2-2001

Bern Porter International: Volume 5 Number 3 (February 1, 2001)

Bern Porter
Sheila Holtz
Natasha Bernstein

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters

Part of the American Literature Commons, Art Practice Commons, and the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation
Porter, Bern; Holtz, Sheila; and Bernstein, Natasha, "Bern Porter International: Volume 5 Number 3 (February 1, 2001)" (2001). Newsletters. 64.
https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/porter_newsletters/64

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Bern Porter Collection of Contemporary Letters at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsletters by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby. For more information, please contact mfkelly@colby.edu.
February 1, 2001

ISSN 0911-156

Volume 5, Issue 3

Bern Porter International

A Literary Newsletter and Bulletin of the Institute for Advanced Thinking

"featured poet" read $15, plus a minute. Itold the audience to take the door. There were good poets, heroin, crack, weed, booze, but mostly one who showed the variety of regular and I'd be back to read some new poems. Stepping outside of the

submitted by
D.A. Russell
altered by
S.R. Holtz
The Cherotic Revolutionary - Underground 'Zine

Posted by Molly E. Holzschlag on January 23, 1997 15:00:00:

TITLE: The Cherotic Revolutionary

DEFINITION: Underground Print 'Zine

CREATOR: Frank Moore, Publisher

MAIN CATEGORY: Literature

ALTERNATIVE CATEGORIES: Art, belief, ritual, sensuality

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CORE WAVE: Is the act of art really a magic ritual?

MAIN QUOTE: "i and this zine are just middlemen, just a pipe. when the art goes through the pipe, that is when the pipe is important"
-- Frank Moore, The Cherotic Revolutionary

HIGHLIGHT QUOTES: "We are really an anarchist, arts, avant-garde, experimental, art, beat, cartoons, community, counter-culture, alternatives, culture, dada, surrealism, erotica, essays, ethics, feminism, fiction, gay, humanism, humor, interview, lesbianism, libertarian, literature(general), magic, non-fiction, philosophy, photography, poetry, prose, psychology, satire, sex, short stories, spiritual zine. Or, a life on the edge zine, for short"

"Bad art is the manure from which good and great art springs. All artists have done some bad art. A large percentage of art could be called bad art. In other words, you cannot have any art without having bad art anymore than you can have any science without having most experimentation be 'failures.'"

"One of the functions of art is to offend, to create tension by revealing hidden aspects of life. "-- Frank Moore

HIGHLIGHT RECOMMENDATION: The Cherotic Revolutionary is a black-and-white print zine out of Berkeley, California. Its covers are usually collages of surreal sex images, and its content ranges from intelligent essays, impressive photography, spiritual poetry, and political tales of tragedy and triumph.

DEEPER: I came to know Frank Moore on the now-defunct online service known as GENie--this was some time ago--before the Internet was available on a commercial basis, before the Web existed. We became friends because I managed one of the service's Round Tables and he would continuously..."
place rather outspoken posts that had to be pulled by me due to information that didn't fit the more stringent "Family Values" of a commercial online service. I hated pulling those posts, because Frank always had something interesting to say. Our friendship grew out of the email sent back and forth regarding these posts.

Eventually I did some writing for the Cherotic Revolutionary, which has featured known poets such as Karen Finley, and the infamous performance artist/post-porn modernist Annie Sprinkle, as well as countless yet equally talented and outspoken artists from every medium.

Cherotic Magic is, in its most simple definition, sex magic. But it doesn't mean that fucking is what makes magic per se. It's more about the exploration of the human body as a temple of pleasure and pain, and these experiences are what can bring us to a deeper, or greater understanding of the spiritual through the experience of the physical. It's sort of an Occidental Shamanistic Tantra. But only sort of--the important issue is that it ties into the creative, and often co-creative experience, manifest in this case in the form of an exceptional, bizarre, and--to some--offensive zine that puts a variety of issues into the face of people and asks them to think, feel, and make connections in their own way.

CONNECTIONS: None yet.

IMAGES AND CLIPS: “optional image url" field used to post

ACCESS AND DISTRIBUTION: Frank Moore's Cherotic Revolutionary can be found at Frank Moor's Web of Infinite Possibilities. Copies of the Cherotic Revolutionary can be purchased for $5.00 from Frank Moore, Inter-Relations, PO Box 11445, Berkeley, CA. 94712. Email: f.moore7@genie.geis.com FAX: (510) 524-2053

Moore, Frank

Address  
POBox 11445
Berkeley, CA 94712
Voice  
(510) 526-7858
Fax  
(510) 524-2053
Email  
fmoore@eroplay.com
Web  
http://www.eroplay.com

A performer, director, writer, and teacher of shamanistic art. Conducts performance rituals throughout the year. Books, cassettes, and videotapes are available. Publishes 'The Cherotic rEvolutionary', a zine about 'the edge'. His work has been the subject of attack by Jesse Helms.

Index Keys
art * censorship * individuals * theatre
MINIMALIST DIATRIBE ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF
PRESIDENT-SELECT GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE INSTALLATION
OF HIS HAND-PICKED CABINET MEMBERS, THIS DAY
JANUARY 20, 2001 A.D.

EAT SHIT AND DIE YOU FUCKING FASCISTS
Eat shit and die you fucking fascists
Eat shit and die you fucking fascists

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary
(by any means necessary, you fucking fascists)
EAT SHIT AND DIE
you fucking STULTIFYING FASCISTS

YOU MAY NOT PRIVATIZE THE STREETS
The streets belong to the people
The streets belong to the people
The people have the power
The people have the power
to rule
to dream
(yes, Patti)
to die for our dream
to live for our DREAM
to manifest our dream
(by any means necessary)
our freedom ,
our voice

EAT SHIT AND DIE YOU FUCKING FASCISTS
EAT SHIT AND DIE YOU FUCKING FASCISTS
EAT SHIT AND DIE
YOU FUCKING FASCISTS
EAT SHIT AND DIE
YOU FUCKING FASCISTS
EAT SHIT AND DIE
YOU FUCKING FASCISTS

EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT EAT
EAT IT
Eat shit and die
you snake oil salesmen

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
Keep a clean nose
Watch the plainclothes
YOU DON'T NEED A WEATHERMAN TO KNOW WHICH WAY THE WIND BLOWS
(yes, Bob)
Eat shit and die you overpaid frontmen
eat it raw you champions of self-interest

Eat shit
you

extraordinary extremists

Eat shit you

Eat shit you

Eat shit you

Eat shit you

conglomerate conspirators

Eat shit you

assiduous assassins

Eat shit you

shameless self-promoters

Eat shit you

pilfering profit-mongers

Eat shit you

heinous henchmen

I don't give a fuck about your fucking interest rates
I don't give a fuck about your fucking oligarchy
I don't give a fuck about your global economy
I don't give a fuck about your deep-pocket dynasty
I don't give a fuck about your compassionate conservatism

compassionate conservatism

is a lie

I don't give a fuck about your Vision 2020
Blow the fucking planet
into fucking Kingdom Come
Thy Will Be Done

I don't give a fuck
I don't give a fuck

FUCK YOU

EAT SHIT AND DIE

Natasha Bernstein
Orland, Maine
January 20, 2001
John Lennon once characterized his wife, Yoko Ono, as the world's "most famous unknown artist. Everybody knows her name, but nobody knows what she does." What she was famous for, of course, was him. The art for which she was unknown could not conceivably have made her famous—although even the most famous of artists would be obscure relative to the aura of celebrity surrounding the Beatle of Beatles and his bride. Yoko Ono had been an avant-garde artist in New York and Tokyo in the early 1960s, and part of an avant-garde art world itself very little known outside its own small membership. The most robust of her works were subtle and quiet to the point of near-noticeability. One of her performances consisted, for example, of lighting a match and allowing it to burn away. One of her works, which she achieved in collaboration with the movement known as Fluxus, consisted of a small round mirror which came in an envelope on which YOKO ono/self portrait was printed. It belonged in Fluxus I—a box of works by various Fluxus artists, assembled by the leader and presiding spirit of the movement, George Maciunas. But the contents of Fluxus I were themselves of the same modest order as Self Portrait. We are not talking about anything on the scale, say, of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. We are speaking of things one would not see as art unless one shared the values and ideologies of Fluxus.

Fluxus, in that phase of its history, was much concerned with overcoming the gap between art and life, which was in part inspired by John Cage's decision to widen the range of sounds available for purposes of musical composition. Cage's famous 4'33" consisted of all the noises that occurred through an interval in which a performer, sitting at the piano, dropped his or her hands for precisely that length of time. A typical Fluxus composition was arrived at by selecting a time—3:15, say—from the railway timetable and considering all the sounds in the railway station for three minutes and fifteen seconds as the piece. As early as 1913, Marcel Duchamp made works of art out of the most aesthetically undistinguished vernacular objects, like snow shovels and grooming combs, and he was in particular eager to remove all reference to the artist's eye or hand from the work of art. "The intention," he told Pierre Cabanne in 1968, "consisted above all in forgetting the hand." So a cheap, mass-produced object like a pocket mirror could be elevated to the rank of artwork and be given a title. How little effort it takes to make a self-portrait! In The Republic Socrates made the brilliant point that if what we wanted from art was an image of visual reality, what was the objection to holding a mirror up to whatever we wished to reproduce? "[You] will speedily produce the sun and all the things in the sky, and the earth and yourself and the other animals and implements and plants." And all this without benefit of manual skill!

Fluxus made little impact on the larger art world of those years. I encountered it for the first time in 1984, at an exhibition held at the Whitney Museum of New York in which the art made in New York in the period between 1957 and 1964 was displayed. It was a show mainly of Pop Art and Happenings; and there were some display cases of Fluxus art, many of them objects of dismaying simplicity relative to what one expected of works of art in the early 1960s, exemplified by large heroic canvases with churned pigment and ample brush sweeps. Maciunas spoke of Fluxus as "the fusion of Spike Jones, vaudeville gag, children's games and Duchamp"; any display cases contained what looked like items from the joke shop, the children's counter in the dime store, handbills and the like. Ono's relationship to Fluxus is a matter of delicate art-historical analysis, but if she fit in anywhere, it would have been in the world Maciunas created around himself, where the artists and their audience consisted of more or less the same people. It was a fragile underworld, easy not to know about. Ono's work from that era has the weight of winks and whispers.

So, it was as a largely unknown artist that Lennon first encountered her, at the Indica Gallery in London, in 1966. The point of intersection was a work titled YES Painting, which consists of a very tiny inscription of the single word Yes, written in India ink on primed canvas, hung horizontally just beneath the gallery's ceiling. The viewer was required to mount a stepladder, painted white, and to look at the painting through a magnifying lens, suspended from the frame. It was part of the work, as it was of much of Yoko Ono's art, then and afterward, that it required the participation of the viewer in order to be brought fully into being. Much of it, for example, had the form of instructions to the viewer, who helped realize the work by following the instructions, if only in imagination. The ladder/painting was a kind of tacit instruction, saying, in effect, like something in Alice in Wonderland, "Climb me." Somehow I love the fact that John Lennon was there at all, given what I imagine must have been the noisy public world of the Beatles, full of electric guitars and screaming young girls. Lennon climbed the ladder and read the word, which made a great impression on him. "So it was positive," he later said. "It's a great relief when you get up the ladder and you look through the spyglass and it doesn't say no or fuck you; it says YES." There was only the simple affirmative rather than the "negative... smash-the-piano-with-a-hammer, break-the-sculpture boring, negative crap. That 'YES' made me stay." It would be difficult to think of a work of art at once that minimal and that transformative.

"YES" is the name of a wonderful exhibition at the Japan Society, much of it given over to the works for which, other than to scholars of the avant-garde, Yoko Ono is almost entirely unknown. I refer to the work from the early sixties, a blend of Fluxus, Cage, Duchamp and Zen, but with a poetry uniquely Ono's own. The most innovative of the early works are the Instructions for Paintings, which tell the viewer what to do in order for the work to exist. These have the form of brief poems.
Here, for example, is the instruction for a work called Smoke Painting:

Light canvas or any finished painting with a cigarette at any time for any length of time.

See the smoke movement.
The painting ends when the whole canvas or painting is gone.

Here is another, called Painting in Three Stanza:

Let a vine grow.
Water every day.
The first stanza—till the vine spreads.
The second stanza—till the vine withers.
The third stanza—till the wall vanishes.

Now these are instructions for the execution of a work, not the work itself. They exist for the purpose of being followed, like orders. In formal fact, the instructions are very attractive, written out in gracious Japanese calligraphy by, as it happens, Yoko Ono’s first husband, Ichiryanagi Toshi, an avant-garde composer. It is true that the conception was hers, but by means of whose handwriting the conception should be inscribed is entirely external. Nothing could be closer to Duchamp’s idea of removing the artist’s hand from the processes of art. Duchamp was interested in an entirely cerebral art—the object was merely a means. And so these attractive sheets of spidery writing are merely means: The work is the thought they convey. “Let people copy or photograph your paintings,” Ono wrote in 1964. “Destroy the originals.” So the above instructions, in numbers equal to the press run of The Nation plus however many pass-alongs or photocopies may be made of this review, are as much or as little of “the work” as what you would see on the walls of the gallery. The question is not how prettily they are presented or even in what language they are written. The question is how they are received and what the reader of them does to make them true: The instructions must be followed for the work really to exist.

So how are we to comply? Well, we could trudge out to the hardware store, buy a shovel, pick up a vine somewhere, dig a hole, plant the vine, water it daily—and wait for the wall against which the vine spreads to vanish. Or we can imagine all this. The work exists in the mind of the artist and then in the mind of the viewer. The instructions mediate between the two. At the Indica Gallery, Ono exhibited Painting to Hammer a Nail. A small panel hung high on the wall, with a hammer hanging from its lower left corner. Beneath it was a chair, with—I believe—a small container of nails. If you wanted to comply with the implicit instructions, you took a nail, mounted the somewhat rickety chair, grasped the hammer and drove the nail in. At the opening, Ono recalls, “A person came and asked if it was alright to hammer a nail in the painting. I said it was alright if he pays 5 shillings. Instead of paying the 5 shillings, he asked if it was alright to hammer an imaginary nail in. That was John Lennon. I thought, so I met a guy who plays the same game I played.” Lennon said, “And that’s when we really met. That’s when we locked eyes and she got it and I got it and, as they say in all the interviews we do, the rest is history.”

Jasper Johns once issued a set of instructions that became famous: “Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it.” Ono’s version would be “Imagine an object. Imagine doing something to it. Imagine doing something else to it.” Ono’s enthusiasts like to say how far ahead of her time she was, based on some entirely superficial parallels between her Instructions for Paintings and certain works of Conceptual Art, which also consisted of words hung on the wall. Thus in 1967 Joseph Kosuth composed a work that reproduced the definition of the word “Idea” as it appears in a dictionary. The title of the work is Art as Idea as Idea. The work of art is the idea of idea (Spinoza—profoundly defined the mind as idea ideae). For reasons entirely different from Ono’s, Kosuth was bent on transforming art into thought.

Art historians are always eager to establish priority, usually by finding resemblances that have little to do with one another. In truth, Ono was precisely of her own time. It was a time when the very idea of art was under re-examination by artists. Works of art can never have been more grossly material—heavy, oily, fat—than under the auspices of Abstract Expressionism. But the aesthetic experiments of Cage, of Fluxus and of Yoko Ono were not, in my view, addressed to the overthrow of Abstract Expressionism. They were rather applications of a set of ideas about boundaries—between artworks and ordinary things, between music and noise, between dance and mere bodily movement, between score and performance, between action and imagining action, between artist and audience. If the impulse came from anywhere, it came from Zen. Cage was an adept of Zen, which he transmitted through his seminars in experimental composition at The New School. Dr. Suzuki, who taught his course in Zen at Columbia, was a cult figure for the art world of the fifties. Yoko Ono had absorbed Zen thought and practice in Japan. The aim of Zen instructions was to induce enlightenment in the mind of the auditor, to transform his or her vision of world and self. The aim of Ono’s instructions was similarly to induce enlightenment in the mind of the viewer—but it would be enlightenment about the being of art as the reimagining of the imagined. In her fine catalogue essay, Alexandra Munroe, director of the Japan Society Gallery, writes, “Asian art and thought were the preferred paradigm for much of the American avant-garde.” Abstract Expressionism and the New York avant-garde exemplified by Cage, Fluxus and Ono belong to disjointed histories that happened to intersect in Manhattan at the same moment.

At the time of their marriage, Ono said that she and John Lennon would make many performances together, and the fact that Lennon set foot in the Indica Gallery in the first place and engaged with Yoko Ono in that atmosphere implies that he found something in art that was lacking in the world of popular music, for all his great success. It is characteristic that for him, art meant performance—not painting on the side, which was to become an outlet for his fellow Beatle Paul McCartney (there is an exhibition of McCartney’s paintings making the rounds today). What Ono offered Lennon was a more fulfilling way of making art, and inevitably she was blamed for the dissolution of the band. What Lennon offered Ono was a way of using her art to change minds not just in terms of the nature of art and reality but in terms of war and peace. In 1968 Yoko Ono declared that
“the art circle from which I came is very dead, so I am very thrilled to be in communication with worldwide people.” One of Yoko Ono’s most inspired pieces was her White Chess Set of 1966 (a version of which, Play It By Trust, can be seen in the Japan Society lobby). Instead of two opposing sides, one black and one white, she painted everything—the board and the pieces—white. Since one cannot tell which pieces belong on which side, the game quickly falls apart. “The players lose track of their pieces as the game progresses; one cannot tell which pieces belong on which side, the game is stripped bare. One of the cutters is a man, who cuts the shoulder straps on her undergarment. The artist raises her hands to protect her breasts, but does nothing to stop the action. Ideally the cutting continues until the entire piece is cut away, one piece of her clothing. One by one, they mount the stage, as we see in a video at the Japan Society, and cut off part of what she is wearing. One of the cutters is a man, who cuts the shoulder straps on her undergarment. The artist raises her hands to protect her breasts, but does nothing to stop the action. Ideally the cutting continues until she is stripped bare. I find it a very violent piece, reminding me somehow of Stanley Milgram’s experiment in psychology, in which people are encouraged to administer what they believe are electrical shocks to the subject (who pretends to be in agony). The audience has certainly overcome, a bit too gleeefully, the gap between art and life—it is after all a flesh-and-blood woman they are stripping piecemeal with shears. It reveals something scary about us that we are prepared to participate in a work like that.

Another film, Fly, shows a housefly exploring the naked body of a young woman who lies immobile as the fly moves in and out of the crevices of her body, or moves its forelegs, surmounting one of her nipples. The soundtrack is uncanny, and we do not know if it is the voice of the fly, the suppressed voice of the woman or the weeping voice of an outside witness to what feels like—what is—a sexual violation. It is like the voiced agony of a woman with her tongue cut out. The sounds are like no others I have heard. Yoko Ono is a highly trained musician who gave her first concert at 4 and who sang opera and lieder when she was young. But she is also a disciple of Cage and an avant-garde singer who uses verbal sobs, damped screams, deflected pleas, to convey the feeling of bodily invasion.

Yoko Ono is really one of the most original artists of the last half-century. Her fame made her almost impossible to see. When she made the art for which her husband admired and loved her, it required a very developed avant-garde sensibility to see it as anything but ephemeral. The exhibition, at the Japan Society makes it possible for those with patience and imagination to constitute her achievement in their minds, where it really belongs. It is an art as rewarding as it is demanding.

Let’s Get Drunk and Read Poetry

When traveling by plane, families with small children bottle or pacifier in their ears.

BAD POETRY

Across the parking lot dogs ice/fail饺子

Giant 10 F

Lost and Found Times No. 45 - November 2000. Subscription is $25.00 for 5 issues.
Editor: John M. Bennett. Luna Bisonte Prods, 137 Leland Avenue, Columbus, Ohio, 43214.

Bernstein & Holtz, eds.
BERN PORTER INTERNATIONAL
50 Salmond Street
Belfast, Maine 04915

Mail this