

IN MEMORIAM

Nicholas Zurbrugg, highly gifted poet, artist, mover and shaker, professor of English and cultural studies and director of the Center of Contemporary Arts at De Montfort University, Leicester since 1995 after a longtime position at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia in 1978, died on 14 October 2001 following a brain hemorrhage at the age of 54. This was not an ordinary professor, but a catalyst for the avant-garde. He did write two books on postmodernism: *The Parameters of Postmodernism* (1993) and *Critical Vices: The Myths of Postmodern Theory* (2000).

But his great contribution was his investigations, explanations and appreciations of concrete poetry, Fluxus, the multimedia avant-garde, which excited him, his students, his friends, his colleagues around the world. He was always open to new ideas, writers and artists, such as Henri Chopin the sound poet and William Burroughs, the writer. He also became interested in the cyber artists, Stelarc and David Blair, and video art, especially when practiced like Bill Viola.

He organized and attended conferences throughout the world, was a curator of multiple exhibitions. A poet and artist himself, he loved to spend time with poets and artists. As a young man, he edited the cult magazine *Stereo Headphones*, where concrete poets such as Henri Chopin and Bob Cobbing would appear alongside Burroughs and Beckett (his doctorate was on Beckett and Proust at St. John's College, Oxford).

We know him recently for the amazing *Rethinking the Avant Garde*, an event held at De Montfort's centre for contemporary arts in 1998. He brought together such artists as Michael Snow from Canada, and body-modification artists Orlan and Stelarc. At the end of 2000, he brought together the older generation of concrete poets – Chopin, Cobbing and Emmett Williams – with a more recent generation of language poets, including Charles Bernstein, as well as Verona collector and publisher Francesco Conz, with whom Zurbrugg shared a love for concrete poetry and the Fluxus movement.

While in Australia, he was responsible for bringing key 20th century theorists (such as Jean Baudrillard) to Australia, Henri Chopin, the French sound artist, and New York writer/performer Kathy Acker. He also curated "Visual Poetics: Concrete poetry and its contexts" for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Brisbane in 1989 and "Francesco Conz and the Intermedia Avant-Garde" in 1997, for the Queensland Art Gallery in 1997. He was instrumental in persuading Francesco Conz, the eminent Italian collector of Fluxus material, to donate an important body of this material to the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane.

While in Australia, he contributed significantly to fostering an awareness of interdisciplinary practice through this projects at this Gallery, universities and alternative art spaces. He was responsible for bringing key 20th century theorists (such as Jean Baudrillard) out to Australia, the French artist Henri Chopin and New York writer/performer Kathy Acker. Zurbrugg tirelessly involved and championed local artists in his exhibition and writing projects. Importantly these included 'Visual Poetics: Concrete poetry and its contexts', which he curated for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane in 1989 and 'Francesco Conz and the Intermedia Avant-Garde' in 1997, which he curated with myself for the Queensland Art Gallery in 1997. His untimely death has been felt throughout the cultural world.

Andrzej Partum (1938? — 2002)

Partum. He was an odd blend of mystery and hoax, genius and cheap trick. For decades, he was a moving monument on Krakowskie Przedmiescie in Warsaw, strolling along the historic street and talking to poets, artists, provoking persons of importance — and then inviting them for an hour of coffee and deliberate nonsense, or mental zaoum.

It is not certain when he was born. He used to say 16 December 1938, but this could be just a date. When I asked him once about the origin of his name (Partum does not sound Polish nor Slavic), he replied with a distich in Latin, one that related to Virgin Mary (ante- and post- partum).

Andrzej, it seems, has been living all his life in Warsaw. He left this city for a few years in the 1980s for Copenhagen, assuming Danish citizenship of which he was very proud ("I am now the subject of the Danish monarchs"). And though he has been known throughout the international art community, Warsaw and its cultural milieu were his grazing grounds without which Partum was not a happy man. Thus he returned to his native city in the beginning of the 1990s — and stayed for good.

Partum was an institution, even if not a wholly reliable one. He was a composer and pianist, poet and publisher, artist and performer, author of manifestoes and insults thrown at the respected, elitist or pompous, founder of the Bureau de la Poesie and of The School of Positive Nihilism. And he was a charmer and a trickster.

Spending most of his life in communist Poland, Partum developed a unique strategy of dealing both with the authoritarian system as well as with the hierarchical cultural milieu this system promoted and conserved. To give an example: Partum tried to organize his debut concert straight away at the Polish National Philharmonic. First he phoned the Philharmonic director acting as a top Communist official (the director printed a poster and reserved the hall). Then he visited the director as Partum the Pianist and discussed the program with him. Unmasked and defeated — he spread the whole story around as a minor victory of Partum the Trickster.

He self-published his books of poetry and artists books since the late 1960s — a practice virtually unknown in the Soviet block. Since 1970s he started to employ mail art in his strategies, corresponding and exchanging art mail with artists in Europe and the Americas (it seems that Fluxus artists were especially important to him), but also offending critics, official artists and art officials with now legendary postcards: "You are ignorant of art and culture"...

Partum was under various artistic and literary influences throughout his life (from Polish Futurism and Dada to Fluxus and Conceptual Art) — but his attitude and manifested creative independence was a real inspiration for a whole generation of artists in the 1970s and 1980s. Since his return to Poland he preferred to stay with his older friends, sharing small glasses of vodka in the Warsaw Artists' Club. Andrzej Partum died in Warsaw on March 1 2002.

— Piotr Rypson

ROBIN CROZIER

Robin Crozier, 1936-2001 (Dec. 21). Robin was born in Gosforth, England; he studied art and taught at the Sunderland Polytechnic in northern England. Survived by his wife, Chris Nolan. Robin was a word artist, the word artist of his time; an artist who worked with language as a medium and who expanded the possibilities of language immeasurably. He was a conceptual poet, a sound poet, a visual poet, a Fluxist, a mail-artist, and one of the most generous and wide-ranging collaborators of the 20th century. His influence has been profound and his life and work has touched innumerable artists and writers all over the world.

I began corresponding and collaborating with Robin in the early 1970's, initially meeting him in the mail-art network. We were alike in our obsessive need to relentlessly explore and pursue the possibilities of language and over some 30

years we produced hundreds of works together: visual, textual, conceptual, and every combination imaginable. One of our projects, the Chapters, worked on steadily over some 25 years, consisted of a sheet of paper mailed back and forth, on which we would add one line at a time. When the sheet was full, it became a complete Chapter, and I published it in *Lost and Found Times*. In his last letter to me, dated Dec. 10, he enclosed the completed Chapter 24, on which he has written/drawn a row of shoes. He suggested "maybe all they need is a good shine". (He also told me he had decided to forgo therapy for his terminal cancer in order to continue working in the network.) So I added a shine to the shoes and started a Chapter 25. That start and my letter and other material were in the "out" mail basket at the library where I work when I learned he had died. I retrieved the envelope in order to write to his wife instead. I am now planning to publish all the Chapters together in a single book, a task that gives me great sadness and joy combined.

Another major and long-lasting project we did together was a (seemingly) endless series of TLPs (Tacky Little Pamphlets is the technical term) that we sent back and forth to each other, intervening in them each time, until I decided they were "done" and printed them. There are dozens and dozens of these. We also did envelopes, visual poems, modified and re-modified texts, drawings; you name it. Robin seemed completely unconcerned with art as a gallery commodity, and dealt with it for what it should be, a fundamental life force. This attitude I very much shared with him, and the loss of such an energetic, committed, intelligent, and generous friend and colleague has been devastating to me. And all the networks he participated in will greatly miss his numerous on-going projects: the Memo(random)s, the Wanda work the chairs and tables, the self-portraits, the writing, and so much much more. Long live Robin Crozier!

John M. Bennett
Dec. 31, 2001

A SMALL PORTRAIT ON THE DEATH OF ROBIN CROZIER (1936-2001)

a fluXus blue suede shoe
placed on top of a chair
placed on top of a table
placed on top of a red-headed doll named Wanda

crono bird
zero fox
boring king
bishop rod

tongue lips
words smith

send a view from a town nearby
casting
a gentle ear
a gentle bear
a gentle beard
through sunderland sunset fine

one more bright star picked from the mail art sky
every mail artist is a random memo(ry) of a constellation
in the endless chain-letter that just took the dark one
an infantile utopia sealed in a big cardboard box
a sculpture model eyed up in the swingin' Rome
an image lingering in the dictionary of synonyms
spelled out in calm round childlike handwriting

we never met
but most of all I regret
not even giving you a phone call
(like with Michael, like with Ray, like with many before)
paper friend, brother in mail, benign teacher
it does not need to be in flesh and blood
to be real
hold on, we're coming

vittore baroni

baroniv@ats.it
on xmas eve 2001

BILL BUNCE

Longtime director of the Kohler Art Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Bill Bunce died suddenly at the age of 65 in late February. He had been scheduled to talk on "Artists' Books" for the Friends lecture series on 28 February. Many remember him as warm, generous, urbane, witty and a connoisseur of the vast beauty of the world. With his keen intellect and good sense, he was an important contributor to the founding of the Art Libraries Society of North America, as I remember him. He also was tremendously supportive of artists of the book throughout his career and in his retirement after 33 years as head of the Kohler Art Library.

ART PEOPLE

Charles H. Wright, a Detroit obstetrician and gynecologist who gave birth to Detroit's first African American history museum in the mid-1960s, died at the age of 83. Starting with art exhibitions placed on a trailer that traveled to schools and state fairs, the Museum of African American History is now the world's largest African American history museum, renamed the Charles H. Wright Museum...

Neal Benezra is the new director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, succeeding David A. Ross, who left the museum abruptly last year. Benezra has been the deputy director and curator of modern and contemporary art at the Art Institute of Chicago. His position is effective 1 August.

Reginald Pollack, a painter and printmaker known on both coasts of the US, died in December at the age of 77. He painted portraits, still lifes and landscapes as well as more metaphysical images that included angels, animals or circus performers.

Kara Walker is representing the United States at the 25th Sao Paulo Bienal, curated by Robert Hobbs, with "Slavery! Slavery! Slavery!", an 85-foot-tall cyclorama of almost life-size figures made of black paper silhouettes, a self-portrait of the artist as Mary Poppins, and one of her text pieces, "Letter from a Young Black Girl".

Catherine Voorsanger, an associate curator of American decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, died at the age of 51 from complications of melanoma.

Gustav Rau, art collector and philanthropist who amassed one of the world's major private art collections, died in Stuttgart at the age of 79. All of his art (including works by Renoir, Monet and Cezanne) was warehoused or on tour, never on his own walls. His collection will be sold gradually in Germany to provide funds for vaccines, medical care and clean drinking water for children in the developing world.

Theresa Bernstein, who as a member of the Ash Can School of realistic painting was both hailed and flailed for "painting like a man" in the 1910s and then continued to generate vibrant canvases for 8 more decades, died in February at the age of 111. She was also known for her works that took Jewish celebrations and religious observances as their subject matter.

Richard Brown Baker, collector of contemporary art whose keen eye benefited the Yale University Art Gallery and the Museum of Art at RISD in Providence, died in Shelburne, Vermont at the age of 89. He bought "the work