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Bern Porter International

Volume 1 Number 2 * * * ISSN 0911-156 * * * Autumn 1997

William S. Burroughs on ART AS MAGICK

"The Fall of Art," from THE ADDING MACHINE: SELECTED ESSAYS, by William S. Burroughs, NY: Arcade Publishing, 1985, pp 60-63.

What we call "art" -- painting, sculpture, writing, dance, music -- is magical in origin. That is, it was originally employed for ceremonial purposes to produce very definite effects. In the world of magic nothing happens unless someone wants it to happen, *wills* it to happen, and there are certain magical formulae to channel and direct the will. The artist is trying to make something happen in the mind of the viewer or reader. In the days of cows-in-the-grass painting, the answer to "what is the purpose of such painting?" was very simple: to make what is depicted happen in the mind of the viewer; to make him smell the cows and the grass, hear the wistling rustic. The influence of art is no less potent for being indirect... The influence of art has a long range cultural effect. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso -- the Beats wrote a worldwide cultural revolution... Representational painting is dead... Nobody Paints cows in the grass anymore...

Montage is an old device in painting now. But if you apply the montage method to writing, you are accused by the critics of promulgating a cult of unintelligibility. Writing is still confined in the representational straightjacket of the novel, a form as arbitrary as the sonnet and as far removed from the actual facts of human perception and consciousness as the fifteenth century poetical form. Consciousness *IS* a cut-up; life is a cut-up. Everytime you walk down the street or look out the window, your stream of consciousness is cut by random factors... Take a walk down a city street and put what you have just seen down on canvas. You have seen half a person cut in two by a car, bits and pieces of street signs and advertisements, reflections from shop windows -- a montage of fragments. And the same thing happens with words. Remember that the written word is an image. Brion Gysin's [literary] cut-up method consists of cutting up pages of text and re-arranging them in montage combinations...

...What has happened here? Art has become literal and returned to its magical function of MAKING IT HAPPEN, after a long exile in the realms of imagination where its appetite for happenings has become inordinate. Now suddenly art makes its lethal eruption into so-called real world. Now painters paint a future before it is written... Will writing catch up?

YOUR WHAT?

by
Katherine Donithorne

There's Buster stretched out to the end of his rope, lying under a tree. It's the only tree in the entire campground, and no protection in a storm. His owner and his wife are gone for the day if it doesn't rain again. Buster is still soggy, and has his paws doubled up under his jowly Bernard head. I can't decide if he looks doleful or bored. Certainly not repentant.

Buster was on the prowl last night, and stopped by. Squally clouds were flirting with the stars, and I asked his opinion on the chances of rain and whether the tent would leak if it did. His disinterest was profound, and accepting his view of each minute to its own, found him some unfinished potted meat. His nose was large for the can, but he eased out the paste with a facile tongue, listened politely when I tried to convince him empty was empty, and wandered off.

Shortly after he left I decided to gamble on the stars, and contentedly snuggled into the sleeping bag. Right on the edge of sleep I heard Buster's owner from three campsites away, stridently demand his immediate return to confinement on his rope and collar. The man's irritation and number of threatened punishments rose with the prevailing wind. Buster woofed. "Stuff it," I translated for him, and put my head under the pillow.

I don't know if the storm woke me, or Buster moaning out there in the dark. He had quite a range of gurgles and yowls audible even above the sounds of wind and rain, and was difficult to ignore. It seemed unbelievable that his owner or his owner's wife could sleep though the combined noise since Buster was also apparently trying to tear down the door of their trailer. I thought about bringing him in here with me, but inside a tent a large dog wet triples in size. I thought too about the tent leaking, and what to save if it did. The indecision and the patter of rain lulled me back to sleep as I mentally juggled sleeping bag, pillow, suitcase, a probably ungrateful Buster, and myself into the car.

This morning I woke slightly damp to the sound of Buster's owner once again. "That damn dog. Look what he's done. He's ruined it. How did he get under there? He's torn it to pieces and it's all wet, what's left of it."

His wife is trying to be pacifying. She is not defending Buster, just trying to quiet the man's shrill complaints. "It's not ruined," she says. "I can fix it."

He verbally swats at her, furious, finding all at fault but himself. The sanctity of his being has been violated. His possessions ruined by his dog, and now his wife wants to belittle his due outrage. The pleading in her voice creates a fugue with the whining in his. Neither mention that perhaps Buster was only trying to get out of the wind and wet, and on consideration I reject the impulse to go over and defend him either.

In a moment of silence I cautiously crawl from the tent, and see the woman walk by on her way to the showers. She moves with slow exaggerated steps, the way a woman does when embarrassed by her man making a public display of his childishness, and her acceptance of his tyranny. I become engrossed in retying the tent flaps.

"Hurry it up," the man snarls at her dragging heels. "You're already late, and it looks

like rain again. My whole day will be ruined.”

She pauses, straightens her back, and distinctly says, “You forgot to roll up your car windows last night,” with emphasis on the ‘your.’ He turns toward the car, apoplectic at the added insult of undoubtedly wet seats. His wife, with renewed dignity, walks on.

Buster has his head up now. He’s squinching his eyes at some blackbirds that are dividing up the remains of breakfast just beyond his reach. I wonder what the important thing was that he tore apart, and pose him a linear syllogism involving the nature of possessions.* Buster curls his lip, laughing at my presumption that he was ever a possession, and with one paw tests for slackness in his collar. The blackbirds are making book on his chances of escape.

- * Your wife wants to be the ruin of something of yours.
Your dog uses something of yours and ruins your day.
Your day can not be enjoyed if ruined.
A possession is something of yours for use and enjoyment.

SOLUTION:

Your wife wants to be, your dog can not be, if ruined a possession is yours,
and your day is cancelled.

SAM SILVA

A DEAD MAN FLEEING

THE TANGIBLE QUINT BEFORE THE STORM

I sleep and drink
the rose of sleep...
I gather nothing
while I may...
...but morphine angels
watch me doze...
...and crush with sighs
the bloody rose...
...and make a nectar rich
and deep...beneath a star whistle wisemen shine
...and I have heard
...the son of God was born this way.

Swat the sunlight
with fumous exhalations...tobacco
rolled at the fringes of this
urban explosion...Miami!
You do not vaguely like
...these punk and paranoid voices
...that crawl a line south
from your home in the Carolinas
...anxious to admit themselves
to some vague form of grace
...they are the sickness of the age
...a cluster of adolescent sicknesses
...aids and tuberculosis...in he vile
wind of some white trash slum
...piquant and peculiar...longing
for some ridiculous poetry...
...all of the snakes
in drag...who filtered through your past.

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KETAN BEN CAESAR -- MILLENNIAL PERFORMANCE POET

a review by Sheila Holtz

Often outrageous, always ebullient, Ketan Ben Caesar's "Resonations for the New Millennium" takes us on a guided tour from the Big Bang to the year 2000, and back again. In this 22-minute video recorded on April 18, 1996 at the Community Education Center's Performance-in-an-Intimate Space, Philadelphia, the city's most ubiquitous performance poet (he eschews the label "performance artist") postures, pontificates and proselytizes in his characteristic tongue-in-cheek fashion.

His introduction, in classic style reminiscent of the Greek epic poets' prologues and invocations, tells us, with the rhythmic pulse of a rapper, who he is and what he is about:

[I'm] comin' at you
to
...reveal you
enrapture you
to wax rhapsodic to you
-- I'm a rapsody waxer!

Ketan then embarks upon a prodigious elucidation of cosmological history, beginning with the Primordial Silence and the First Word. Then he admonishes us to

L I S T E N

"with donkey ears perked" to the millennial portends which surround us. Like the archetypal Guru holding forth to his attentive disciples he delivers the timeless message heard down through the epochs. It's all here now, he says, "the begining and the end, the first and the last word." It's all a

cosmic soup can
-- nothing more to add in,
nothing less to subtract out...
Everything else goes without saying,
but I'm going to say the unsayable any old how.

And he does!

Lest this all get too deep and esoteric, Ketan seasons his presentation with generous pinches of his delightfully unique humor. In fact, his humor is more than just spice; it provides the basic stock and flavor of his poetic bouillabaisse;

Bigger than the Big Bang
was the Big Strew...
There a speck of me,
here a speck of you--
THE BIG STREW!
WHOOOP-DEE-DOO!

...and all this while ceremoniously removing successive articles of clothing!

While Ketan Ben Caesar can be taken with a grain of salt, nevertheless, he should not be taken lightly. He cuts the meat close to the bone when he says

...What I think I see
Is what I get for my reality...
I do think
I don't blink
I see
Reality...

I'd rather be a fool fooling myself
than a fool fooled by some other damn fool.

So, OK, it's been said. But, still. What could be more true?

The mood and timbre of Ketan's schtick may be light-hearted, but he is no lightweight. He addresses issues fundamental to the poet, and thus to us all. And, unlike many, he has the courage to speak plainly and address his audience directly. He is not like "the poets of today [who] are withdrawing, embalming themselves in a cryptic language which grows ever more unintelligible." (1) He is OUT THERE, IN YOUR FACE, and, as he says, "comin' at you / to / reveal you."

So, let those of us with "donkey ears" hear him.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT "Resonations for the New Millenium" write KETAN BEN CAESAR, 2439 ALDER ST., PHILADELPHIA, PA 19148

First there were the Ten Commandments
Then there was the Eleventh Commandment
At last: THE ULTIMATE COMMANDMENT

THE ULTIMATE COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not 'should' on thyself
and Thou shalt not 'should' on thy neighbor"

-- This Commandment of All Commandments
is really a NON-Commandment
to end all Commandments
as the only rule is: there are no rules
as the only truth is: there is no only truth

As there is no 'all-right'
& there is no 'all-wrong'
As there is no 'all-bad'
& there is no 'all-good'
As there is no 'all-best'
& there is no 'all-worst'

Therefore: There is nothing to do,
there is nothing to not-do
DO NOT DO, DO NOT NOT-DO
There is nowhere to go
GO NOWHERE GO
There is nobody to act like
ACT LIKE NOBODY ACT LIKE
There is naught to prove
PROVE NAUGHT PROVE
There is no person to please
PLEASE NO PERSON PLEASE

There is no need to say anything
BUTTON THE LIP
STOP FLAPPING YOUR YAP
DUMMY UP

There is no 'supposed to'
no 'got to'
no 'have to'
no 'ought to'

There is no 'must' do this, 'must' do that
DON'T GO 'MUST'ERBATING ON YOURSELF
OR ON OTHERS..

No Two Ways About It: 'SHOULD' HAPPENS
But don't 'should' on yourself
and don't 'should' on anybody else
and don't let anybody else
'should' on you

If somebody 'should's on you once,
shame one them
Of somebody 'should's on you twice,
shame on you-know-who

Thou shalt not 'should' on thyself
and Thou shalt not 'should' on thy neighbor
and Thou shalt not let thy neighbor
'should' on you

Give and take no 'should'
This Commandment of All Commandments
is really a NON-Commandment
to END all Commandments

THIS-IS-THE END
OF-ALL-COMMANDMENTS
Whoop-Dee-Doo
THIS-IS-THE LIVING-END.

--KETAN BEN CAESAR

EXCERPTS FROM
THE SECRET DIARIES OF MARILYN MONROE

by Marilyn "Mo" Monroe*

Yes, things perk up around here after nightrise. The sunshine slips away and the darklife moves in. Red flashing lights on the eastern horizon and hoot-howl whistles from the same direction. The charms come alive. Sweet sweet madness overtakes gray-day faces and the eyes begin to kindle in their sockets.

I always knew this age would be electric, somehow zapped and wham-banged. Both this age and this era, you see, because it is our age which makes us see this era so. We are young, we are breathing, we are burning, yah, we are all aflame. We are wriggling in ecstasy, we are living with relish and a fine hedonistic ethic. Our forty daze in the dry heat-humping desert haz done pazzed owne bah...

Children have a way of stating the obvious. And everyone is amazed. Because it was so obvious that THEY never even saw it.

Does anyone ever listen to his own mind? Paid attention to the sound it makes? Who has heard his own echoes? Who has seen his own reflection in everything?

To the stars: in our dreams.

§ § §

How the Master quivers like a leaf then bursts wide open in miraculous transformation. And it all happen in a swirl, a sensory swirl. Abstract sound and thought become embodied in flesh and movement. Movement, flesh, limbs, and a whole pulsing kinesthetic moment. Moment. Moment. Moments flash, flesh rolls, lithe in a pool of darkness. And we, the watchers, are swallowed and conjured and bewildered and utterly, utterly consumed.

There is a presence, a being who moves between life and death in some kind of hazy twilight (we all know it.) And his eyes burn across our faces and we, like him, are perfect, perfect. A homeostatic wonder called breathing: we feel the breath, the breathless, the deathless void. His legs strain to leap still higher, to gain flight ...

The dance is almost a crucifixion. It is so simple to understand how Nijinsky knew what he was -- that is -- God.

Artistry is one's natural state. Everyone is born an artist and some of us lucky ones manage to remain children. But inside everyone there is that child that can still be found, fluttering along in tune to the magic ... §

* (MO MONROE's postcard exchange with BERN PORTER will be forthcoming from ROGER JACKSON, PUBLISHER. MO is a 20-year old painter, sculptor, writer, and former student at the UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS, Philadelphia.)

Titles by Bern Porter

Questions About Henry Miller That No One Ever Asked Me—With Answers, by Bern Porter. 58 pp. Illustrated. Reprinted on 12/10/95. 100-copy Economy Edition \$7.50

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My Affair with Anais Nin, (Part I: Paris-New York Days) by Bern Porter with Natasha Bernstein. 36 pp. Illustrated. Publication date: 5/23/96. 350-copy Trade Edition \$8.50

Bern Porter's Pillow Book, by Bern Porter. 70 pp. Illustrated. Publication date: 7/4/96. 120-copy Limited Edition \$22.00

The Best Period of My Life, by Bern Porter. 16 pp. Illustrated. Publication date: 11/1/96. 50 Copy Limited Edition \$7.50

My Affair with Anais Nin, (Part II: San Francisco Days) by Bern Porter with Natasha Bernstein. 40 pp. Illustrated. Publication date: 3/1/97. 250-copy Trade Edition \$8.50, 35-copy Limited Edition \$12.00

Crossfire, by Bern Porter and Jack Saunders. 40 pp. Illustrated. Publications date: 4/10/97 250-copy Trade Edition \$7.50

Rites of Spring, by Bern Porter. Holograph greeting on US Government postcard. Publications date: 4/25/97. 26-copy Limited Edition \$10.00 (out of print)

Redundant, Redundant, a Bern Porter exhibition booklet with Porter essay, "Wherein the New Order." 8 pages. Illustrated. Publication date: 5/25/97. 100-copy Limited Edition \$7.50

A Walk on the Wild Side: A Photo Tour of the Sculpture Garden at the Institute of Advanced Thinking, by Bern Porter. A 23-item card and photo set. Publications date: 7/10/97. 100-copy Limited Edition \$15.00

"*I Pursue Her Still*": *Bern Porter on Anais Nin*. 114 pages. Illustrated. Publication date: August 21, 1997. \$20.00

My Affair with Bern Porter, by Natasha Bernstein and Alan Abrams. 48 pp. Illustrated by Al Berlinski. Publications date: 4/17/97. 250-copy Trade Edition \$12.00

Bern Porter — Forthcoming Titles

My Affair with Anais Nin, (Part III: Berkeley Days) by Bern Porter with Natasha Bernstein.

My Affair with Anais Nin, (Part IV: Silver Lake Days) by Bern Porter with Natasha Bernstein.

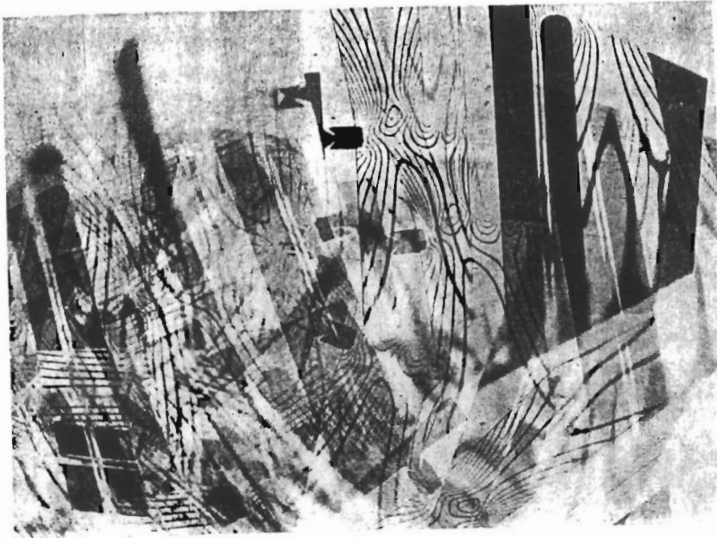
Open Letter to O. J. Simpson

Bern on Bern

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Thus it is possible to have a new approach to the foundation of things, the reason for their existence, the truth with which they carry out that existence and the force for good which by their being they instill in things about them. The wholeness and the apartness are double images in conflict but the reason for the apartness is that a new wholeness may yet rise again. Obviously the forced combination of similarly fused and widely divergent objects via painting methods opens an entirely new world populated with yet unconceived forms not yet described in any vocabulary or language. No greater revolution in art may exist than that.

- BERN PORTER

The Institute Of Advanced Thinking

Porter gave me the following list of artists and others (Porter calls them "scholars") connected with the Institute. Scholars who actually visited Belfast are noted by an asterisk; the others he has met on his travels.

- *Patricia Aldrich, Unity, Maine, Scholar in Painting Research
- Bo Atkinson, Montville, Maine, Scholar in Research
- Anna Banana, Vancouver, Canada, Scholar in Events
- Acosto Benton, Montevideo, Uruguay, Scholar in Visuals
- Harry Bowden, Sausalito, California, Scholar in Photography (deceased)
- Vittore Baroni, Forte Sei Marmi, Italy, Scholar in Visuals
- Guy Bleus, Wellen, Belgium, Scholar in Visuals
- Skip Back, Hull's Cove, Maine, Scholar in Research
- *David Cole, Brooklyn, New York, Scholar in Graphics
- *Cathy Counts, Portland, Maine, Scholar in Poetry
- Eric Findley, London, England, Scholar in Graphics
- Christian Herman, St. Louis, Missouri, Scholar in Communication
- *Dick Higgins, New York, Scholar in Writing
- G. X. Jupiter Larsen, Vancouver, Canada, Scholar in Events
- Pat Latter, Yass, Australia, Scholar in Visuals
- Ruggero Maggi, Milan, Italy, Scholar in Visuals
- *Mark Melnicove, Gardiner, Maine, Scholar in Publishing
- Peter K. Meyer, Stockholm, Sweden, Scholar in Tonics
- Jackson Maclow, New York, Scholar in Poetry
- *Charles Morrow, New York, Scholar in Composition
- Gogo Nesbitt, Ossnik, New York, Scholar in Poetry
- Clemente Padin, Montevideo, Uruguay, Scholar in Visuals

- Aurelio Peccei, Rome, Italy, Scholar in Research
- *Stephen Petroff, Bowdoinham, Maine, Scholar in Poetry
- Diter Rot, Reykjavik, Iceland, Scholar in Visuals
- *Abigail Shahn, Solon, Maine, Scholar in Painting
- *Lee Sharkey, China, Maine, Scholar in Poetry
- Carol Stetzer, Oatman, Arizona, Scholar in Visuals
- *Shogo Shimamoto, Nishinomiya, Japan, Scholar in Mail Art
- *Janelle Viglino, San Francisco, California, Scholar in Poetry
- *Mary Weaver, Belfast, Maine, Scholar in Drama
- Alma Yoray, Brunswick, Maine, Scholar in Dance

Porter delights in the word *scholar*, particularly since he refuses to admit to the Institute anyone with an academic connection. "You're at Brown," he told me dryly, "so you're not eligible to be a scholar." He yearns to restore creativity to scholarship, to eliminate the aura of the dry, plodding academician, so he thinks of Institute artists as visionary scholars in a realm of Advanced Thinking. Most of these artists are young and little known outside their specialties.

reprinted from
Where to Go What To Do When
You are Bern Porter, A Personal
Biography, by James Schevill

SCHOLARS WANTED

Would you like to become a scholar of the Institute? If so, please send your area of focus/interest and a brief biography in a descriptive letter to:

Natasha Bernstein & Sheila Holtz, editors, BERN PORTER INTERNATIONAL
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