

HOW WELL DID THEY SUCCEED? How much change did the Living Theater effect upon even the most susceptible members of the Yale community—the drama students? Does anyone ever know whether or not he succeeds in touching another?

This much we can certainly say: after the long arguments over coffee and cigarettes, after all the pros and all the cons had been laid out in the coffee shops and kitchens around the university, and the traditional theater had been weighed and measured against the *essential theater* of Artaud and the Becks, after all the points of view had been viewed and reviewed and finally blunted, we can be quite sure that the students of the Yale drama department went to class, read their Chekhov, turned in their assignments, and hoped for better grades than they deserved.

This doesn't necessarily mean that nothing has changed because the drama students haven't liberated the University Theater yet or locked Dean Brustein up in the Green Room. Despite Strindberg's statement that the theater has always been dominated by the bourgeois, we can always discover a modicum of comfort in telling ourselves that it need not always be so. The entire situation can change, will change, in a fraction of a second, or a long half hour; that is all the time it takes to turn the structure upside down. One sudden explosion in the culture vacuum is all that it would take to shatter the dreadful *taedium vitae* (which makes schizophrenia look like a bad cold) and turn us from suicide to Paradise here and now.

Several days after the students and the Becks had met in the little theater under the big theater, the Living Theater opened its fourth and final production, their eagerly anticipated collective creation in progress, *Paradise Now*.

"IF-I-COULD-TURN-YOU-ON/IF-I-COULD-DRIVE-YOU-OUT-OF-YOUR-MIND/IF-I-COULD-TELL-YOU/IF-I-COULD-DRIVE-YOU-OUT-OF-YOUR-WRETCHED-MIND/I-WOULD-TELL-YOU. . ."

The evening's spectacle began with members of *Le Living* roaming through the house, screaming at the audience, chanting and complaining. . .

"I am not allowed to travel without a passport!"

"I am not allowed to smoke marijuana!"

"I am not allowed to take my clothes off. . .!"

"Free theater. . . ! Act! Speak! Do what you want, the theater is yours! Feel free. . . ! You, the public, can choose your role and act it out!"

"Free the culture! Enact the cultural revolution!"

And one voice asked, "What is the cultural revolution?"

Indeed, what is the revolution of culture? What does it mean when a gang of victims sets out to change the perceptions, alter the perspectives, revolutionize the arts, and includes the audience in this revolution? And what are the Republicans and Democrats doing about it? What are you and I doing about it? What will it do about us?

Why banality? Why a rigid system of aesthetics? Why actors and why an audience and why should people sit on chairs and tell each other stories? Why aren't we eating more art, practicing the politics of ecstasy, and rolling naked on the illuminated stage, warmed by the footlights, touching and being touched by each other? Wouldn't that be just as interesting as spending the evening attending to language? Why should language be restricted to defining experience? Why shouldn't

language
a vast r
shouldn't

Ramparts: 30 Nov 68

The fir
four-and
hundred
of the co
partially
in the th
company

The stamp collection of
Dirk Bach
Dirk Bach

who did it) cried out, "The play is over! The theater is in the streets! The streets belong to the people! And WE ARE THE PEOPLE!"

And then some people, following the lead of Julian Beck, who marched offstage, up the aisle and out into the Indian Summer evening, clad only in a *cache sexe*, turned the night into a parade, an improvisation, a naked walk at midnight in New Haven.

I happened to be standing at the corner of Chapel Street waiting for the traffic light to change, when I saw the crowd coming out of the University Theater. And I saw, almost simultaneously, a patrol car at the light, also waiting. I saw the expressions on the faces of the officers in that car when they glimpsed the approaching mixed crowd of nearly naked and fully dressed theatergoers, walking on the sidewalk and in the street, away from the theater and into real life. That was a delicious moment. The officers had that look which comes when reason fails and there's nothing at all real about the reality, and it is easier to disbelieve your eyes than to accept what you're actually seeing. Hundreds of half-dressed people marching off the Yale campus. Going where? Why? There had been no word of any demonstrations, protests, or student uprisings. Yet there they were, a whole damned crowd of them marching right towards the patrol car. So who can blame the officers for reacting like frightened, confused men, and arresting the first ten naked people they could grab?

Julian and Judith and some other members of the cast were among those placed under arrest. Nothing unusual about that. Of course the police didn't have to use their Mace on one excited youth who was wearing only his shoes, socks, and undershorts, but then we have to remember that the police also have their point of unreality, past which they should not be pushed, else they panic and people get hurt. Naturally. Whose fault is that? If one aspires to be a real revolutionary, one must develop some compassion for policemen.

The bail was set, the charge was indecent exposure, and the Becks spent a few hours in jail while the details were worked out by their lawyers and the chief of police. Dean Brustein showed up at the station, described the evening as a "controlled occurrence," and said it was all "remarkably harmless and even gentle." The New York Times printed his comments the next morning, consigning it all to history.

It has always been my contention that revolutions should be conducted in the theaters. Further, revolutions should be remarkable, harmless, and definitely *gentle*. I would suggest that all our revolutionaries learn from *Le Living* and discard their guns, along with their clothes, and march naked up the aisles and out into the streets, to mystify and amaze policemen, and by their wonderful, outrageous, wordless eloquence, serve notice that the Cultural Revolution has commenced.

[ART]

The Stamp Collection of Dirk Bach

THE VISUAL FORMAT of postage stamps interests me. I enjoy seeing what happens to additive images contained within borders, to serrated edges, perforations and letter forms. Moreover, it is an extremely suitable vehicle for launching protest statements—particularly ones which involve verbal messages.

I can't recall exactly when I began this series; I think sometime in the early part of 1967. I remember that the idea was initially appealing because of the extraordinary interest Americans take in consecrating memorials of endless variety: zoos, swimming pools, park benches, forests, drinking fountains.

The conception and placement of the bulkier memorials, consisting primarily of artillery pieces which appear to have eternally captured their own town squares and city plazas, seem to have been prompted by a peculiar reverence for historical episodes in which extreme acts of violence have been interpreted as stunning examples of patriotism. The flimsier, less permanent memorials—particularly commemorative postage stamps—tend to be oriented toward exploiting more humanitarian issues, such as "Pray for Peace," "Nebraska Statehood Centennial" and "Law and Order."

I have obviously not concentrated on the theme of commemorative stamps in an effort to improve the design and content of our postals, although there is certainly a need for serious improvement in this area of government publications. Paintings of postage stamps are a means of communicating contemporary themes and concepts without resorting to heavy-handed contemporary visual invectives such as the all-purpose collage.

—DIRK BACH

Artist DIRK BACH is the director of the Scudder Gallery at the University of New Hampshire. During the past few years he has had a number of one-man shows, and he is represented in many public and private collections.



