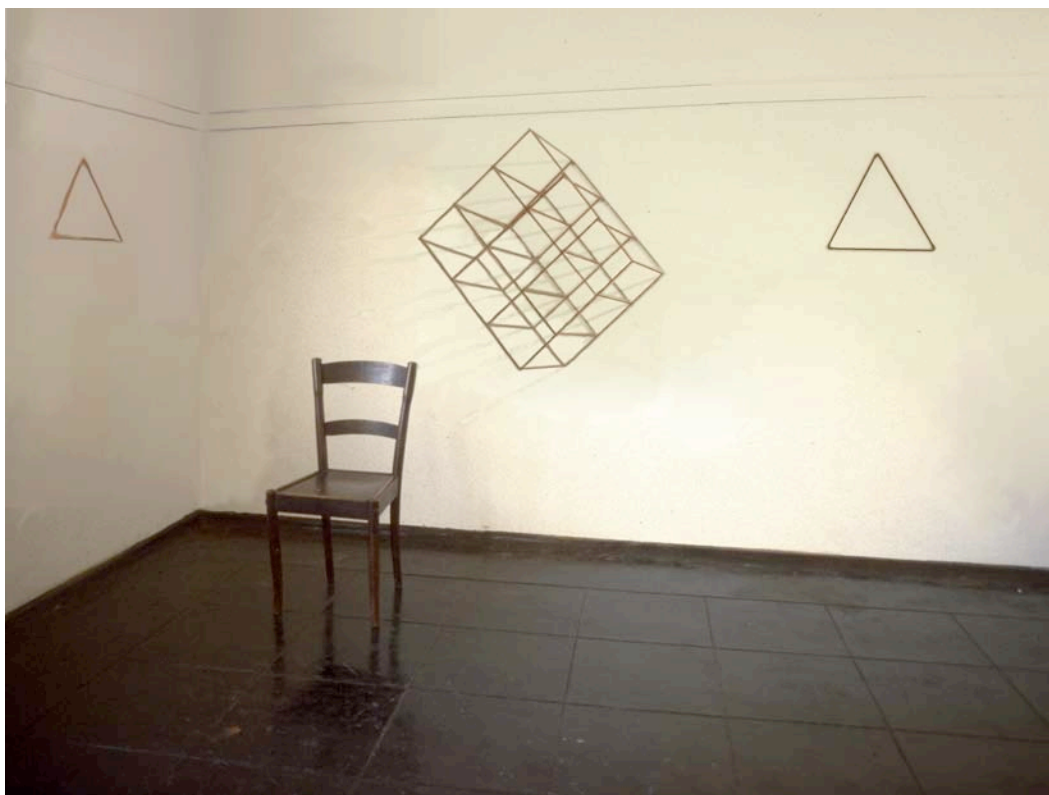


SAMKELO MATOTI
July 22, 1994

Matoti, a second year student at the Technikon, was a regular at the FLAT. His home was in the Transkei and thus he was living in student residence on campus. He approached us at the FLAT with the proposal: instead of returning home during the July holiday month when the residence was normally closed, he asked if he could stay with us and work at the sculpture department towards an exhibition at the FLAT. We agreed.

The work that he exhibited was an installation of steel triangles, cubes and pyramids. Like geometric drawings, these shapes were arranged to form a minimal composition on the wall. These sculptures then became the background for a large projected image of the artist.



SAMKELO MATOTI, installation, 1994



'33 x 33 Degrees', an action by Aliza Levi, Samkelo Matoti, Horsburgh, Barry and myself, 1994

33 x 33 DEGREES
A Drive into the Natal Midlands
July 1994

The situationist concept of the *dérive*, or ‘drift’ described by Debord as a “transient passage through varied ambiances...” and covered earlier in the section on the *Internotinal* (p. 204) was applied by us in this action. 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. Horsburgh, Levi, Matoti, Barry and myself embarked on such a ‘drift’. We filled a car with petrol and headed into the Natal midlands, our only ‘goal’: to find the point represented by 33 degrees latitude and 33 degrees longitude on the map. We drove into unfamiliar towns and got lost. The point was never found, but then the goal had only been a veil for the ‘action’.

Though it refers specifically to a kind of ‘urban journey’ the concept can be applied to a more expanded notion of ‘drift’, that simply involves letting things happen without plan or intention. In conversation with Barry, he spoke about this action:

Barry: Do you remember that drive we went on one day?

Allen: Yes, in fact I was looking at some slides of that the other day. I wanted to talk about it in terms of *dérives*. Who came on that drive?

Barry: Aliza, Samkelo, Jay, you, myself and maybe even Rhett.

Allen: Why did we do it?

Barry: We were looking for the physical point where 33 degrees latitude met with 33 degrees longitude on the map. I think that the point represented some kind of vortex or ‘energy’. It was somewhere near Durban, well it was actually closer to Ixopo in fact. And maybe because of that, we were unable to find it. We did come across a petrol-station in the middle of ‘nowhere’, where this attendant spoke French.

Allen: Even though our aim was to find this point on the map, it was the journey itself that was significant. It was like looking for the Holy-Grail.

Barry: Yes, and we got lost. Lost in the Natal Midlands. I remember us stopping and asking some locals for directions and Jay threw an angel covered in honey into the velt.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Barry, Allen; Interview 10, Telephone call, AT&T, Feb 16, 1999



QUASI-STELLA OBJECTS
Multi-media audio-visual performance at Jam & Co Jazz Club
July 31, 1994

This event was described by Owens in her weekly arts and music report in the *Mail & Guardian*. She says:

On Sunday night prepare for the unusual. The folks from the FLAT Gallery will be putting on a sound performance. Always experimenting with different concepts in all fields of art, the performance entitled *Quasi-Stellar Objects* is definitely not a get down and boogie type jol. Instead it is designed to unsettle the audience while at the same time inviting them to accompany the artists in their experimental journey, some of which will be improvised.¹⁷⁴

Quasi-Stellar Objects, a multi-media collaborative performance at Jam & Co Jazz Club was orchestrated by Bussy, Martyn, Horsburgh, Barry and myself. Jam 'n Co (previously Jam & Sons) was an Afro-Jazz cross-over club that we frequented. Hannalie Coetzee, the manager had been organizing some interesting programming for the club and approached us at the FLAT about doing a performance evening that incorporated all of our recent experiments. We agreed, and with the general concept of the US lunar landing in mind, we came up with the title *Quasi-Stellar Objects*. According to Barry,

“Quasi-Stellar Objects” was a term used in the book *Film as a Subversive Art* by Amos Vogel¹⁷⁵ to describe the farthestmost objects in the universe.¹⁷⁶

While many collaborative projects at the FLAT had up until that point been quite organic; the introduction of a larger audience, brought with it the need to plan and rehearse a specific set of actions. Barry and Horsburgh adopted a more ‘rigid’ approach in planning for the evening, which was at odds with a more improvisational concept favored by Martyn and myself. As tensions grew, the collaboration proved to be so strained that at some point Martyn chose to opt out of the event. Though the more ‘rigid’ concept was eventually adopted, in retrospect, we were still ill prepared for this event.

¹⁷⁴ Therese Owen, ‘Music’, *Mail & Guardian*, Johannesburg, July 29, 1994

¹⁷⁵ Amos Vogel; *Film as a Subversive Art*, New York, Random House, 1974, p. 14 - 15.

We did ultimately agree on a number of things. We determined that the first action at the event would be the playing of a pre-recorded audio piece based on my *Nina/Paul/Paul/Nina* experiment with looping phrases. Here, I recorded Barry and Horsburgh dueling, in stereo, the words ‘hand’ and ‘craft’. This was repeated and overlaid ad-infinitum until the words became unrecognizable. While this was playing, Barry laid down a huge sheet of paper in front of the stage and drew in the audience’s space. The filmmaker who had documented the *Internotional* moved amongst the performance shooting footage of us that was then screened through a live feed onto a television facing the audience. *Hand/Craft* went on for 12 minutes.

Bussy then, bringing forward some of his ideas from *Aural Hygiene*, began to play a repetitive set of chords on his viola. As before, I sampled him and re-fed the ‘info’ through a loop-tape live in front of the audience, until a cacophonic drone was reached.

Barry and Horsburgh next sat at two tables that had been set up on the stage with microphones and a typewriter¹⁷⁷. Once Bussy’s ‘set’ was complete, the two began reciting texts ‘tennis-style’ at each other in what resembled the process previously employed in the *Miracle Filter* tapes. I then sampled their conversation erratically and feed that through a loop back into the system. Horsburgh’s phrase: “That’s unthinkable! You can’t just destroy an entire race,”¹⁷⁸ for example, was repeated continuously with other samples as they continued with their recitations.

A friend of Barry’s, Willem Huysers, was staying with us at that time, and he contributed a very ‘bad’ version of a Doors song to the programme. Though Martyn had pulled out from the project initially, he was in the audience, and attempted to join in by banging on a table.

The performance was loosely inspired by a disk that we had found documenting the US space programmes of the 60s. Throughout the entire evening, the performance was perforated with comments from “Houston”. It was noisy attempt at poetry, on stage.

The oddity of our presenting such a performance at this Afro-Jazz club was immediately evident to us when we arrived to see that a professional ‘sound engineer’ had been hired. Our obvious displacement was further heightened when a black Englishman, who had come to the bar looking for authentic ‘ethnic music’, was confronted with us. He shouted throughout the entire performance, that he did not come all this way to see “racist white people perform this western crap”.

¹⁷⁶ Barry, Allen; Interview 10, Telephone call, AT&T, Feb 16, 1999.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

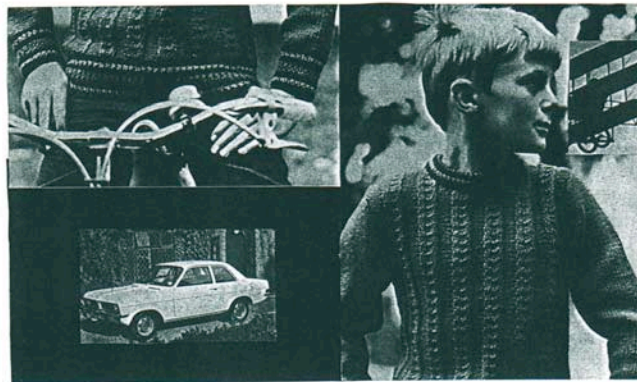
¹⁷⁸ Quasi-Stellar Objects; *FLAT Recordings*, Tape 32, Durban, FLAT, July 31, 1994.

This explosion, unsettling as it might have seemed was an honest and vibrant reaction to our presence, and in a sense contributed to the unpredictable chaotic state that we welcomed. However, more destructive tensions had been forming within the FLAT group, and the fabric of our community was breaking down. It would never be the same and we would not perform collaboratively again at the FLAT.

quasi - stellar objects

"...fluctuates erratically..."
 "...distant objects..."
 "...unprecedented manner..."

audio/visual performance
 tomas barry/brendon bussy/siemon
 allen/jay horsburgh/rhett martin



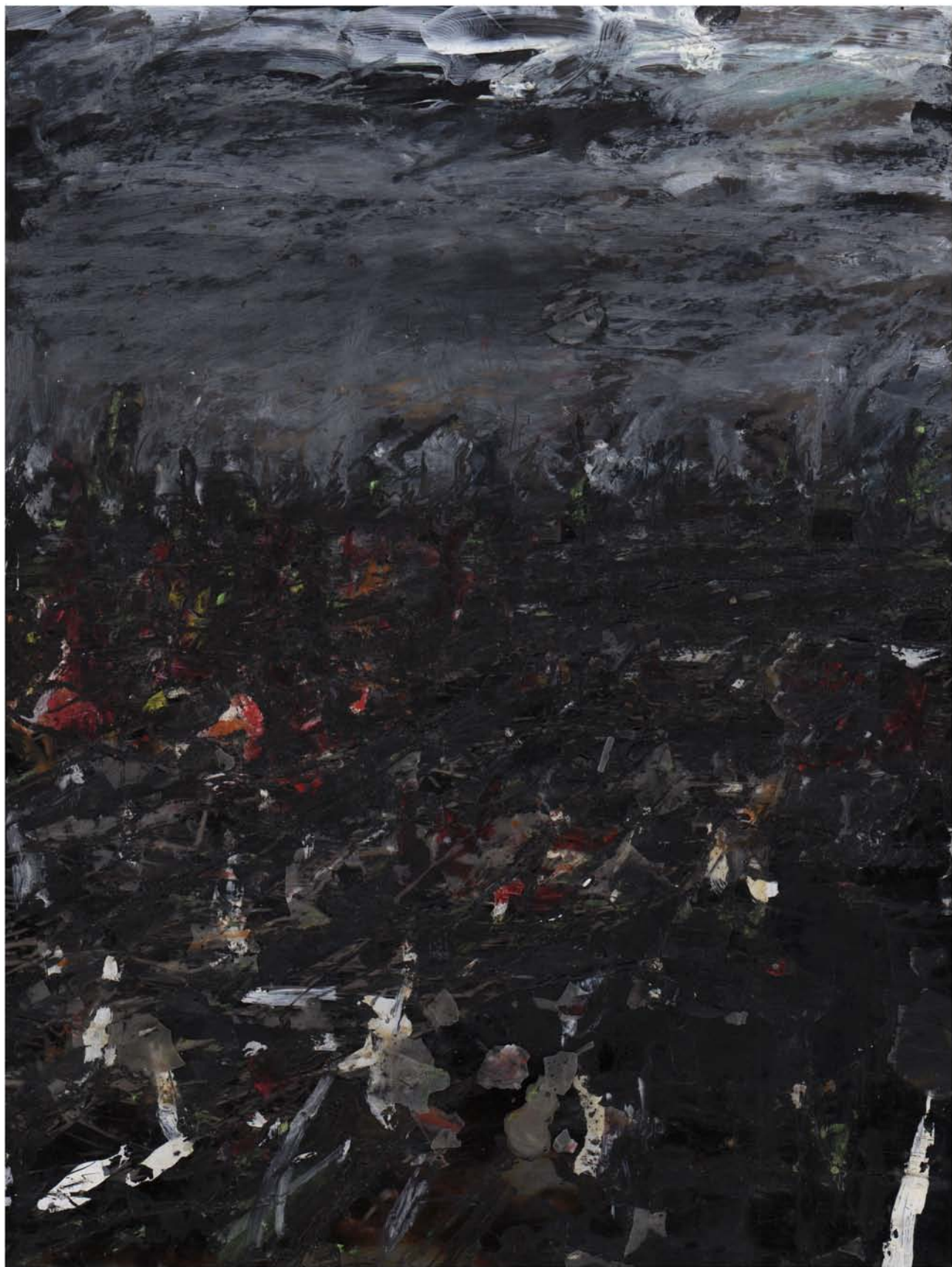
sunday 31 july 8:00pm £5/£3.

jam and co. 1 west st.



Although we did not play 'music' at the event, nor were we musicians or even a 'band', this scene was typical of our rehearsals at the FLAT at that time. If you like, we were a parody of a band. From left to right: Barry, Horsburgh, Martyn & myself, 1994

Above: The poster for the performance, 1994



CLINTON DE MENEZES, wax & paint on black & white photograph, 1992.
For unknown reasons, the work on this FLAT exhibition was not documented. This image shows De Menezes' process in an earlier work.

JEROME MKIZE, CLINTON DE MENEZES ***August 12, 1994***

This exhibiton was originally organized by Carol Gainer and Clinton De Menezes. When Gainer later pulled out Jerome Mkize, a painting student at the Technikon chose to exhibit with De Menezes.

De Menzes continued to work with collage and large earth-coloured, abstract landscapes, while Mkize exhibited a number of big drawings. These massive charcoal on paper works resembled satirical cartoons. In my telephone conversation with Barry, we discussed this work.

Allen: Were you at the Jerome Mkize and Clinton De Menezes exhibition?

Barry: Yes and in fact I was speaking with Trueman Myaka about that the other day. I asked him whether he knew where Jerome was. But he didn't know.

Allen: What work did Jerome put up for that exhibition?

Barry: He made extremely large drawings on brown paper. I think they could have been almost two meters wide by two meters high. One of the works consisted of a figure that had the head of an antelope (or reindeer) and the body of a human. And this figure was giving birth to a person in a speech bubble.

Allen: What do you think he was implying by using this imagery?

Barry: Before he put the work up in the FLAT, I remember attending a crit of his work at the Tech. During that, he had said that he was dealing with dream imagery; that these images were based directly on a dream that he had had. They were very Shamanistic. He also mentioned that the work represented or was a metaphor for a rebirth into a new democracy.

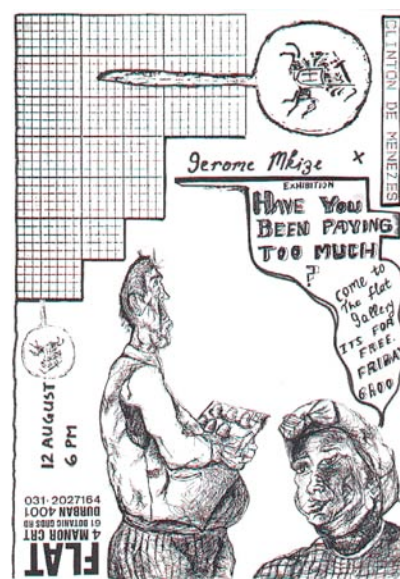
Allen: What else can you say about the work?

Barry: The works were very monochromatic. He used a lot of brown and dark greens.

Allen: What about Clinton's work on this exhibition.

Barry: I could be wrong here, but I think he had those very large, abstract landscape paintings. The earthy ones.¹⁷⁹

Exhibition poster, 1994



¹⁷⁹ Barry, Allen; Interview 10, Telephone call, AT&T, Feb 16, 1999.



RUAN HOFFMAN, mail-art, 1994.
Hoffman, a Pretoria-based artist and friend of Barry's had sent to the FLAT a number of composite artworks in the mail.



The FLAT inbetween exhibitions, 1994.
 From left to right: Tamlyn Martin, myself, Horsburgh, Willem Huysers, Timothy Mlambo & his brother. Huysers, Mlambo & his brother were all staying at the FLAT with Barry & I at this time.

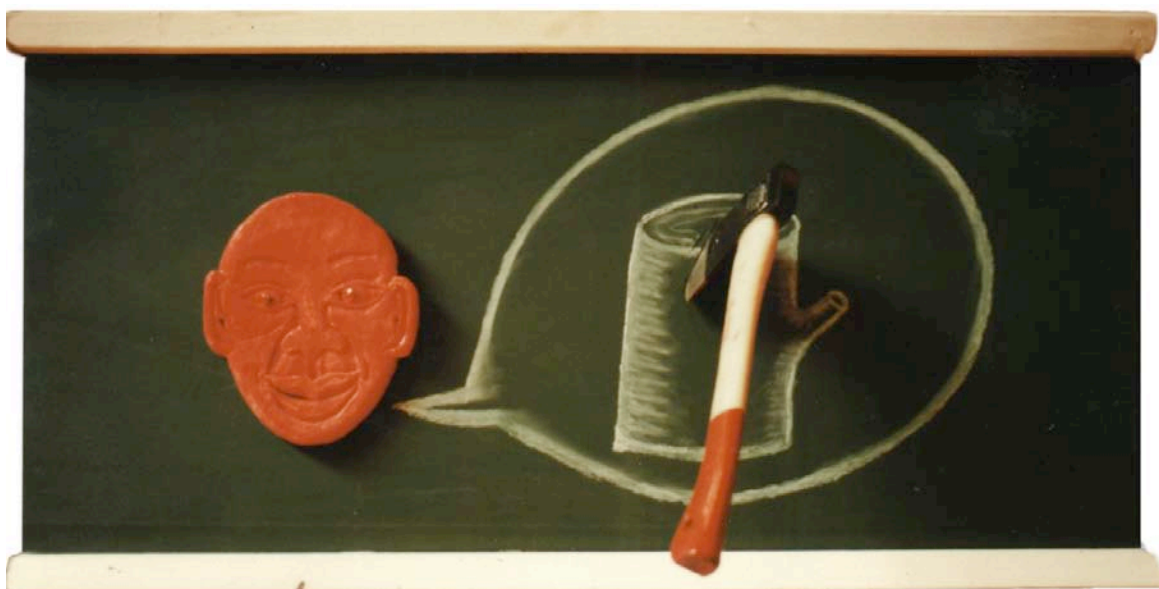


THOMAS BARRY, 'Cultural Desk', 1994
 Barry's "magnus opus", this collection of found objects, 'junk' and 'valuables', was exhibited at the Technikon Natal Art Gallery towards the end of 1994. Barry had accumulated much of the material from various sources (most notably the street) and stored them 'display-like' in his room. Many of Barry's student peers at that time questioned the fact that Barry exhibited this kind of work, because they felt that he had literally transposed the contents of his bedroom into the exhibition space, and indeed he had.

FORM OF THE FUTURE
Durban Art Gallery
August 10, 1994

Form of the Future was an important exhibition in that it marked the first efforts of the Durban Art Gallery to show younger artists from the region. Hermanides had approached the DAG a year earlier to inquire if they would exhibit his work. When they declined, he spoke to Andries Botha, who was on the DAG board at that time. Through Botha's efforts, the DAG agreed to an exhibition, which would be a historical survey of all those associated past and present with the Sculpture Department at the Technikon, including the then senior students. This included most of the artists who had been involved with the FLAT and indeed the majority of work exhibited had been previously shown at the FLAT.

It was an important shift for the DAG, not only in terms of the inclusion of younger artists, but also the exhibition of new genres. The DAG would later develop the *Red-Eye* Event, an experimental program that included installation and performance.



THOMAS BARRY, axe, chalk-board, lifebuoy soap, chalk, 1994

GROUP DRAWING EXHIBITION ***August 18, 1994***

Originally proposed by the occupants of a commune on Berea Road, this group exhibition/installation of drawings evolved through a rather comical series of misadventures. As the exhibition date approached, few of the commune ‘artists’ had prepared any drawings, and as the event had been advertised in our flyer we were forced to look for art elsewhere. A Scottish artist, Anthony Scullion, who was visiting Durban, supplied most of the work for show and saved the day.

Scullion’s drawings, which numbered more than twenty were hung not only on the walls but the ceiling as well. Most featured a central figure on a simple ground. These ‘characters’ were modeled and weighty, but also distorted, their gestures expressive.

Scullion later designed the cover for, South African band, Urban Creep’s 2nd album and exhibited widely in Johannesburg and Cape Town.



The Ricciotti Ensemble playing on the streets of Durban, 1994

RICCIOTTI ENSEMBLE

October 7 – 10, 1994

The original Ricciotti Ensemble, from which this SA group took its name, was a 25 year old Dutch street orchestra. This later incarnation was organized by Libbie du Toit in Johannesburg and Brendon Bussy in Durban, and its aim was articulated in this statement from the group:

The aim of this ensemble is to play to audiences outside the established concert podia. The musicians consist of music students, young professionals and good amateurs from across the country. The repertoire range from Classical to Contemporary.

October 1994 marks the birth of the South African Ricciotti ensemble and forthcoming there will be a tour organised every holiday.¹⁸⁰

The group's mission was to bring various musicians from around the country together and to then take this ensemble 'to the streets'. As Bussy was involved, and Barry was their contact in Durban, he organized for them to rehearse at the FLAT. At that time, we had all moved out of the FLAT in an attempt to make the entire FLAT into a gallery. They not only rehearsed at the FLAT, but also prepared meals and were offered the FLAT for lodging.

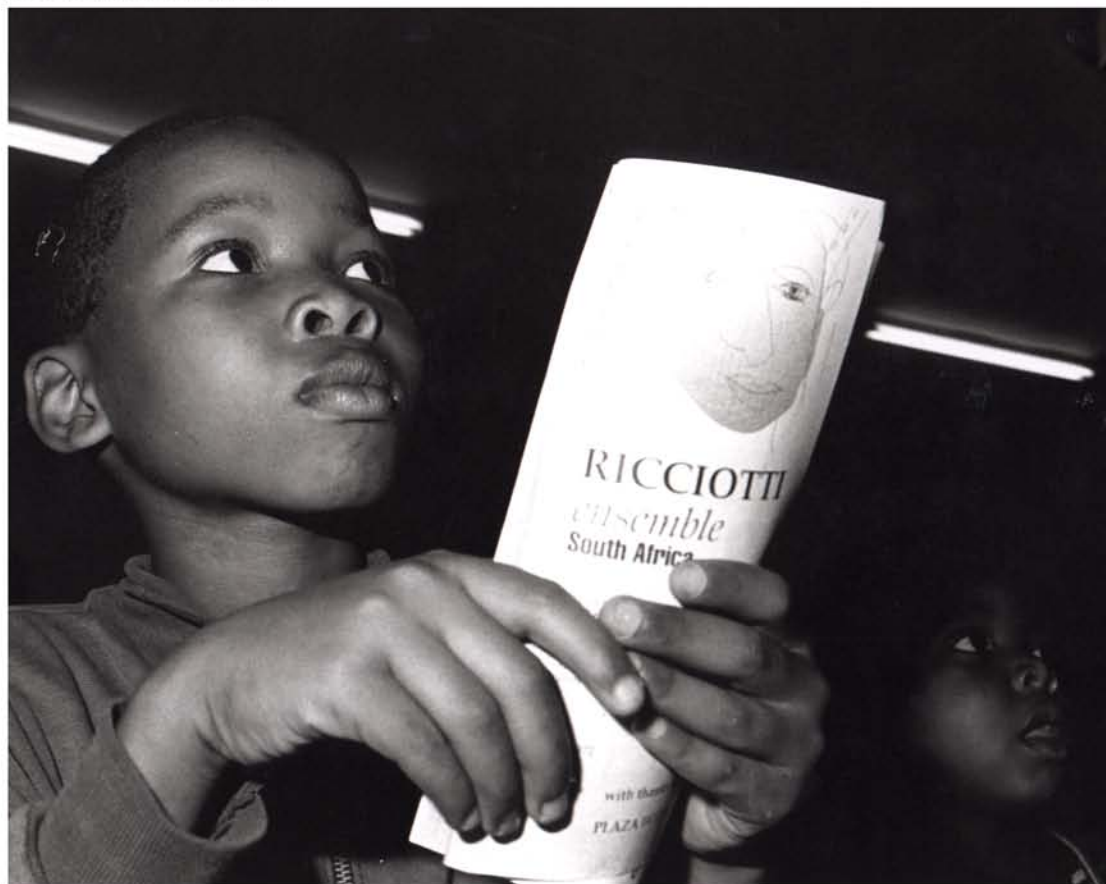
The ensemble played in a variety of venues in Durban. These included performances on the street, various folk and rock clubs, and in a music hall in Umlazi township. The ensemble was structured in such a way that they invited anyone to join in their music playing and so was an open-ended group of musicians. In Umlazi, Thami Jali and a group of gumboot dancers became a part of the ensemble.

As with previous events, such as the beader's workshop or Sam Ntshangase's school children's day in the gallery, the FLAT again operated as a 'community center', providing a space as needed. This time as a rehearsal site.

¹⁸⁰ The Ricciotti Ensemble; pamphlet, Durban, Oct 1994.



Ricciotti Ensemble leaflet, 1994



The audience, 1994



The Ricciotti Ensemble on the streets of Durban, 1994



The Ricciotti Ensemble at the Folk Club, Plaza Hotel, 1994

FAIZA FAYERS, NIRVANA RANJITH, LENE TEMPLEHOFF
Three Women Artists and a Dome
October 14, 1994

This exhibition took place on the FLAT's first birthday, and was significant in that the artists were primarily affiliated with the University of Durban Westville (UDW). Contact between the UDW and Technikon had historically had not been strong and so the FLAT provided at this time a kind of meeting ground for the artists associated with the two institutions.

It was proposed by Lene Templehoff, who was a sculpture lecturer at UDW and had been a student at Maritzburg University as well as at the Technikon foundry. She exhibited with two senior printmaking students from UDW, Faiza Fayers and Nirvana Ranjith, using the entire FLAT space.



Left: Faiza Fayers & Nirvana Ranjith at the FLAT, 1994. Right: Lene Tempelhoff with, amongst others, Trueman Myaka, Horsburgh, Tsietsi Matibako, Nancy Thomson & Jethro, 1994.

TOCSIN
University of Natal – Durban
October 1994

Organized by Matthias Schneider-Hollek, Melissa Marrins and John Roome; this was a collaboration between composition students from the University of Natal (UND) and Fine Art students from Technikon Natal. Schneider-Hollek, from Germany, was a visiting composition lecturer at the UND at that time, and Marrins who knew Schneider-Hollek acted as the liaison between the two institutions. Roome was responsible for organizing the Technikon students.

The FLAT was approached to participate in discussions and meetings and to get involved with the event. Though this was not at all a FLAT project, the stage had been set by events such as the *Internotional* and our performance at Jam & Co. More experimental performance work in Durban seemed to be ‘catching on’, at that time and many of the people involved in this event were or had been part of the FLAT, including Paterson, Marrins, Barry, Mansfield and Martyn from the Technikon Fine Art department; and UND composition student Tione Scholtz.

Meijer announced in the paper:

Tonight at 7pm fine art students from Technikon Natal and composition students from Natal University are collaborating in TOCSIN, a multi-media event. This performance piece will take place at the Howard College Theatre on the campus of Natal University and thereabouts.¹⁸¹

These students proposed a collaborative ‘happening’ on the campus of the University of Natal, at the Howard College Theater. This was a perfect setting, because the large cylindrical, double-tiered space, with its many side rooms, was not only acoustically ideal, but offered an active site for the participants. I was initially involved, but later opted not to take part. However, on the evening of the event, I brought along the ‘Miracle Filter’ (cassette recorder) and began to actively record the events as they unfolded. In a sense, I too became a performer and a participant in the entire process. In my recording I interviewed many individuals in the large audience, asking them their opinions of the show. Many spoke positively to the fact that Technikon and University students were collaborating together, but other non-art or non-music students, who were studying nearby in the library, negatively expressed a concern over the excessive noise.

¹⁸¹ Marianne Meijer; Art Beat, *The Daily News*, Durban, Oct 1994.

The evening was conceived as a 'multiple happening', with many activities and performances occurring simultaneously throughout the building. In one hallway, four amped performers including Marrins made 'noise' by scratching sand-paper against different surfaces while beating on various percussive instruments. In front of them, Barry meticulously and methodically cleaned the floor for the entire evening. As he removed the dust, his cleaning efforts eventually produced a shiny (medical) cross in the centre of the floor. Martyn participated by sleeping on a mattress for the entire show. Mansfield, who was nowhere to be found for most of the evening, had been hidden in a box. He suddenly appeared out of the box, his body painted gold.

In a small room under the stair-case, Marrins had created a disturbing installation from pornographic material, and in another room, painting students covered each other with paint. They then 'painted' a large canvass with their bodies, recalling Yves Klein's performances. In another space, two composition students played ping-pong, while recording and projecting the sound. Scholtz in a space adjacent set up a 'jazz-rock' band and played a number of his noise-jazz-rock-fusion pieces reminiscent of the work of John Zorn. Pre-recorded and augmented sound bytes, composed by Paterson and Schneider-Hollek, also filtered throughout the entire space.

Other than my 'interview' recordings, Paterson's minimal compositions for voice remain the only surviving document of the event and appear on the CD - *FLAT Recordings*. In a later interview with Paterson, I asked him about this work:

Allen: Can you describe your input into this event?

Paterson: I made an installation about the monotony of process art and music.

Allen: Could you talk about the ideas you were working with in this text/audio piece?

Paterson: The piece just followed the structure of any audio or written text. "One thing after another". Even if I tried to deviate from this pattern one thing still followed on from the next.

Allen: Is it significant that the text is read by people other than yourself? Like a composer.

Paterson: I think you are getting the picture, Siemon. The work echoed its surroundings, the goings on etc. I think in the context of the event the work disappeared, which I personally enjoyed. Very much like my 'thought houses'. It worked quite well although I felt that by having the performance in a sequence, it drew attention away from the anonymity of the art-work. Draw your own conclusions.

Allen: What was the piece's function in relation to the rest of the stuff going on? Was all the audio principally your work or were there others?

Paterson: Simon and Jay worked on the audio, I just gave them a rough idea of my piece and they came up with the rest. I did however ask for it to be repetitive in nature.¹⁸²

Paterson's work, which was composed with a number of texts, was recorded by Schneider-Hollek. The recording begins with some of Hollek's electronic works and then proceeds to Paterson's compositions. Comprised of words sampled from mathematical or philosophical concepts, these compositions are intended to be highly minimal and only slightly suggestive. The voices in the actual recordings are not that of Paterson, but rather other people including some music students and Horsburgh.

¹⁸² Paterson, Allen; Interview 7, snail-mail, April 1998.

JEFFREY BRANDT
A Menagerie of Broken Thoughts Disciples
October 26, 1994

Jeff Brandt, a second year student at Technikon Natal, presented an exhibition titled *A Menagerie of Broken Thoughts Disciples*. Shown were a collection of recent works in steel, stone and wood.

RHETT MARTYN
November 23, 1994

Martyn, although heavily involved in the FLAT's more 'ephemeral' projects such as the audio recordings and performances, had always expressed reservations about mounting a solo exhibition at the FLAT. At the time that he conceded, he had been working on a series of extremely rough figures in steel and plaster, and these became the basis for his exhibition. The jagged steel infrastructures violently jutted through the plaster and gave these life-sized humanoid, forms an expressive quality. In the interview with Frost, she spoke about the work:

I would read them as expressions in an expressionistic language - of angst, anxiety, dread. The metal structures coming through the skin are reference to skeleton and bodily perforation. But the inside is so sore that it must penetrate to the outside.¹⁸³

SCULPTURE WORKSHOP EXHIBITION
December 2, 1994

Organized by Kim Goodwin, an artist who instructed at the Technikon; this show marked the final exhibition at the FLAT. Goodwin approached us on behalf of the students in his night-time sculpture classes, and when we agreed these students mounted an exhibition of portrait busts made in his class.

¹⁸³ Frost, Allen; Interview 12, Richmond, Feb 18, 1999.

FLAT BURN-OUT

January 18, 1995

Though the FLAT was beginning to quietly wind down, the strain of the constant demand on its occupants beginning to take a toll, its ending was characteristically dramatic. By the 3rd of January 1995, we had already given notice to vacate the flat at the end of January. Barry had moved to an abandoned house near Crart Avenue, and I into Berea Court. Horsburgh was leaving Durban and had planned to remain at the FLAT until his flight to Cape Town. About one week before the final date on our lease and one day prior the flight, he left a candle burning while going out for drinks. Barry and I drove past the FLAT just in time to see the fire engines and the firemen putting out the last of the flames. It was quite a finale. Ironically, all that remained of Horsburgh's belongings was his passport, something he regarded as a divine act.

