

contemporary

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



BLAST THEORY, *If You Could Ask Everyone in the World One Question What Would It Be?*, 2000. Photo: David Grandorge. Courtesy: Museum of Installation, London

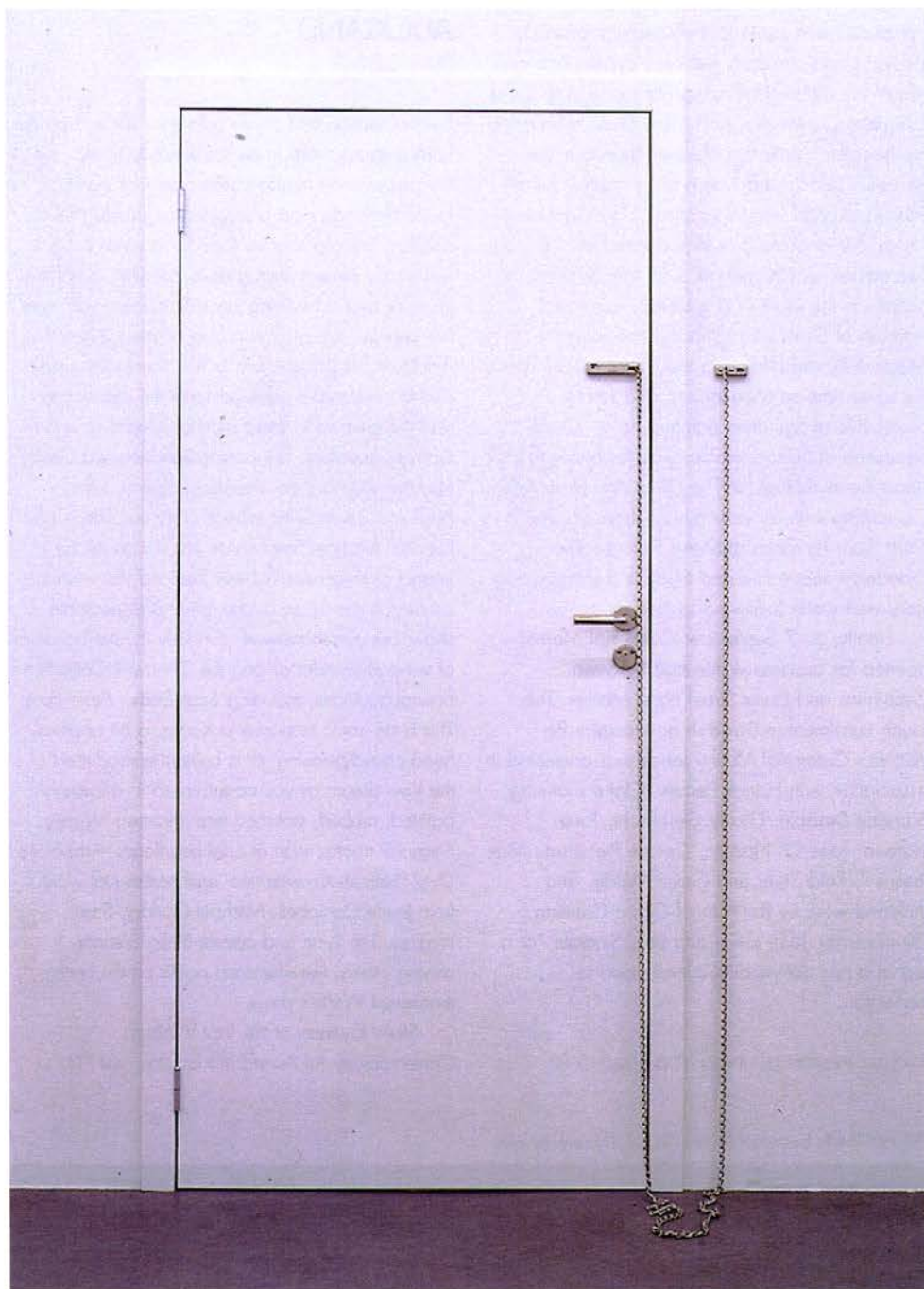
LONDON

RICHARD DYER

As an interesting foil to the Whitechapel's *Early One Morning* exhibition of what purported to be the cutting edge of young contemporary sculpture, Stephen Friedman Gallery presented *EU2* – current trends in European sculpture (until 19 October). Notable was Karsten Konrad from Berlin and Mark

Manders from The Netherlands. However, the inclusion of Rachel Whiteread's maquette for her plinth cast, which was installed in Trafalgar Square earlier in the year, seemed an unnecessary 'big-name-draw' strategy, having nothing of the contextual weight – and indeed beauty – of the original and adding little to what was in fact a very successful and refreshingly uncommercial exhibition in a commercial gallery.

Around the corner in Savile Row, Rut Bles Luxemburg's solo show at Laurent Delaye, *Cauchemar* [see Reviews] – liberally lubricated with the artist's own 2001 vintage Mosel Riesling – portrayed the city of Paris in a state of anthropomorphic excitement. The notion of the building as body, the city as synecdoche for the psychic simulacrum of the soma, was much in evidence, with faces and torsos sprouting from



MICHAEL ELMGREEN and INGAR DRAGSET, *Powerless Structures Fig. 126 (long safety chain)*, 2001, 217.5 x 103.5 cm. Private Collection. Courtesy: Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

crumbling walls and buckling limbs budding from bursting tree roots. The strength of the exhibition was augmented by its installation by architect Patrick Lynch. Nonetheless, any one of these brilliant photo-works would have stood on its own against a brick wall or under a bridge in the East End (as indeed one of Luxemburg's photos was once installed, remaining amazingly graffiti-free, as astutely its subject was the nearby sixties tenement block).

Another instance of cross-class-cultural juxtaposition was the opening of the Peer Trust at its new premises in Hoxton Street in a shop which formerly housed an African entrepreneur intent on selling wind-up radios to the seriously white working-class residents of the area – perhaps Peer may last

longer. Consisting of a single work by Swedish artist Lars Arrhenius, which wove a fantasy narrative of love, loss, accident and incident into the grid-like backdrop of the A-Z, the inaugural installation was accessible and engaging enough to find acceptance with the no-nonsense clientele of the local ale house across the road. Despite the yBa's flirtation with the object, the popular and the everyday, the still burgeoning East End art scene remains resolutely an upper-middle-class economic and cultural graft onto a stubbornly working-class area.

Tate magazine may have succumbed to the charms of Condé Nast, but no similar knight in *haute couture* armour seems likely at present to

catwalk to the rescue of the Tate empire itself. The multi-venue institution is heading for a substantial deficit next year, an exceedingly serious situation when you consider that their government grant is only £27.8m and the annual running costs £55m. One consequence of this dire situation is that the Tate is no longer able to fulfil its remit of purchasing important works of contemporary British art – something which Charles Saatchi, soon to open his leviathan modern art gallery (dare we say museum?) close enough on the South Bank to Tate Modern to huff and puff and blow worryingly hard, has no evident problem with. Perhaps Sir Nicholas Serota is in need of his own 'personal adviser', a sort of Martin Maloney for the twenty-first century, in order to aid him in acquiring the rather more reasonably priced works of brilliant up-and-coming artists – I have the odd couple of hours free on a Saturday afternoon.

Nearly three years ago I asked the Museum of Installation to add me to their mailing list, so, imagine my delight when last month they replied to my email – isn't modern technology wonderful? As my apartment is five minutes from the gallery in Deptford it would actually have been quicker for them to shout. However, all was forgiven when I viewed the rather good exhibition by the arts group Blast Theory, *Trucold and other works*, the highlight of which was *Choreographic Cops in a Complicated World* (2000). A simple but effective game of digital video looping which transformed violent cop-flick moments into hilarious hip-hop and break-dancing sequences accompanied by a suitably synchronised soundtrack, the humour was tellingly counterpointed by the numbness induced by the endless presentation of violent imagery in almost every Hollywood film.

RICHARD DYER IS NEWS EDITOR OF CONTEMPORARY, ASSISTANT EDITOR OF THIRD TEXT AND MANAGING EDITOR OF WASAFIRI. HE IS ALSO A FREELANCE CRITIC AND LECTURER

NEW YORK

MICHAEL WILSON

It's autumn already, and the kids are back at school. The new gallery term officially kicked off on 5 September (yes, it's possible to be that precise), and the crowds were out to impress in their new hats and shoes, blinking in the bright light of a dozen video installations. While a helicopter (that later turned out to be part of Julia Scher's overblown security-inspired installation at Andrea Rosen Gallery) hovered ominously overhead, Chelsea emerged from its summer slumber with a mix of old boys and new kids.

Perhaps the strongest shows, however, opened over the subsequent fortnight. Vargas-