

PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE

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The Legendary Silvia Ziraneck Tells All

★ Plus ★
Philip Glass
Fashion
Camp Art
Dart
John Stalin

Who are the Art Vandals?



Holidays in Harness



The Brochure

WE ARE LIVING SCULPTURES, 'Somos esculturas vivientes,' the phrase in Spanish memorised for DDART's recent package holiday to Salou, Spain. But this was to be no ordinary holiday retirement from the cold art climate of Britain, by DDART members Dennis de Groot and Ray Richards. It was to be a performance running continuously during the seven day Blue Sky holiday package at the resort.

DDART planned to use the week-long rest from ten years of performance and media outrage as a continuous performance. Once outside their hotel room, the hotel lobby lift, dining-room, poolside, beach and resort town would be the locations for their living sculpture. For this they prepared a holiday outfit. Two leather harnesses constructed to be worn over summer styled safari suits. The harnesses ran down the legs and arms, straps were fitted with hooks onto which a variety of lengths of dowel poles could be fitted. With one end connected to one body part, the other end of the pole was tied onto the other performer. Richards and de Groot began to look like personalised Brunel engineering feats.

The movements by the artists were therefore determined by the construction

and as they were 'on holiday', the construction had to be altered to suit the routines of the day. Eating and walking to the beach became major feats of design mechanics, with the performers needing to move in unison: no small achievement at the hotel bar, dining-room or sea's edge. They unfortunately were unable to take part in the Donkey Safari, due to circumstances beyond their control.

What were DDART's intentions and reasons for choosing the package holiday as a situation in which to work? De Groot describes how they hoped to be able to spend the week in the company of the same group of people taking the package trip. The tourists would witness performances throughout the entire seven days, a resonance would build up of what they saw. However this was not to happen as DDART wished, as of course the people disembarking from the plane all went to different hotels. So the only option was to base their efforts at their own hotel, the Oasis Park. A 800-bed hotel or 'tourist factory' as de Groot called it. The 400 seater dining-room, with its two shift meal system feeding the EEC sunseekers, became a high point for the performances. DDART would enter, one behind the other, an elaborate series of poles connect-

ing various parts of their bodies. The management at first accommodated them by moving their table places around the room at each meal.

On the third day things changed. DDART had spent the morning down at the beach; coming back for lunch they went to go back to their room to change the pole structure to take on the next task of eating. They arrived five minutes late at the dining-room, performing as they entered, the 400 diners broke into applause and a minor cheer broke out. Anticipation had built up with their late arrival. The management advanced and informed them that they would have to stop if they were to be served a meal. DDART said they wished to continue performing. A compromise was struck; they would meet with the hotel manager the following morning. At this meeting a long discussion took place about what they were doing and art's place in the everyday world. DDART asked if there had been any complaints. The manager said there had been none, in fact people seemed to enjoy what they saw. But he pointed out that it is not possible to have art all the time explaining this with a phrase 'if you like porridge, you don't eat it all the time', something every hotelier understands.



Michael Bennett

Out for a Walk



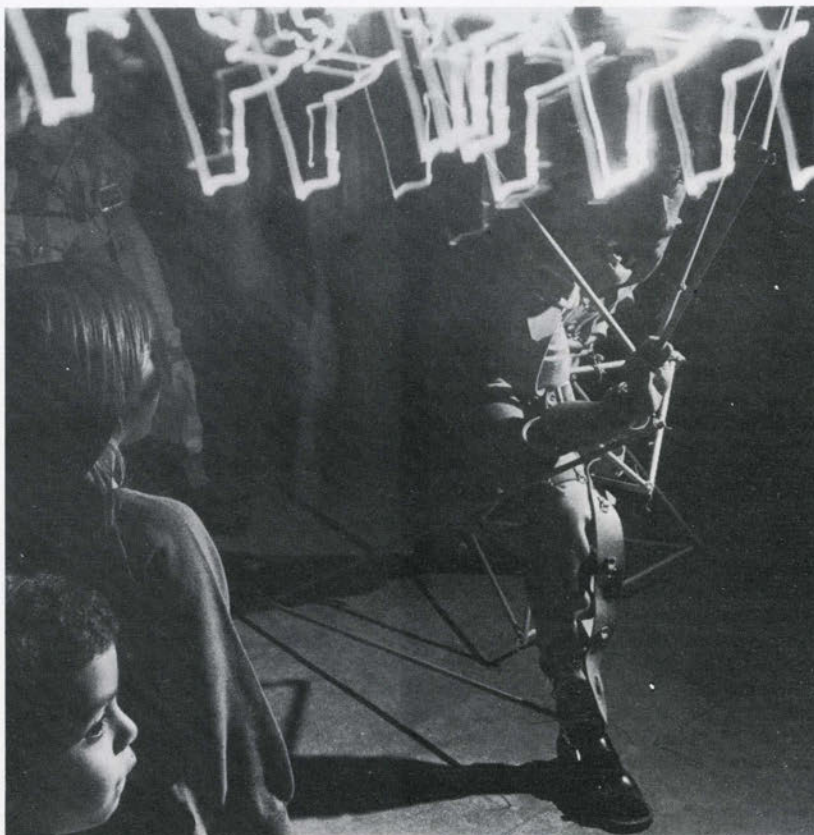
Michael Bennett

On the Beach

DDART argued that what they were doing was not upsetting anyone and they wished to continue. The manager said that although he had no objections to the actual performance, if they didn't stop, the local police would be called. DDART were offered an apartment nearby as a compromise, so reluctantly they took this offer.

Following the move, which had been a big disappointment to their aims, de Groot and Richards started to perform in the town and others near to Salou. In Reus, away from the coastal fringe of tourism they worked in the hot town square during siesta. Mad dogs and...Reactions from local onlookers were continuous, with two images recurring. DDART were either building a flying machine or were involved in some form of penitence. De Groot commented how the Spanish reacted differently to a performer coming up close and, as he puts it, entering into the 'personal space.' On one occasion a man stood perfectly still as he came right up to his face. The impression is that the Spanish would let the performer take over the open space while the onlookers stood quite still. At Barcelona and in Salou, performance walks were held along the promenade seafront; attempts by the police to move them on met with crowd resistance.

On the last day De Groot and Richards stripped to their beach wear and built a tall tower out of their poles, with which they



At the Disco



In the Town

waded out to sea. The entire beach watched as they progressed. Were they going to bury the tower at sea? No; eventually they returned to be met at the water's edge by a local who insisted on buying them a drink at the beach bar.

Their holiday over, DDART returned to the airport to fly home. In the departure lounge, a large display of photographs greeted them. Local enterprising photographers had taken pictures of everyone disembarking from the plane seven days earlier. The holiday snaps were being hawked as a perfect memento to the holiday. DDART bought theirs and flew home.

DDART Takes a Break was seen by the artists as a success, in spite of the problems encountered. The surprised holiday makers had responded with comments such as 'Well, if nothing else, it looks good'. Discussions had been held in the hotel bar about performance and its place in life. People had come up with suggestions of where else they could perform. And of course the two performers and their linking construction of poles now featured in scores of holiday snaps throughout Europe, as DDART were asked to pose with holiday groups while performing.

DDART see themselves as sculptors manipulating objects and shapes in space, but their work is carried on outside the art space and the demands of the art market. This must be one of the main reasons why they have not achieved any recognition; along with the notoreity constructed for them by the press. This is interesting,



At the Cafe

compared with Gilbert and George's recognition on the international art circuit. Talking to De Groot and Richards, it is apparent that they would like to come in from the cold, in particular with the funding of their work. One arts association which did fund a performance project only made the grant available on condition that no adverse publicity would be attracted.

It could be read into DDART's holiday performance and recent visit to Australia that they would wish to leave Britain for a warmer climate, which is not surprising. But is their work really so outrageous and difficult, or is it just that they don't perform in the accepted venues? Is their work no more difficult to understand than Richard Long's landscape works or Christo's wrappings? Is it because they shun the art publicity machine or is it because they have had more than their fair share of exposés?

Whatever the reason it seems in no doubt that their work is exciting and remains experimental, because they stay outside. Both literally by performing in public places but also because they are true art outlaws.

Robin Morley

Taken from interviews with Dennis de Groot and Ray Richards. Also *Relationships between Sculpture and Performance Art*: a report and interview with DDART by Thomas McCullough, published by the Education Department of Victoria, Australia

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