



**Claims
Department**

OK, it's October and man, do I love Crocktober!!!

I'll be documenting my Slow-Cooker creations all month, and really, when have I not? The opening salvo this year, like most years, is chili.

This is also my birthday month, which means I'm doing daily posts under the hashtag #birthmonth which will be helping to fill these pages!

Sadly, we also lost someone who was a big part of Bay Area fandom for ages. More on that later.





On Performance Art

I have been exploring Performance Art.

Ubu.com, UBUWeb to the hip kids, has a whole lot of Performance Art recordings, and while I'm not traditionally a big Performance Art nerd, I've really gotten into it. Yes, I've written about Maria Abramovic and my fondness for video art, but there's something that really brought me into Performance Art lately.

I'm not 100% sure what. Probably the internet.

Now, I've gone through my Video Art phase, my Sound Art phase, but performance art is different and really, not quite geared towards me. There's an aspect of performance art that requires

attendance, and any video record may transit instantly into video art. That's an argument for another day, though.

There are several things that are important to put together. Dance and theatre are a part of Performance Art, but there is a difference. The five elements that are viewed as defining Performance art - Time, Space, Body, The Presence of the Artist, and The Relationship between the Artist and the Public. This basically says something very simple: in traditional performance, theatre and film and video and dance, there is usually a part of the 'artist' that is absent. The writer is seldom there, or if they are its more or less incidental. The script is created to be read by an actor, whether or not that actor is the writer/director/producer/whatever. The 'author' is only incidental, whereas in Performance Art, it is essential. You can not have the piece without the author being present. This does not mean that it's not choreographed or written, but that there is an essential element to the delivery that comes from the 'author' which can also mean that many of the



participants in it are a part of the authoring of the piece. This is an argument against the traditional idea that the book is the most important artifact in the creation of a piece. Here, it is the performance that trumps the book.

I think there's also a simpler way to look at it - it must make the viewer actively re-contextualize either what they are seeing against what they expect or take actions which force a recontextualization of the scenario or their relationship to it.

Stick with me, please.

An excellent example of Performance Art's ability to be many things would be Spike Jonez's classic music video for *Praise You*. In it, Jonez works with a group of dancers, the fictional Torrance Community Dance Group, to deliver a performance played on a boombox in front of a movie theatre, the Bruin Theatre (where I saw *Annie* in 1980) in Westwood. The idea is that they are performing there without permission, and while it's clearly a dance project, it's also a video art piece, but more importantly, it was done in-situ, and the interaction with the audience is key to the entire project. At one point, a theatre employee turns off the boombox, which I believe was unplanned. Jonez, after the boombox is silenced jumps and clings on to the employee. I always thought that in that moment, he whispered something to him to allow them to finish the project.

This certainly works as video art and dance, though the dance is simple and kinda purposely uninspiring, but as a performance art piece, it certainly qualifies as performance art for those lucky enough to have seen it in person. There was a time, brief, that it only existed as a piece of performance art. The conflict is inherent within the expectations of the audience for 'traditional' dance crew stuff, but more importantly, it was the conflict between the scenario and the setting. This was a flashmob concept, and in most cases that is the conflict between expectation of place and time vs. the will of the artist.

Unarguably a performance art piece is Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*. In it, Ono sits in front of the audience wearing her best clothes, and in her first performance of it said to the audience - "Come and cut a piece of my clothing wherever you like - the size of less than a postcard - and send it to the one you love."

And randomly selected members of the audience were presented scissors to come and cut.

And they did.

This is seen as a feminist piece, some art critics have said that it was the equivalent of a rape to have her clothes cut off in front of the audience, and that by inviting the audience to remove portions of her clothes, they are moved by the viewer to victimizer. That's a really interesting take, and I think it was Ono's full intention. There's the famous work *Helena* where ten goldfish were in ten blenders and any audience member could turn them on and blend up the goldfish. Two audience members apparently did over the run of the piece. These both allow the audience to act out their darkest desires in the guise of an artwork. Just putting the possibility for such actions out there seems to be both begging the audience to do the bad thing while at the same time, telling them their bad people if they want to do it. I would say that stands as a pretty clear two-force conflict.

There are a couple of version of *Cut Piece* out there, and in one, where an audience member cuts off the strap of Ono's bra, you can see in her eyes that she did not expect any audience member to go that direction. I think that transformation of the scenario in this one is incredibly clear.

Now, there's a kind of performance art where the art both is and isn't present. These are moving, sculptural pieces. The classic has to be the self-destructing sculptures of Jean Tinguely. These were sometimes included fireworks, fires, water, smoke, and other destructive forces. These were statues until they became a performance piece. These do not so much confront the viewer as to what they are seeing, but they are forcing them to consider what the actual art piece they experienced was. It was a transformation in front of the eyes of the viewer, that is certain.

It gets murky with one of my favorite pieces in the whole wide world - *Metropolis II*.

The thing, most of the time, is a big old cityscape. It's kinda futuristic, it's kinda 1930s New York, but there are these like tracks that run through, some like freeways and some railways.

Then, it's turned on.



Thousands of cars, a bunch of model trains, and more start to power through the scene. Kinetic Sculpture lives in two worlds, but it certainly is a transformation. Without movement, it's still a fascinating piece, talking about the idea of the city and the role of movement within it. Someone pointed out that when LA shutdown in 2020, it was as close as we're even gonna get to *Metropolis II* when it's not running. The idea of Kinetic Sculpture as performance art is interesting, because these are two distinctly different pieces when operational and when not running, but I'm not sure it qualifies.

Burden did a lot of performance art, things he called danger art. He had himself shot in the arm with a .22. He had himself thrown on to the freeway in a black bag at night. He was

pretty crazy, but he was always pouching the envelope on what was acceptable as art. I kinda think of him as *Jackass* in the 70s and 80s.

Vito Acconci is one of the most famous performance artists, and I've really dug into his stuff via Ubu.com. He was a great video artist, but his performance stuff is solid. *Seedbed*, where he masturbated under a thing of glass in a gallery, is what he's most known for.

Operating at pretty much the same time and with the same level of renown was Dan Graham, who died just last year. He carried himself and his practice much differently, and I have to say that reading about Performer / Audience / Mirror and seeing the video that exists from it, I can see what he's looking at is the idea of the audience, and in particular their field of view, as the theatre that the scene plays out on. That means that what he's doing, in this case a description of his stance, actions, and so on, are being forced to contend with the sight and expectations of the audience. In a way, he's zigging exactly when the audience expects him to zig, but somehow, that's uncomfortable, and that entirely plays out in the mind of the viewer.

Of course, as I dug through older stuff, I had to see where the current things were going on. Yoann Bourgeois did a piece that I consider to be Performance Art and amazingly beautiful. It's him, a set of stairs and a trampoline. He starts walking up towards the top, periodically falling off, hitting the trampoline and rebounding to near, or slightly behind where he fell off.

It's a story about life, and how you are trying to get towards something and fall back.

The thing here is that it's telling a story through abstract performance, but it's recognizable. The methodology for telling that story is not what is expected, though. This is a circus act, but it's outside the setting of a traditional circus, oh, and it's telling a story. The removal of a kind of performance from its traditional setting is one key element that I think automatically puts an audience into a different mindset.

Also, it looks like they did it in a Mall.

This reminds me of a music video I've written about a lot - *ZZZ is playing Grip*, and not just because of the trampoline. There,

the idea is the audience is seeing an off-kilter trampoline performance, but the real performance is for the camera which is mounted to the ceiling. These two elements are at odds with one another, as one has the meaning and full content of the piece, and the other gets it in a completely different context. Both, though, are valid performances, but with completely different meanings and expectations.

If I had any sort of cache in the art world, I would certainly develop a Performance Art practice of my own...but that's another article!







True Crime News

The Delphi Case

The Delphi murders grabbed headlines for almost three years.

And they're back after a really weird filing.

The Delphi murders have been one of the most covered cases in recent memory. Abby Williams and Libby German were found near an abandoned trestle in Delphi, Indiana, murdered. The crime scene, never fully described for the public, was dubbed as 'disturbing' and the few pieces of evidence brought sleuths out in droves. They had managed to capture voice and a brief, indistinct image of their killer on one of their phones. The case ended up drawing a lot of citizen detectives, but earlier this year, they made

an arrest, Richard Allen was their man, and after they had a search warrant, they found a gun that matched the ballistics of the casings found at the scene.

And now, Allen's lawyers are challenging the warrant on very strange grounds. In the words of the filing - "(1) Members of a pagan Norse religion, called Odinism, hijacked by white nationalists, ritualistically sacrificed Abigail Williams and Liberty German;"

Yeah, it's gonna be like that.

So, let's look at what the Defense is claiming and then a lot about the actual reality of the case.

So, in the document, they point out that there's a lot of things that would seem to be out of the tradition of Neo-Norse paganism. Three cops on one part of the investigation had developed a theory about the killings being a sacrifice by four Odinists, and even wrote a letter to the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit, who said that it appeared to be a Odinist murder.

Now, the defense is claiming that the State held the information on the potential involvement of Odinists from them and that was much stronger than the case they could have made against Richard Allen.

Now, why would those three officers think there was a Odinist connection?

Well, we'd never really been given a good thought of the crime scene, and there were apparently sticks on the bodies that indicated Odinist things, ie. Runes and potentially a set of sticks that look like a set of antlers placed above one of the girls' heads. There was also blood on one of the trees, and that it could have been another rune that resembled an 'f' which could be fehu (cattle or wealth) or ansuz (god), though others have said it didn't quite seem deliberate. It's also likely that the sticks were put in a similar shape.

This would probably not be enough, but they put out a case against a fellow named Brad Holder. He's known to be a Odinist, and his son Logan is said to have been "dating" Abby.

Even in the document, those quote marks are there.

There were apparently strange Facebook posts on Holder's page that the Defense claims resemble the crime scene

and the way the bodies were found. There was also an image of a naked man hanging on a tree. Even I, with only a slight understanding of Norse religious beliefs, knew that this was clearly a reference to Odin hanging from the Tree of Life. We are given a description of the location where the bodies were found, though not where they were killed. The bodies and the differing blood patterns are interesting, and the fact that Abby was wearing Libby's clothing but Abby was naked. There was little blood at the scene,

Now, Brad Holder had connections to four people who are considered suspects. One of them named Elvis is said to have asked what would happen if his spit was found on one of the girls and he could explain it away. He also told his sister that he had been there, making it sound like a part of an initiation ritual.

Is this ridiculous? Well, it does have elements that you could tie to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and 90s, but there's another element - White Nationalism.

In recent years, there's been a lot of connections of racists taking on the mantle of old Norse religion. I've talked a bit about this in the Norwegian Black Metal stories I've told over the years. This seems to be an attempt to tie the murders to a cult that is White Supremacist, which is a double-whammy.

There are portions of a deposition of Holder's wife Amber that draws the picture of one of Holder's acquaintances, Patrick Westfall, that made him seem to be a dangerous person, and clearly an Odinist.

Now, this is clearly spiraling a story, and entirely out in the public eye. It's somewhat different from the indictment and charging document, which gave enough to make it clear that there was need for Allen to be charged, but not going into the corners so much. The challenge to the warrant is interesting for a few reasons, but mostly because without that gun and bullet connection, it's hard to pin it on Allen.

Now, while I think that's a dumb thing to try and argue the Odinist angle, there are issues the submitted memo brings up that are real, including about the documentation of the finding of the bullet. That's a legit problem, but probably not enough on its own to derail things. The Odinist thing might not be enough either. While I can't see a judge looking at it and making a narrow ruling

on some of the cases in front of them, I can't see them dropping the warrant's validity on the basis of a theory where there's far less evidence than there is conjecture.

The thing here is that they want this info into the general public. They're trying the case in the court of public opinion, much the same way that the Prosecution in the McMartin pre-school did to get the jury aware of the matter. Still, there is some there there in this memo, and though the primary thrust of it will likely not bear fruit, there's enough that it will at least get a hearing.

The Delphi case will keep going, and while this somewhat wild conspiracy theory might have legs, I'd not bet on it.







Crocktober

It's that time again.

Every year, in October, I bust out the Crockpot and start using it. This is timed on purpose, because it's usually still too hot to use the Crockpot in September, and October is also the time when we start to put on the Winter weight.

This may explain my diabetes.

Most years, we start with chili. This year is no different.

I've covered most of my chili recipes in The Drink Tank over the years, and this year will only be slightly different. I usually use a lot of beans (pinto, Dark Red Kidneys) and often hominy. This year, just Kidneys and a bit of refried to thicken. We have our

chili mix, and we're going slightly more whole pepper heavy. Jalapeños, a habanero, and a few serranos. Lately, I've been using bison bone broth, which gives a slightly richer flavor. Of course, onions, garlic, ground beef, stew meat, diced red peppers, and carrots. It's substantial and it's tasty.

Chili is one thing that everyone in our family will enjoy together, with Vanessa and the kids enjoying with buttered bread, and me using tortilla chips. That's the first day, and it'll last us about three days total.

Which is good because cleaning our crockpot is an absolute pain!!!





Doug Berry

This will be the first of several, I think.

Doug Berry has died. Doug was...

I haven't got the words.

Doug showed up in various issues of *Journey Planet* and *The Drink Tank*, and he even co-edited two. He was a helluva writer, and one of the best storytellers I have ever had the honor of sitting in a fanzine lounge with.

And now, he's gone.

I can't express how I feel right now. I knew it was coming, he'd been posting about his time in the ICU and it sounded serious, at times like he was saying goodbye without actually saying it.

I can think of so many things that could give a tiny view of who Doug was, but the one thing I'll always remember is running into him after I'd won the Hugo, in that period when I'd bring it to cons with me, handing it to him and saying "get used to carrying that weight, you'll have your own soon enough!"

The smile that man threw at the that moment.

