

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Hello!

We wanted to talk about some of the events that have been going on in the last six months. As most of you know, the arts are being attacked by both conservatives who are out to censor (their word: "defund") any artwork that does not conform to their (highly objective and universally accepted) ideas of decency, and by legislators who are trying to make cuts in state budgets. Most recently John Frohnmeyer, the new chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, tried to withdraw funding from an exhibition about AIDS at Artists Space in New York. This follows three other attacks on the arts: 1) The Robert Mapplethorpe show at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC was cancelled because of the anticipated protest by members of Congress over the sexual content of the work. 2) The show containing the now famous Andres Serrano photograph went smoothly and without incident. But as punishment for showing the work both Southeastern Contemporary Arts, which organized this show, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, which organized the Mapplethorpe show, were put on probation for five years--all NEA grants they apply for must be reviewed by Congress. 3) A student artwork that displayed an American flag on the gallery floor at the Art Institute of Chicago drew major protest by veterans and others, and because the Art Institute refused to remove the work, they were punished by a reduction in state funding to one dollar--as was an arts advocacy organization that supported the Art Institute's decision not to take down the work! It is worth noting that the three artists in question were a black, an Hispanic, and a gay artist. These are just three examples that made it into the mainstream media, but there are many more that most of us don't hear about.

Why is all this happening, and why now? Certainly it can't be because money spent on the arts is any significant proportion of anyone's taxes or of public budgets. Americans spend 77¢ each in taxes per year for art. A recent survey found that 70% of all Americans would be willing to pay an extra $10 per year to support art. (That would mean a few billion dollars for the arts every year--a far cry from the $170 million the NEA now receives.) If money were the real issue, the public and our elected officials would be focusing on things like unbearably bloated military budgets ($29 billion goes to admittedly unneeded spare parts, for example), government corruption, white collar crime ($100 billion every year in activities like insider trading, illegal polluting, consumer defrauding), corporate and private non-payment of taxes, etc. As a sector of the work place, the arts are some of the most efficient businesses in this country, both in terms of stretching each dollar and in making a significant contribution to society. At a recent meeting of philanthropists and non-profit organizations, a manager at a large Boston bank for 20 years said that the for-profit world doesn't come close to our ability to make the most of our resources, and she hypothesized that this is related to the fact that we believe in our work.

So, if it's not the money issue, what's going on? We don't have one answer for this. Perhaps, out of frustration at trying to run a country that's out of control, legislators pick on the arts because we're an easy target, and because we SYMBOLIZE things in powerful ways. One of the things we symbolize is the plurality of opinions, aesthetics, and voices in this country. This knowledge is threatening to some who fantasize a simpler and more homogeneous society. The most direct method for making those voices go away is to censor them or to take away their funding so that they can't afford to express themselves.

So many questions are being raised: How is art changing in response to the current climate? (We've noticed more activist art, for one thing.) What other periods in history can we look to that are similar to this? Why are we so suddenly having to defend our existence, and where are our supposed allies? What role does art play in an industrial democracy? What of our culture do we want to preserve for future generations and how do we do that now?

How do we communicate these concerns? We need to find ways to talk to non-art world people about the value of art (in non-monetary terms), the value of freedom and diversity of expression--whether we like the work in question or not.

These questions are no longer academic. The issues are about the survival of artists who are honestly and persistently doing their work year after year, and spaces like Mobius which support contemporary artists. It's about the real value of art, opposed to "market value." It's about freedom of expression during times of rapid and sometimes frightening change, at the end of a millennium. . .

ALL THESE QUESTIONS AND MORE will be the subject of a DISCUSSION FOR THE ARTS COMMUNITY at Mobius entitled "Why Contemporary Art is Necessary. . . Practical Arguments in Support of Art Making and Arts Funding," moderated by Maureen Dezell--writer for the Boston Phoenix--on Thursday, January 11 at 7:00 pm. All attendees' participation is welcome and encouraged. We'd like this discussion to enable everyone to articulate their ideas better when talking to friends, family, and congresspeople. We hope to see you there, and please bring your thoughts and ideas.

Marilyn Arsem and Mary-Charlotte Domandi
"Why Contemporary Art is Necessary . . . Practical Arguments in Support of Art Making and Arts Funding."

Thursday, January 11 7:00 pm

Blood & Stone: "TBA"

Saturday, January 13 8:00 pm

We would like to make music that would be just like making music all the time. A performance would be like a party you know you clean up and make everything look nice but really it's just your house where you live and everybody comes over and you give them things to eat and drink and they say oh what a nice place you have here. We would like a performance to be like that it would just be what one does every day only one wears nicer clothes or whatever.

We are Blood & Stone which means we are Johny Blood and Ned Stone and we are an electric tuba duo which means well there are two of us and we both play electric tuba. Some songs we do are by us and some are by other people and some aren't songs at all. In "TBA" we are trying to do what we are always doing we are playing tubas with electronic effects and lots of amplifiers and lots of sounds and the wonderful smell of dinner. Also we hope our friends will be helping us with words and pictures and sounds and lights and other things too. We hope that anyone who heard us it will be just like when people visit they will say oh yes that is very nice. That is why this piece is called "TBA".

Obvious/Mysterious The primary genres in the "New Genres" category subdivision of performance art include:

The Obvious Monolog
The Mystery Monolog
The Visually - Based Unfolding Mystery
The Sound - Based Unfolding Mystery
The Visual and /or Sound - Based Obvious Presentation or Opaque Presentation

All of above are with or without Audience Interaction

All are on the scale of Packaged - Ad Libbed, Rehearsed, Rehearsable, Unrehearsed, Unrehearsable

Does it matter where it is done? Does it matter who does it? Does it matter who the audience is? (Is the persona of the performer(s) integral to the meaning of the piece, or is persona non-transferrable)?

Genre can also be defined by a means/ends analysis (i.e I'll do a performance whose means are...)

[music, visual art, text, interaction, etc...]
or I'll do a performance whose end is... [political change, pleasure, etc...]

-This analysis is that the starting point of a piece defines its genre. It is anti-critical in that it deals with intent, not outcome.
And asks, why that intent?

Dan Lang
Dan Lang and Mari Novotny-Jones

**The Big Game**

Friday-Saturday, January 19-20, 8:00 pm. Sunday, January 21, 2:00 pm

We have, over the years been intrigued with audience interaction and the problems of tackling questions of ethics, spirituality, or coming of age in a generation of scientific and mechanical wizardry.

Our paths converge again; and the interest is in an interactive performance using elements of chance, choice and an imposed structure on the audience. Who will be ready to play the game of life - that is life classified into first, second, or third class or if you like - first business, or economy.

We both wanted to try and deal with a topical issue centering around ethics and morality. Crime and Punishment seemed a good place to start - coming off the heat of the STUART CASE. Most of our investigations into this subject lead us into long discussions about the nature of crime, the history of punishment, does punishment fit the crime, the myth of safe space. Trying to create a performance based on let's say the audience committing a crime seemed so slight in comparison to the real nature of crime that we concurred was extremes of greed and poverty. At this point, it became too huge to deal with all the levels of crime.

Now, to move on to how to do a performance about greed and poverty. A lot of our time is spent grappling with abstractions. How do you get an audience particularly a Mobius audience to examine their feelings about these extremes without insulting them or stating the obvious. One early idea: put half of the audience in the January cold ally behind Mobius and the other half spend the night in a suite at the Ritz. Bring them together the next day and exchange conversations about their experiences. In a way, it is truer than a "performance". But is it stating the obvious and then what?

We are in the process now of narrowing our scope, trying to engage the audience in abstraction and reality. Our formula is a game. We can hope that in playing this game some real feelings will evolve - either collectively or individually. We can promise that the audience will spend untold riches either on yourself, someone else, or something lasting. One thing to remember it is a game of luck, skill, and nitty gritty choices.

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Marilyn Arsem

*Dreams (breathe/don't breathe) of Home and The Beginning or the End*

Friday-Saturday, January 26-27 8:00 pm

Sunday, January 28 2:00 pm

My performances of *Dreams (breathe/don't breathe)* of *Home* and *The Beginning or the End* unfortunately had to be cancelled in November. They are now rescheduled for January. So if you thought you missed it, here's your second chance. It's probable that I won't be performing these works at Mobius again, though I will be touring them elsewhere. Performing with me will be Jessie Davis and Katherine Finkelpearl. Here's what I wrote about the pieces in the last newsletter:

These two performances are the final two works of the Pig Baby series, begun in 1984 with Bob Raymond. They explore images of life in death and death in life. Operating in real time, the performances involve a series of activities using natural materials such as meat, fish, bread, hair and bones, that result in olfactory experiences, as well as visual images for contemplation.

Many of you have seen this work develop over the years. I put these two pieces together on the same program for the first time last June at Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, NY. I was pleased with the result. I think the two compliment each other on a number of different levels. I look forward to hearing your response to the combination.

Marilyn Arsem in Dreams (breathe/don't breathe) of Home
In the first grade my class was learning how to read and write. One day I was walking home and a small group of third grade boys stopped by. It was a wet winter day and a half inch thick coat of slush coated the parked cars, slipping and folding down windshields here and there. "You don't know how to write," the boy in front said. "Yes I do," I said. "No you don't," he said louder. "Yes I can," I said more softly. "Show me," he said, as though offering me his ball, as though giving me a chance. As casually as I could I slowly spelled my first name out on the hood. He waited until my finger left the car. "That's not writing," he said triumphantly. "That's only printing," he said with scorn, and his classmates laughed and he showed his teeth and I showed mine and rage and shame glistened in my eyes like two crystals grown just a bit more blunt. The letters winced, simple, and apart. The J leaned. The o wobbles. h and n stand on uneven legs. Beneath them the engine lies cold like a blood red tulip bulb in the frozen ground.

When I was working inside the project, I felt very present and engaged and even like there were quite startling discoveries being made about the subtleties of performing. But... It began to feel like we were examining performing for performing's sake. At this time, I'm more drawn to examining my connection to performing as it relates to a particular production. Our work together, particularly as we began to bring our exercises into performance, became self-conscious and introspective. I think, entirely unintentionally and perhaps even insidiously, the self-consciousness started to undermine our main purpose "to explore a realm of creativity which is pre-invention, pre-craft, pre-technique, pre-choreography."
An aspect of the project that I’m somewhat unclear about is the audience response. Although I was satisfied with the work, I felt a little let down by the vague audience response Friday; somewhat more validated by the interest shown by the Saturday audience. How do I enable an audience to see this kind of work?

Although many of the exercises we practiced had beauty as images in and of themselves, I was intrigued by what we could have created more in the way of dance.

result - a fifty-five minute performance piece that we can live inside of as a group and as individuals - it becomes a practice to experience being inside of it, listening, seeing, smelling, feeling, sounding our way through each moment.

I can credit the workshop experience and the participants with being a milestone in my career as a artist creating with the medium of movement. I can not express my appreciation enough to John, Laure, Mark, Sara, Dale, Stephanie, Pam, Steve, Darla and Betsy. The two weeks we worked together at the end of September 1989 remain imprinted as a dream and a song on my soul. I found my vulnerability to the perceived harshness of the feedback after the performances to be very disconcerting and depressing. However, after being in that slump for about a month, I have begun to work on another project. What I learned during those two weeks with everyone is rushing over and around me and through me. And I am so delighted.
Kathy Marmor

Coitus Interruptus: a performance about sexual politics and modern love

Friday and Saturday, February 16-17 8 pm

This multi-media performance examines the relationship between modern women and their mythic archetypes. Where the stories of Medusa, Eve, and Pandora are presented as contemporary dramas, daring us to re-examine the role that sexuality plays in the construction of female identity.

Coitus Interruptus is divided into three sections; Medusa's Mirror, The Expulsion of Eve and Pandora's Box. It contains many elements selected from earlier work (HAND-MIRRORS for Medusa, and The Expulsion of Eve.) The third section, Pandora's Box which completes the trilogy is an entirely new work. It has also been co-written by Meredith Sibley, who performs in it as well.

This performance utilizes narrative and non-narrative structures in order to reflect some of the complexity and contradictions of modern existence. It is important to me to create events which are representative of both the tragic/comedic, mundane and dramatic aspects of our lives.

Mobius 13th Anniversary Party, Performances and Auction
Saturday, February 17

The Mobius 13th Anniversary Bash is coming up! On Saturday, February 17 (mark this day in your calendar) at a location to be announced. Mobius will host this amazing event, which will include a BIG party, performances, a fantastic auction, appearances from Moboids throughout history, and delicious refreshments. Be there or be a geometrical regularity of an undesirable nature.

WORKS-IN-PROGRESS
Thursday, February 22, Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24 8:00 pm

A WORD ABOUT WORKS-IN-PROGRESS
As the readership of the newsletter increases I thought it would be a good time to encourage new people to submit proposals for our Works-In-Progress series, and to come to performances. Here is a bit of history of WIP and how it works.

Works-In-Progress began at Mobius when we were still in a loft in Chinatown. Marilyn Arsem had the idea of showing work in early stages in order to get feedback from the audience. This idea of showing work in progress was exciting to performers, creators, and audiences... and it was an invaluable way to grow with our work. I, myself, coming from a traditional theater background, had trouble with the idea of presenting work in such an early form. But it grew on me.

More than 10 years later, Mobius is still presenting the WIP. As a collective, we understand how important audience feedback can be, and audiences here at Mobius have gotten comfortable with their role in providing it. The WIP series, which happens three times a year, has always been open to area artists as a forum to try out their work. It gives artists the chance to have an audience, a space to try out new work, publicity, postcards to mail out to invited guests, strong coffee, support from the Mobius producers, and encouragement to keep working.

Because it is work in progress, we do not offer full-blown tech or video documentation. The purpose is not to show fully produced work--for one thing it would take too long to change between works. It is for the audience and artist to have a dialogue about the work. Each piece can be as long as 20-30 minutes if it can balance in an evening... or as short as one minutes.

Another important aspect of Works-In-Progress is the inter-artist support. Artists present an amazing diversity of forms--video, dance, performance, visual art, or any combination, and on any given evening artists from different media may get a chance to meet each other and work together. The WIP series also gives audiences the opportunity to see a variety of work they wouldn't necessarily seek out. This is why the Mobius producers encourage artists to tell their invited guests to stay for the whole evening.

So, the next WIP is scheduled for February 22-24. Start thinking now--February is just around the corner. Send your proposal to Mobius, and mark it "Works-In-Progress." We look forward to hearing from you.

Mari Novotny-Jones

DEADLINE FOR WORKS IN PROGRESS #30 is January 23 performances will be scheduled for February 22, 23 and 24.

DEADLINE FOR WORKS IN PROGRESS #31 is April 10th performances will take place on May 17, 18, and 19th
Time and Length, long and short...description of things, explanation of things, questioning of things. Always the How to's, What to's, Why to's to you, our patient readers, our faithful viewers, our uncertain reviewers.

programs that guarantee and maintain civil liberties, equal system, and years
falling backwards.

opportunities and social justice for those other than the wealthy.
dream for yesteryears; our escapes behind the worn and colored is now. We live with the deception that yesterday was Grand, the clarity and brightness of yesterday.

The extended image of shortening time, backward falling-absurd, yet portentous in its implications. How true, too tangibly real, when one considers the why-fores and how-fores of petrified sharks teeth from Snake River region of Idaho; current rumblings and crackings of the earth in California, Mexico, China; atmospheric black holes and ozone layer depletions; nuclear proliferation without the means to control it or to rid its waste; massive oil spills in our oceans and destruction of tropical rainforest; political oppression of Tianamen Squares throughout the hemispheres; debilitating Watergates and Iran-Contra Affairs; social unrest, drug abuse, crazed serial killings at home and abroad...a step forward 2 steps back. And yet, we are informed, there is progress.

America the super power, with its faltering public education system, and years too late in its support of teeter-tottering programs that guarantee and maintain civil liberties, equal opportunities and social justice for those other than the wealthy.

Big words, small in action, we are globally half past the day and falling backwards. Our day staving saving but an irresponsible dream for yesteryears; our escapes behind the worn and colored curtain of good old times and wanting and pretending it is now. We live with the deception that yesterday was Grand, when all that glorious, care-free, care-less time, flexing bronzed sun-tanned muscles, finally nurtured the stretching tentacles of social abuse, greed, poverty, and a stupid, vapid selfishness.

We begin counting the ways, the days that manifest the shortness of time and reveal desperate acts shoring up the backward falling, half light of day.

David Keevil
Really Seeing Bert

Friday, March 16
Saturday, March 17
8:00 pm

This is an audience-participatory performance. The audience and I work together to perform the work for each other.

At the door, coming in, each member of the audience is given a performance text and a pencil (see enclosed). The seats are arranged as three sides of a square, forming three distinct groups: A, B, and C. On the fourth side of the square is my music stand. As the audience arrives and sits in the space, the lights are already up, evenly lighting every seat and the area around the music stand.

When the audience is seated and comfortable, I walk to my music stand, and open my score. I introduce the show by trying to quell their possible fears and get them excited about taking part. I say that although Really Seeing Bert is audience-participatory, there will be no tricks -- and I will not single anyone out. I urge them to jump in and take part, and not to worry about making mistakes.

We begin with a rehearsal. I "walk through" the text with them, and give numerous directions about how I want parts spoken (sharply, slowly, whispered, shouted, etc.). The audience members write my directions in their texts. We go over all the difficult places -- not to make them perfect, but to acquaint people with them. I pay particular attention to the numerous parts of the text where groups speak at the same time -- creating a near-chaos of voices colliding and overlapping, or a lyrical juxtaposition of rhythm and "melody."

This introduction and rehearsal takes about an hour. Because we jump from difficult spot to difficult spot, the audience gets some idea of what the piece is about. But they don't yet get a full understanding of the work's meaning or impact.

Following a brief break, we perform the final reading, which takes about fifty minutes. I direct, and read some or all of the solo parts; I have worked with another speaker doing the solo female voices. The readers may feel a bit intimidated at first -- by the difficulty of the text, and the experience of being a performer. But most find the performance engaging, challenging and exhilarating.

A Request

...If anyone has any Vampire stories, dreams, thoughts about whether Vampires are real or not please write it down, send it to me here at Mobius. I am working on a piece about Vampire mythology in a literal and abstract context. If I use something that you send me please include Name address/and or/phone so that I can have your permission to use your material and credit you.

Thanks,

Mari Novotny-Jones
STUDENT WORKS AT MOBIUS

Thursday, March 29
Friday, March 30
Saturday, March 31
8:00 pm

For the third year Mobius will present a weekend of performance and intermedia works by area college students. Each night, three to four different works will be presented. This is your chance to see works by students from Boston's varied colleges and art schools. Don't miss it!

Call for work: Proposals due at the Mobius office February 27.

Mobius is seeking proposals from Boston area college students for new performance art and intermedia works. Submit a proposal of not more than two pages describing the work you'd like to present. Also include a paragraph about yourself and documentation of your work if you have it (audio cassette, slides, drawings, 1/2" video). List the running time and a list of your technical needs. Low tech pieces are preferred as this will be a group showing with 3-4 works each night.

Visual Artists and Writers Residencies

Four and eight week residencies for visual artists and writers. November, and January through April. Applications accepted all year, reviewed monthly. Call or write for information and/or application: Vermont Studio Colony, P.O. Box 613 Johnson, Vermont 05656 tel (802) 635-2727

The New England Film and Video Festival (NEFVF) is pleased to announce its 1990 competition. Entry deadlines are: February 2, 1990 for independents and February 12, 1990 for student film/videomakers.

This year's entrants compete for cash and services in excess of $8,000, including a $2,500 Best of Festival Award and the $2,500 Boston Globe Critic's Choice Award. Film and video awards are made in independent and student categories. Special awards include Award for Social Documentary sponsored by Fanlight Productions and Newton Television Foundation and Outstanding Super 8 Award sponsored by Super 8 Sound.

The competition is open to independent media artists who are permanent residents of Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire or Rhode Island. Students who are attending a New England college or university also may enter. Students who are attending a college or university outside of New England who have permanent residence status in New England are also invited to enter. All entries must have been completed within the past two years. Students entries must have been completed while a student.

For applications and information, please contact: Arts Extension Service, Division of Continuing Education, Goodell Building, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003; (413) 545-2360

The New England Film and Video Festival is presented by the Arts Extension Service of the Division of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and the Boston Film/Video Foundation (BF/VF) and is sponsored by The Boston Globe.
At a loss for New Year's Resolutions?

Here are some ideas ---

1. Save **money** by not eating out.
2. **Donate** the money you save **to Mobius**.*
3. Cut down on **coffee**.
4. **Donate** the **money** you save on coffee **to Mobius**.*
5. Eat more prunes.
6. Take more risks.
7. Have more fun **every day**.

* Send contributions to:
**mobius** 354 Congress Street Boston, MA 02210

P.S. If you've already completed resolutions 2 and 4, go straight to 7.

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Tear off here

Your Name ________________________________________________

Address ________________________________________________

City, State ___________________________ Zip ________________

May we list your name on our funder list? ________________
January

Why Contemporary Art is Necessary . . . Practical Arguments in Support of Art Making and Arts Funding."
Thursday, January 11 7 pm FREE

Blood & Stone: "TBA"
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February

Kathy Marmor
*Coitus Interruptus*
Friday, February 16 and Saturday, February, 17 8:00 pm

March

Bart Uchida
*Half Past the Backward Falling or Day Light Saving Time*
March 14-24
Gallery hours
Wednesday-Saturday, 12:00-5:00 pm
Performances
Thursday-Saturday, March 29-31 8:00 pm

David Keevil
*Really Seeing Bert*
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Student works at Mobius
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Mobius 13th Anniversary Party, Performances and Auction
February 17

Works-in-progress
Thursday, February 22, Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24 8:00 pm

Mobius
354 congress street
Boston, MA 02210
(617) 542-7416

address correction requested

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