LETTER AND EVENT
CONTENTS

PREFACE
CARLOS BASUALDO  6

INTRODUCTION
STEVEN RAND  7

ARTISTS
CHRISTINE BORLAND  8
ANNIKA ERIKSSON  10
DOUGLAS GORDON/
RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA  12
RENÉE GREEN  14
HENRIK HÅKANSSON  15
CARSTEN HÖLLER  18
MATS LEIDERSTAM  20
OLAF NICOLAI  22
ANN-SOFI SIDÉN  24
JAAN TOOMIK  26
GITTE VILLESEN  28
ELIN WIKSTRÖM  30

LETTER AND EVENT
MARIA LIND  33

BIOGRAPHIES  46

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  54
PREFACE

Over the past three decades internationalism has been recast as a sort of bad word. Gone seems to be the times of the Socialist International, where the myth of a gathering of wills that would transcend national boundaries was forged under the signs of freedom and emancipation. Nowadays, the connotations of the term have become tainted by the maneuvers of Capital. In the recent history of architecture, for example, the International Style ended up being everything but a call for democracy, imposing instead models of urban standardization that were applied equally to the very different conditions of the North and the South, the Center and the Periphery. Indeed, the International Style is somehow a potent signifier for what internationalism came to mean: nothing but a modern avatar of the colonial expansion, this time disguised behind the fancy drapes of contemporary culture.

The word “internationalism” today seems to have been replaced by a newer, more fashionable term, “Globalism.” In French, two different words are used to describe the existence of a system of communication that operates on a global scale: one is globalization, which refers to the movements of the market; the other is mondialization, which applies to the possibility of the emergence of a (future) global culture. This terminology may be more precise, but it is eventually misleading: it may hide or soften the strong connection between economy and culture that characterizes our contemporary world.

The International Program at Apex Art attempts to operate in that space defined in between globalization and mondialization, by questioning their relations and the very possibility of their coexistence. The format of the Program is open in terms of organizing performances, art exhibitions and lectures. Its goal is to problematize the very notion of internationalism through artistic practices and, specifically, through curatorial work. The fact that the Program takes place in New York enables it to pose these questions more systematically and, as we hope, thoroughly. For what could be more challenging than to think about a phenomenon in the very place that originated it?

Questions about location and displacement, about origin and influence, are relevant issues to the Program. But its goal is not to arrive at a univocal solution. The very strategy of problematizing these notions through an alternative praxis aims less at obtaining answers than at developing a method of inquiry, one that could hopefully be experienced and exercised in an ever-changing and experimental manner.

Carlos Basualdo, International Program Coordinator, Apex Art C.P.
INTRODUCTION

Blueberries in January

Art. This is a difficult time to understand what it is, or what it means. We can still hang some of it on the wall, but increasingly it is co-operative (or uncooperative) and narrative, containing certain statements and observations of the world not committed to written words but frozen as a vignette.

If the state of society is said to be reflected in its humor, then perhaps there is an analogy in art. Where we once expected a beginning (circumstance), a middle (observation) and an end (resolution), we now settle for circumstance and observation. Conclusions can, sometimes only be speculative. Too often we see defense of and commitment to an idea as ego-driven and we respond aggressively. Art seeks to distill a concern, prodding the viewer; it tries to separate, intensify and define the experience, but often offers no resolution.

Maria Lind has done an impressive job of selecting poignant works in order to reveal multiple facets of this consideration. These works isolate and highlight cooperation, group dynamics, reevaluation of the environment, integration, evolution and globalization. We are given more issues than answers to consider.

LETTERANDEVENT mirrors society in its decentralization, reflecting this tendency toward a form of agoraphobia. Like the Internet, it's everywhere and nowhere at the same time. There are still places where children who are intentionally deformed for a family's survival coexist with cell phones and environmentally sensitive automobiles. People eat food that only hours before was halfway around the world. We are running out of third world countries, but not third world people.

Most compelling is the issue regarding how these works from other countries highlight the cultural differences that do remain. For example, in some cities one can safely involve people off the street in events because a sense of community controls the environment; in others this can create deadly results (or at least the ubiquitous paranoia of cities). This poses the question of how culture in general, and art in particular, integrate and become part of society. Is art as we know it imploding or will it confront the larger issues of a society in apparently increasing isolation? This show addresses some of these considerations, effectively involving the artist, the viewer and society.

Steven Rand,
Director, Apex Art C.P.
CHRISTINE BORLAND
INSIDE POCKET
JACKETS, COATS AND GUNS 1997

9mm Beretta Pistol

PHOTO: INSIDE POCKET DETAIL, PRAGUE 1995
ANNIKA ERIKSSON
TWO MEN AND A SHEEP
THREE SURVEILLANCE VIDEOS 1995-96
« cinéma liberté »
DOUGLAS GORDON
RIRKIRT TIRAVANIJA
CINÉMA LIBERTÉ/BAR LOUNGE
SCREENING OF FILMS CENSORED IN THE U.S. AND A BAR,
10 WARREN STREET, NEW YORK
RENÉE GREEN
RETURN
INSTALLATION WITH BOOK, PHOTOGRAPHS AND INVITATIONS. A BOOK
PARTY AT ART RESOURCES TRANSFER, 504 WEST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK
SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 1997

"TRAVELERS WHO DO NOT GO ANYWHERE,
DO NOT NEED MAPS"

You are cordially invited to attend a book party for the
U.S. pre-release of:

Certain Miscellanies: Some Documents

By Renée Green

Published by De Appel Foundation (Amsterdam) and DAAD (Berlin)

At Art Resources Transfer 504 West 22nd Street (212) 691-5656

On Saturday, April 26, 1997, 3 to 6pm

This event is part of "Letter & Event," an exhibition curated by
Maria Lind. The other component of this work, entitled "Return," can be
viewed at Apex Art C.P., 291 Church Street, New York (212) 431-5270
CHARACTER PROFILE:
The character is often visibly detectable as a female with brown skin and dreadlocks. She was born in the U.S. and speaks English as her native tongue, but she studied French and in brief exchanges can seem to be from some French speaking place. Where she might be from is very dependent upon the language she speaks. She’s been asked at various times and in various places whether she’s from Martinique, Puerto Rico, Guyana, Jamaica, some island near Venezuela, Paris, London, and New York. She’s been told by a Senegalese that she resembles a girl he knew in Senegal and by a Mexican that she looks just like his cousin. She is from the metropolis, in her case New York.
HENRIK HÅKANSSON
ALIEN NATION
(TENODERA AVIDIFOLIA SINENSIS)
INSTALLATION WITH PLANTS, FRUIT FLIES, MEAL WORMS,
SUPER WORMS, PRAYING MANTISES AND A CONTROL SYSTEM
Matts Leiderstam
Returned, the Rambles (Spring or Earthly Paradise)
After a Painting by Nicolas Poussin 1997
Oil on canvas and an easel, 40x55 cm

Photo: Returned, Hampstead Heath 1997
OLAF NICOLAI
SMALL INTERIOR FOR VOYAGERS
FOLIAGE AND BAG
INSTALLATION IN THE GROUND OF LIEUTENANT PETROSINO SQUARE

GREEN SERPENTINO WITH ENGRAVED FLORAL PATTERN AFTER PHILIP OTTO RUNGE, 3X3X3 CM

PHOTO: SMALL INTERIOR FOR VOYAGERS 1991
2. INT BEDROOM NIGHT Just Before Dawn

A dimly lit, cluttered bedroom. In front of a window an elderly woman RUTH FIELDING (65) is asleep. Her hand is next to her head on the pillow. A cracked muddy HAND reaches up and touches Ruth's hand.

Ruth wakes up with a start. She turns the bedside light on. The hand is gone. Ruth gets out of bed.

RUTH (to herself)
Oh my God! I had the strangest dream. Look!

Ruth looks at her shaking hands.

Fade-in the amplified SOUNDS of a clicking clockwork followed by 3 rings from an old grandfather clock somewhere in the house.

At her bedside table there is a PHOTOGRAPH of her husband with two small children standing outside a University.

Ruth picks up a small tape recorder from her bedside table. She hits "record" and speaks into the microphone.

Fade-in the amplified SOUNDOF crickets.

RUTH (to the recorder)
The time is now 3.05 AM. I woke up. I dreamt that I was a newly born calf, my brown and white patched skin still wet and warm. It's a sunny day. I'm standing on a winding dirt road in a landscape of fresh green hills. My mother who is a perfectly normal human is talking to me. I'm looking at myself and at another calf standing next to me on shivering legs. I ask her why she hasn't told me that I have a twin sister and that I was born a calf. My mother looks at me reproachful, and says "But don't you understand..." her voice filled with an underlaying motive that I absolutely don't get. End of recording. The time is now 2 AM.

Ruth hits "stop" and puts her tape recorder on the bedside table. She picks up a pill box and brings a few PINK PILLS to her mouth and swallows them with some stale coffee from a half full mug.

ANN-SOFI SIDÉN
QM ("— I THINK I CALL HER QM")
35MM FILM ON VIDEO BY ANN-SOFI SIDÉN AND TONY GERBER. 1997
SCRIPT BY ANN-SOFI SIDÉN
Would you come out of the house again and get in the car? Oh yes! Fine!

It started right away, yes it is actually so, did you notice that? I had to speak.
up on it, otherwise it will start on its own as soon as it sees me

GITTE VILLESEN
“WHO GETS THE FOOD?”
“WILLY GOES FOR A DRIVE”

VIDEOS 1995

It's got humor
ELIN WIKSTRÖM
OH, HELL!
BOXES AND UNLIMITED NUMBERS OF PEOPLE
THE LITERAL IMPULSE

"What if doubt reaches deep into your heart" reads the red inscription on the pink mug from which I sip my morning coffee. It is a line from an old Swedish hit song. I don’t know how the rest goes. All the same, I know that it is buried somewhere deep in my memory. The mug is a work by Annika Eriksson, first shown at ICA Malmöborgs, an exhibition held in a Malmö supermarket in 1993. The colors of the mug clash, and it struck those who saw it on the shelves at ICA as slightly bizarre. The coffee runs quickly from it, down my throat. I start to write.

The key word for much contemporary art is “reality.” I am not thinking of the traumatic return of the real in American art which Hal Foster discusses but the one where the relationship between art and everyday life is being concretized, and direct interaction between the work and the viewer is emphasized. It often takes the form of pseudo-scientific projects which seem to have taken over the role of subjective storyteller from documentary photography. Concepts such as presence, experience, and authenticity are being restored in this context but not necessarily subjected to naive idealizations. Still, we are talking about generations which have grown up with mediation as a fact and consumer society as the norm. They have learnt the postmodernist lesson of the problems
of communication in general, and the politics of representation in particular, and about the dubiousness of the grand narratives. Yet the desire to create relationships and engage in interchanges, to build up and paste together rather than taking apart and polarizing, is unmistakable.

One might say that the urge to concretize that is often present to investigate the real here, and which characterizes the nineties, is the counterpart of that which Craig Owens called the allegorical impulse of the eighties. The representational model most often used in this literal impulse is the indexical sign relation. According to C.S. Peirce’s sign theory, an index is based on the fact that the relationship between the sign and that which is designated, between the image and that which is depicted, is physical in nature. They have been in direct contact, and depend on each other the way an imprint of a foot depends on the foot and the weathervane on the wind. The most common form of index is probably the photograph, where that which is depicted makes an imprint on the film, where reality so to speak touches its representation.

In the essays “Notes on the Index: Part 1” and “Notes on the Index: Part 2,” Rosalind Krauss notes that the common denominator of the pluralism of the seventies with, e.g., body art, conceptualism, video, performance, and site-specific installations, is not style. What unites them is rather that they operate like an indexical sign, and that they are dependent on photography, primarily as documentation. According to Krauss, the first to see the connection between the indexical sign and photography was Marcel Duchamp, whose photographs and ready-mades are both a kind of section carved out of the continuum of reality. She even maintains that the index is what unites the different ideas in his practice, pointing out that he used to refer to his ready-mades as snapshots.

At the same time as Duchamp is a prominent figure in the postmodernist questioning of unity, authenticity and presence, his interest in the index has a certain bearing on the romance between the so-called contextual art, or relational aesthetics, and reality. As in his own works, and again in the seventies – but also in Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, conceptual art, and minimalism (Arman, Daniel Spoerri, Alison Knowles, Ben Vautier, Gordon Matta-Clark, Douglas Huebler and others) – it is today a matter of taking advantage of
causal connections offered by the index: it has a special ability to
literalize in time and space. But this literalness is often combined
with a twist of fiction in this art of the nineties, with shams, inventions
and free interpretation of facts. Like all evidence, the index may be
manipulated, and it is seldom placed in the service of grand utopias
and comprehensive redefinition. Instead, it is a matter of small scale
projects, close to everyday life and colored by social involvement
and private experience, of a wish to give a personal imprint without
necessarily feeding the cult of the Artist.

THE RELATIVE PERIPHERIES
When discussing this contextual art, the social, economic, political
and cultural context is of central importance. The very name sug-
gests that both mental and physical contexts are actually crucial.
In the debate over the last few decades about large and small
contexts, about the power relations between center and periphery,
the state of the local – or relative – periphery has been overlooked,
for obvious reasons. The center-periphery paradigm has rightly
been frequently both discussed and questioned. However, a quick
glance at today’s global picture, as well as at the general artistic
and intellectual situation, shows that in spite of geopolitical changes
and the development of information technology, it is too soon to
dismiss it. It is still useful as a tool, but it needs to be redefined.
One way of doing this could be to focus on the relative peripheries.

The cultural and geographic peripheries of the West – such as
Eastern Europe, Scotland, Scandinavia, Mexico, and Canada – are
obviously not thought of as part of the center of the world, but
neither can they lay claim to be the victims of the same discrimina-
tion and imbalance as that which characterizes the relationship
between north and south: they belong neither to the inner circle of
the apparatus with the power to legitimize, nor are they sufficiently
subordinate to warrant special consideration. They are, in other
words, privileged and marginalized at the same time.

Even though these “cousins from the countryside” have been
more or less ignored, they are nevertheless asked to be more
flexible than the “absolute” peripheries; it is often said that “they
are very much alike” and they appear to share the center’s defintion
of both art and quality. Whenever the art of the “cousins” turns out
to deviate from these standards, it has both been thought of as different or been following partly its own tradition and rules, but has simply been regarded as a pale pastiche of the original. Any problems of translation have thus not been ascribed parallel criteria and interests, but have been seen as proof of poor quality: One is so close to the center that your individuality has been obscured in its shadow. This also applies to the problem of center-periphery within the sphere of cultural production in the centers themselves, whether it is concerning political engagement, gay culture or feminist issues.

To shed light on those who already are in some sense privileged may understandably be seen as an unwarranted exercise – clearly, there are those who need it more. But such focus is far from only a self-assertive gesture – it can be of both political and theoretical interest. This peculiar – and sometimes rather schizophrenic – middle position to which the relative peripheries have been relegated, primarily during the last ten years, is interesting for cultural as well as for theoretical reasons. For it appears capable of embracing that which debates on multiculturalism often call for: an artistic practice in which local experience and global perspectives may coexist and interact, and often on terms dictated by the local context.

One can talk here about the contours of, if not a new model for a multicultural artistic activity then at least a thought-provoking example of a deliberate cultural hybridity which allows for both the local and the global, the specific and the general. Such hybrids are obviously not a new phenomenon, but it is only in the nineties that they have become more widespread. Their function and their importance have also changed in part. To the young generations in the West – whether center or periphery – the shared frames of reference are more numerous than ever and more comprehensive than only five years ago. The media revolution, with globalization and new information technology, is not just empty rhetoric to those who actually watch the same films and TV channels, receive the same news, music and clothes and read the same magazines.

**POINTS OF INTERSECTION**

But similarity also creates a need and room for that which is different. Those at the relative peripheries tend to utilize and refer to their own local cultures in natural ways – be they ethnic, economic,
social, or sexual. There is often a commitment and a personal voice here, and a vitality, where for instance, institutional critique does not have to be aggressive but may be delivered intelligently and with sensitivity. The local experience, as seen through the eyes of the individual, then blends with attitudes, languages and subjects shared by one or more generations at least semi-globally.

This is the background of the at once compelling and challenging cultural hybrid. Critical theory cherishes the hybrid as a concept for its contempt for purity and separatism, and hybridity is usually pointed to when identity, such as the abject and the fetish, is being discussed. Here we are mainly talking about an ideological and geopolitical hybrid, however, with a potential for instilling power in those who have been marginalized. They do not have to follow the dictates of the center, but know what they are. They acknowledge their difference, but do not put it on a pedestal. In this way you are able to speak the language of power, if you so desire, while building on your own specific experience and not being excluded. While the general balance of power is shifting towards the local, it also means that the peripheries are drawing closer to one another.

As the art of these relative peripheries begins to receive attention from the mainstream, the situation is beginning to resemble what existed when postmodernist defiance of authority made it possible for more women artists to emerge, allowing for feminist perspectives. The modernist concepts of art began to disintegrate, and more and more varied genres, styles and subjects gained acceptance. Something similar may be seen in Scandinavia, for example, subjective explorations with certain eccentric touches, founded in social and ecological concern, became topics and positions of relevance for entire generations. Such local variants may often find expression in the lingua franca of art – no longer a style, but both a subjective and conceptual position in which the indexical plays an important role.

There is however, like in the eighties a danger of idealization – theoretical openness should not be mistaken for immediate practical application. Learning from the fate of poststructurally influenced feminist art, it behooves us to be cautious. Repressive tolerance is not far away, eager to ghettoize – for feminism is never seen as more threatening than when it is integrated with other things and hard to identify. The commercially and otherwise exhausted centers
leave less room for maneuvering. The relative peripheries do, however, seem to possess an energy which the centers lack, an important distinction – and the contacts between them keep increasing.

It is therefore telling that there is in the art of the relative peripheries a parallel between the hybrid of global and local and the blending of concrete and abstract, of reality and fiction. The two strands cross. The middle position’s emphasis on the locally specific is clearing the way for the empirical, just as the specific is directed at the literal. The concrete relationship between art and life is emphasized. In both instances, it leads to a need and an urge in both artist and public for embodied experiences. It is at the points of intersection between the literal impulse and the relative peripheries that LETTERANDEVENT is taking place.

REALITY AND FICTION

If the balance has been tilted in the direction of the politics of representation within art and cultural criticism for some time, there is now a greater equilibrium. "Both" has become more common than "either-or". The artists represented in LETTERANDEVENT, however, often veer towards literalness and low-key experiments with human relations. A sense of starting anew, trying the discredited and even impossible, can be discerned.

Several of Christine Borland’s projects start from “the real thing” – found objets trouvé or cherchés laden with a past about which the viewer may only speculate. They often touch on issues of life and death, violence and crime, without depicting them directly. In From Life (1994) a real human skeleton, purchased from India through a business in London, was the starting point for an installation in which its identity was reconstructed with the aid of methods borrowed from medicine, archeology, criminology, and popular science. The resulting scraps of information, displayed dryly on a banner, were sparse but highly evocative: “Female, Asian, 5 feet 2 inches, age 25, at least one advanced pregnancy.” The most common handguns in New York form the departure point for Inside Pocket, consisting of used jackets and overcoats which are hung in empty storefronts. The handles of the handguns can be seen sticking out from specially constructed pockets. This and other indirect portraits of unknown people and places by Borland are
filled with brutality and poetics at the same time, they manage to simultaneously elicit opinion and imagination in the viewer.

Ann-Sofi Sidén’s art is also often based on actual events and phenomena, be they historical documents such as in Codex, where she used archival material about women who had been punished in Sweden from the middle ages until the nineteenth century, or objects left behind by someone, as in the various projects based on the life of the American psychiatrist Alice E. Fabian. By transforming and tightening this evidence, she simultaneously reconstructs and constructs a story. Technologies of control and power mechanisms, be they societal or individual, are at the core of Sidén’s work and the resulting existentialism is red hot. In the film QM (“I think I call her QM”) Dr. Ruth Fielding, a woman psychiatrist, encounters her own alter ego, the mysterious Queen of Mud, who pops up in Sidén’s various projects from time to time. She is at the same time prehistoric animal and space alien, paying a visit to earth dressed in only a thin layer of mud and is here subjected by the strange psychiatrist to various scientific and other experiments.

At the heart of Annika Eriksson’s art lies an interest in human relationships: between men and women, parents and children, young and old. Trivial incidents from daily life, which she intensifies so that they verge on the bizarre, form the basis for a body of work which is interactive in the sense that it can only be created with the help of others. Unlike much other relational art it is however, always given physical form, i.e. photography, video and objects. The origin of Two Men and a Sheep, executed in Stockholm (1995), Berlin (1995) and London (1996), was two men that the artist saw tenderly petting a sheep in a pen at the Day of Agriculture at Skansen Park. In Eriksson’s piece two actors were engaged to pet a sheep in a pen for four hours in an empty store or gallery before an audience, while being filmed by a surveillance camera. Thus, the men underwent a less heroic – but paradoxically more provocative – endurance test than those Chris Burden, i.e., designed for himself. Who shows more stamina – the one who can pet an animal for half a day without stopping, or the one who shoots himself in the arm? Furthermore this test of masculinity was financed by men in the local art community who donated 12 dollars each (65 men paid in Stockholm). Thereby a micro-economy was established in which
the financially inferior female artist allowed those more privileged to pay for putting themselves to the test.

The work of Renée Green centers on how identities – gendered, ethnic and social – are being formed and re-formed, especially by the (bad) habit of the West to project itself onto other cultures. She borrows from the methods of anthropology and history in order to study certain historical phenomena such as how the rarely discussed French slave trade has been glossed over, and the treatment of Josephine Baker. This is presented in highly complex installations containing objects, photographs, light, computers and text. Her work Import/Export Funk Office (1992) explores cultural import and export, especially German interest in Black American hip hop and the study of this phenomenon by a German music critic. Many of her projects involve physical as well as metaphorical travel and dislocation. Return is one of the projects within the framework of LETTERANDEVENT which is set outside the gallery. It consists of a discussion based on her book project Certain Miscellanies/Some Documents, held at the cozy Art Resources Transfer on 504 West 22nd Street in New York. It affords an opportunity to discuss with the artist mobility, both geographical and cultural, the notion of home, and how it has been affected by computer technology. As she herself writes, for many “home almost becomes where your modem is.”

The parallel worlds of Henrik Håkansson often seem better than our own, being designed to accommodate the insects and small animals to which they are home. Congo beetles, walking sticks, and frogs live there and they are part of his experiments in communication, which also include plants, often with the aid of music. His installation Frog for E.S.T. (eternal sonic trance) (1995) was a curious mixture of pet store and disco where he sought to establish contact with a group of tree frogs, which besides existing all over the world are considered unusually intelligent and are also ultra-sensitive to disturbances in their environment, with the aid of technomusic, played by a professional DJ. The natural thus encountered the artificial, but their meanings became the subject of a kind of switch: nature was sustained by artificial means, and the electronic music gave rise to concrete exchange. “The indoor-garden” Alien Nation (tenodera avidifolia sinensis), a microcosm with among other things
a hydroponic system and artificial light where praying mantises and their food chain are allowed to follow their natural cycle of development from birth to death, combine – as do many of his works – a certain boy scout naïveté with a serious study of the way nature functions and allows itself to be manipulated.

Jaan Toomik’s background in land art shines through both in his reference to nature’s cycles and in his use of the process-related and the ritualistic. His video installation Dancing Home (1995), containing a lone projection in a trapezoidal room, is a work in which mobility and travelling have been given an almost metaphysical dimension. A man dressed in warm clothes is dancing vigorously on the deck of a boat, accompanied by the monotonous thudding of the engine, which makes it sound like a kind of homemade techno. The still camera, the long duration of the shot and the manic dance of the man lend a certain meditative aspect to the work.

Psychological and metaphysical concerns, as well as overlappings between reality and fiction, also come together in Untitled (1996) which shows a religious procession in Tallinn in which the cuts are timed to coincide with the tolling of Orthodox church bells. When projected on the gallery window at night, the effect is a staccato and somewhat ghostly loop where the people are fixed in a circular movement.

The existentially colored video installations of Douglas Gordon are often based on a direct phenomenological experience, not unlike that provoked by minimalist sculpture. Large screens are placed in darkened rooms which you have to penetrate deeply in order to be able to see the projections. The films are taken both from popular culture and historical archives. In 24 Hour Psycho, for example, Hitchcock’s cultural icon is shown in slow motion and is made to last 24 hours, and 10ms-1, a medical documentary from World War I, shows a man paralyzed by shell shock. This too has been slowed down and has been cut, so that the short loop shows the man frozen in a perpetual fall and attempt to rise.

Together with Rirkrit Tiravanija he has set up Cinéma Liberté/Bar Lounge before on two previous occasions, in Montpellier and Rotterdam (both 1996). The New York version also consists of a combined bar and film lounge where Tiravanija is serving refreshments from the bar while Gordon presents a number of feature
films previously censored in the U.S. (The earlier versions contained films censored in France and Holland, respectively. The films censored in the latter country include family classic version Lassie...). In this relaxing setting, the audience is invited to hang out but also to reflect on both film as a frame of cultural reference and on the conflicts around free speech in, for instance, the U.S.

Tiravanija’s works are based on generosity and human exchange and his staged everyday activities, such as meals and places to meet, literally accomplish that which art ideally pretends to do – i.e. to be enriching for the viewer. These informal situations are usually being played out at art institutions, but in replicas of real rooms taken from the artist’s own life and often with a videofilm played on a TV in the background. At the Whitney Museum of American Art (1995), there was a full-sized facsimile in plywood of his New York gallery which contained musical instruments for the use of anyone wanting to jam, and Kölnischer Kunstverein (1996) contained a replica of his entire apartment open to the public 24 hours a day, five days a week.

There is always an element of psychosocial research and practical philosophy for action in the work of Elin Wikström. She stages social situations as well, directly based on first-hand experience and in which phenomena and concepts such as trust, empathy, hospitality and hope are explored. It is often represented as a value, economic or other, placed in circulation. What are we prepared to spend, in terms of money, time and energy? Is it possible to imagine a gift free from the obligation of gratitude? Rebecka is Waiting for Anna, Anna is Waiting for Cecilia, Cecilia is Waiting for Marie... (1994) consisted, i.e., of 20 women waiting for each other at a gallery in one day. The visitors saw a woman, sitting quietly at a table until another appeared and took over. The piece became a sort of chain of trust, alluding among other things to women’s willingness to invest time and money in others. This humanistic note is less apparent in Oh, Hell!. Here the concept is “Why be nice? Why not be cruel?”. A number of boxes, one filled with sand and the rest empty, are lifted out of the gallery and out into the street with the aid of the visitor. The reverse process is then repeated with the aid of passers-by in the street. While a literal test of helpfulness is taking place, it is at the same time a mischievousness.
The people passing by the Rambles in Central Park may also encounter something unexpected during **LETTERANDEVENT**. A small copy of Nicolas Poussin's *Spring or Earthly Paradise* has been left on an easel in this gay cruising area by Matts Leiderstam, who has made cruising his artistic method. *Returned, The Rambles* is thereby bringing the classical ideal landscape back to today's shepherds and their ground. The work of Leiderstam often draws parallels between art history and gay culture – both demand a knowledge of special symbols. It also involves a complex game with genres of art history such as Classicist and Romantic landscape painting, Victorian genre painting and Scandinavian applied arts and design from the fifties. *The Shepherds* (1994-96) for instance, uses several of those while thematizing the city park as heir to the ideal landscape and the sensual English park as sexual meeting place and arena of violence against gays. Cruising in art history, in museums and in books, he himself is flirting both with individuals in paintings and with manners of painting. With the use of subtle changes in his copies – be it raised eyes or a twist of the torso – he reveals hidden meanings.

Olaf Nicolai is interested in the relationship between nature and culture, especially the landscape as construction. Several of his works are based on the view of the German Romantics of nature as a projection screen for human passions. With the help of a botanist, he has for instance selected plants capable of thriving in an otherwise rather sterile museum setting and arranged them in a little garden, as if the botanical garden had been moved into the museum. His interest in nature/culture and memory come together in the discrete intervention in Lieutenant Petrosino Square, a neglected park at the corner of Lafayette Street, Kenmare Street and Cleveland Place. There he has placed a stone tablet sized 3x3x3cm, on which is engraved a floral pattern taken from a wallpaper design by Philip Otto Runge. This memorial speaks of the landscape as construction, here placed in the nature design most familiar to us, the city park. It is there to awaken emotions, just like the plastic bags and the backpacks stuffed with artificial green plants which function as a kind of portable consolation for the traveler longing for nature.

Memory was at the core of Gitte Villesen’s installation *Willy Bøtker* (1994). A friend, an old man by this name, was interviewed about his
private passion – cars. From 12 different car radios one could hear him talk about his first car, deals and dealers but also about his work as a flight technician and the women in his life. Many of her works are based on this kind of emotionally charged chitchat and allow people both to be heard and to finish speaking. When she uses the video camera it functions like a notebook. In a matter-of-fact manner, she documents everyday encounters, spontaneous or planned, such as leaving the house every day, getting in a car and driving off. The videos with Willy are made inside his home, and as spectators, we are invited into his private sphere. The desire to communicate is strong and the warmth that radiates from these videos testifies to the fact that a genuine exchange has taken place – as the viewer you almost feel that you are present yourself. But as spectator, you are ultimately condemned to remain an outsider and can only long for an encounter of this kind.

The study of humans through animal behavior is something of a leitmotif for the art of Carsten Höller. His playful interactive installations and performance situations test concepts such as happiness and love, both within and outside the art institutions. He is interested in exploring how these states may be brought about through hypnosis and may be manipulated through, e.g., massage and aphrodisiacs. The Robin (1995), which consisted of a group hike through a city park in Glasgow and which included a stuffed robin and recorded bird song, explored the similarities between the territorial defense mechanism of this bird and the drive for human self-assertion. His is a kind of sociology seen through the scientific lens of biology. The sociology of the postal service is intermingled with the personal biography of the artist in his work in LETTERandeVEN T. Enlarged postage stamps, Nefertiti from Germany which does not have any royalty of its own and King Albert from the monarchy of Belgium, transform the white gallery wall into an envelope with no address. In this way, the entire exhibition is transformed into the contents of a letter waiting to be mailed to someone still unknown.

This poetic conceptualism apparently attempts to carve out a nisch where it is possible to explore otherwise compromised concepts, areas and phenomena. It shows that the poststructuralist theory lesson about the production of meaning and the politics of representation has been absorbed, but has been taken further
seeking grounding in specific experiences. The disembodied information technology which creates and widens shared reference frames, and which therefore is a precondition for the hybrid behind the relative periphery, seems to partly have shifted in that the art public is increasingly becoming perceived as phenomenological "experiencers" of events, rather than isolated viewers of pictures. At the same time as the regimes of vision is said to become radically transformed in direction of the aphysical. This art increasingly immerses itself in the literal traces of the index, in direct interaction and physical experience. It is really "real" and fictional at the same time.
BIOGRAPHIES

CHRISTINE BORLAND


IAN HUNT, 'SERIOUS PLAY,' FRIEZE #26, JAN-FEB 1996
MARIA LIND, 'AN ELUSIVE EIDOLON IN A SOCIAL ARCHEOLOGY,' INDEX #2/95
CHARLES ESCHÉ, FROM LIFE, TRAMWAY 1994
ANDREW RENTON, 'CHRISTINE BORLAND: WHOSE THINGS...?,' ART + TEXT #49, SEP 1994

ANNIKA ERIKSSON

Has participated in group exhibitions including Monitor at the Deutsche Theater in Berlin (1997), The Plot* at The Collar Factory in Athens and Uppsala Konstmuseum, Work in Progress – NowHere* at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek (1996), 27.680.000 – Nordic Media Project Sveriges Television (1996), Come and See Us – I Am Curious* at Independent Art Space in

* INDICATES PUBLICATION

IWONA BLAZWICK, 'WORK IN PROGRESS,' LOUISIANA REVY, VOLUME II, NOWHERE, LOUISIANA MUSEUM OF MODERN ART 1996
MATS STJERNSTEDT, 'CONVERSATION WITH ANNIKA ERIKSSON,' COME AND SEE US – I AM CURIOUS, INDEPENDENT ART SPACE 1996
DAN JÖNSSON, 'PARANOIA AND PATHOS,' INDEX #2/95

DOUGLAS GORDON


CHRISTINE VAN ASSCHE, 'SIX QUESTIONS TO DOUGLAS GORDON,' PARACHUTE #84, OCT-DEC 1996
SARA ARRHENIUS, 'THE HEADLESS ANGEL,' SAWN-OFF, UPPSALA KONSTMUSEUM 1996
FRANCIS MCKEE, 'IDLE HANDS,' ZURICH, MUSEUM FÜR GEGENWARTSKUNST 1996
JAMES ROBERTS, 'DOUGLAS GORDON,' PALETTE #4/94

RENÉE GREEN

Born in Cleveland, Ohio. Lives in New York. Studied at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, Harvard University in Massachusetts, School of Visual Arts in New York and the Whitney Independent


ARMELLE LETURQUE, 'RENÉE GREEN, DECODING CULTURES,' BLOCNOTES #12, APR-MAY 1996
'ON SITE SPECIFICITY: A DISCUSSION WITH HAL FOSTER, RENÉE GREEN, MITCHELL KANE, MIWON KWON,
JOHN LINDELL, HELEN MOLESWORTH,' DOCUMENTS #4/5 1994
HOMI BHABHA, THE LOCATION OF CULTURE, ROUTLEDGE, LONDON AND NEW YORK 1994
JOSHUA DECTER, 'RENÉE GREEN: REMAPPING NARRATIVES OF HISTORY AND IDENTITY,'
FORUM INTERNATIONAL JAN-FEB 1993

HENRIK HÅKANSSON


MILOU ALLERHOLM, 'HENRIK HÅKANSSON,' SEE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, ROOSEUM 1996
MARIA LIND, 'HENRIK HÅKANSSON,' FRIEZE #26, JAN-FEB 1996
SARA ARRHENIUS, 'A VISIT TO THE CONGO BEETLE NURSERY SHOW,' INDEX #1/95
KARL HOLMOVIKT, 'HENRIK HÅKANSSON,' FLASH ART #181, MAR-APR 1995

CARSTEN HÖLLER


MICHELE NICOL, 'CARSTEN HÖLLER - GETTING REAL,' PARKETT #43/95
YVONNE VOLKART, 'CARSTEN HÖLLER,' FLASH ART VOL 28 #180 FEB 1995
T MORA-CORVI, 'CARSTEN HÖLLER - INTERVIEW,' PURPLE PROSE #5/95
GREGORIO MAGNANI, 'CARSTEN HÖLLER,' FLASH ART VOL 16, #171/93

MATT S LEIDERSTAM


Has participated in group exhibitions including These Days – I Am


OLAF NICOLAI


THOMAS FECHNER-SMERSLY, 'OLAF NICOLAI' ZINGMAGAZINE AUTUMN-WINTER 96/97
OLAF NICOLAI, 'GLASS AND SPACE,' INDEX #2/97
OLAF NICOLAI, 'VON ENGELN, MYSTIKERN UND KONSTRUKTEUREN,' PROZESS KUNSTZEITSCHRIFT #5/93

ANN-SOFI SIDÉN


Studied at the University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm and


SABINE RUSS, 'QM ON LINE,' CONTINENTS, BORÅS KONSTMUSEUM 1997
DANIEL BIRNBAUM, 'ANN-SOFI SIDÉN,' ARTFORUM FEB 1996
DANIEL BIRNBAUM AND ERIC VAN DER HEEG, 'THE DIARY OF A LADY WHO DISAPPEARED,' MATERIAL #27 WINTER 1995
MILOU ALLERHOLM, 'THE VIOLENCE OF EVERYDAY LIFE,' INDEX #3-4/94

**RIRKJIT TIRAVANIJA**


BRUCE HAINLEY, 'WHERE ARE WE GOING? AND WHAT ARE WE DOING? RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA'S ART OF LIVING,' ARTFORUM FEB 1996
MARIA LIND, 'LETTER AND EVENT, PARALLEL AND PALINDROME,' PALETTEN #4/95
LIAM GILICK, 'FORGET ABOUT THE BALL AND GET ON WITH THE GAME,' PARKETT #44/95
RICHARD FLOOD AND ROCHELLE STEINER, 'EN ROUTE,' PARKETT #44/95

JAAN TOOMIK


RITA ROOS, 'TOMORROW IS A NEW DAY. JAAN TOOMIK ESCAPES THE STEREOTYPES,' SIKSI #3/96
JOHANNES SAAR, 'JAAN TOOMIK: WATER-MOULDERS,' QUARTERLY, SOROS CENTERS FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS NETWORK # 5/95
JOHANNES SAAR, 'JAAN TOOMIK,' PORT OF ART – BALTIC BIENNIAL 1995
EHA KOMISSAROV, 'JAAN TOOMIK,' BIENNAL OF SAO PAULO, SOROS CENTERS FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS 1995

GITTE VILLESEN


Has participated in group exhibitions like Human Conditions at

LARS BANG LARSEN, "NUDITY AND SMALL TALK," INDEX #1/96
ZAPP, VIDEO MAGAZINE, AMSTERDAM 1995

ELIN WIKSTRÖM


LAURA COTTINGHAM, ‘CONSUMING ALL IMPEDIMENTS,’ LOUISIANA REVY, VOLUME II, NOWHERE, LOUISIANA MUSEUM OF MODERN ART 1996
MATS STJERNSTEDT, ‘CONVERSATION WITH ELIN WIKSTRÖM,’ COME AND SEE US – I AM CURIOUS, INDEPENDENT ART SPACE 1996
MARIA LIND, ‘AT WHAT PRICE?,’ SEE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, ROOSEUM 1996
ÅSA NACKING, ‘ELIN WIKSTRÖM LEAVES ROOM FOR WAITING,’ SIKSI #3/95
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Photo p8 Martin Polak, p12 Luc Fournier, p16 Henrik Håkansson, p18 Werner Feiersinger, p20 Per Hüttner, p24 Tom LeGoff, p30 Elin Wikström

Curator Maria Lind
Design Martin Högström
Printing Young’s Printing (1,500 copies)
Translation Swedish–English Kjersti Board and Nina Katchadourian

Apex Art C.P. 291 Church Street (Between Walker and White Streets) New York, NY 10013 t/f (212) 431 5270 apexartcp@aol.com

LETTERANDEVENT
April 24–May 24 1997

Apex Art, founded in 1994, is a not-for-profit space in downtown New York City that exists for the express purpose of providing a critical forum for curatorial experimentation.