

1975
1456

ON THE STOCKS

ON THE STOCKS

A catalogue complement/supplement to the performance "STOCKS AND BONDS".

BRUCE BARBER

It shalbe laweful . . . to put theym into the stokkis and theym so to kepe til
the next market day.

Oxford English Dictionary Act. 19 Hen. c. 6. 34

STOCKS AND BONDS

A PERFORMANCE.

An examination of some of the distinguishing features of the public gallery situation when confronted with an art work that attempts to deny the efficacies of that situation.

- Given 1. The artist as petty offender and/or judge.
 2. The gallery as churchyard and/or market place.

N.B. Are the principles of the gallery egalitarian?
 Are the principles of the work egalitarian?

Tuesday 21st.

C.C.TV. is arranged in the galleries. Co-axial cable is run from the two top galleries to a television monitor below in the foyer. This allows the public to view the performance while the gallery is closed. A public address system is arranged so that the performer may harangue the audience within and also outside the gallery itself. The P.A. system must sound like that found in a fairground or market place. The stocks are set up in the access area between the two galleries, effectively dividing these into two separate spaces . . . into two hemispheres. The seat is placed in anticipation. The scene is set for the arrival of the petty offender.

Wednesday 22nd.

Mother's birthday.

Thursday 23rd.

Rest, confer . . . concentrate . . . confutation occurs.

Friday 24th.

United Nations day. The offender's fast begins.

Saturday 25th.

The offender is placed in the stocks at 5.00 p.m.

Sunday 26th.

He remains in the stocks.

Monday 27th.

Labour Day. At 5.00 p.m. the offender is released. Fast ends.

Tuesday 28th.

Confer, rest.

Wednesday 29th.

Equipment is switched off. All is removed.

This catalogue has been produced as a complement/supplement to the 'performance' work "Stocks and Bonds". I use the word performance loosely here for in many ways the act is a single gesture calculated to evoke a number of responses. This is of course, entirely dependent on who the individual is and on his particular tack in relation to the work.

Although the work may be entered at a variety of levels I have attempted to minimise any deliberate hierarchical structuring. There are no fixed starting points except those provided by the exigencies of the performance itself and the fact that the pages of the catalogue are read from left to right. The catalogue is less a document or score (in the current art historical sense) than a means of exhibiting some of my initial intentions and to a certain extent 'direct' or 'co-ordinate' responses in relation to those intentions. The catalogue is no mere teaching aid or key to the performance for I realise that as many responses as I may 'direct' there may be as many more responses and directions as there are individuals to generate them. A primary aim is that the spectator/perceiver does not end up with interpretations or specific results but with questions. In this sense then I have an end in view.

I wish for the work in total to be seen as a series of propositions each with its own intrinsic volition; to be self generating. Each proposition acts less as a clue to a total whole than as an 'exposure area'. Contact with any 'exposed area' may lead to another which is either more or less exposed than the one initially contacted. Any attempt to link exposure areas causally is apt to lead to confusion or frustration. Connections of a kind do exist however between differing propositions. For want of a more appropriate term I shall call them 'propositional equivalences'; attractions and equivalences in volition.

The enterprise I have involved myself in is not intentionally cabalistic in nature: I have focused my attention more on the hermeneutics of the situation and accordingly on the production and exploration of active and passive metaphors within a flexible structure. This structure exists within a definite art context but does not attempt to estrange itself from the culture at large.

The contract/communion between myself, my audience and by implication the culture as a whole is contingent upon the need to make and experience art . . . ; in this sense the terms artist (performer) and audience (active or passive participants) are mutually interchangeable. This is particularly true if we consider that the spectator completes the work irrespective of the nature or condition of that which is presented. He can only be guided or simply exposed. There is I feel a natural tendency for us to think while thinking and to shift from the role of audience to that of performer, from observing to doing; all of this takes place in the mind. We may complete not only the performances of others but also our own. This often happens in spite of our selves and our senses. It is unavoidably an act of observation and participation occurring simultaneously, with only subtle shifts of emphasis to distinguish one from the other. There is however a limit to what we may complete, as this catalogue will no doubt indicate.

The implications of this contract/communion that we maintain with the outside and the inside may be manifold. For instance that which is happening inside the reader's head when he encounters the statements listed below bears a fundamental relationship to the ideas presented above.

"My name is . . . and I think."

From a lying position, he bent his body forwards towards the wall and locked his hands around his feet.

For some time the figure stood as straight as a die; the photograph was taken and then buried. An erect pole was placed above the ground as a symbol of opportunism.

The enterprise I have involved myself with is essentially an attempt to keep the path open between two parallel walls . . . ; one is in the process of being mended, the other still under construction. Indeterminacy staves off conclusion while it breeds confusion.

IN THE STOCKS

BETWEEN THE STOCKS

ON THE STOCKS

... SINCE WHEN HAS WORK EVER BEEN AN INDEX OF VALUE ...

... PRIME TIME. NO BUCKET SHOP/THIS EIGHT HOUR DAY ...

SECURITIES FOR THE ARTWORKS.

AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL



PLEASE QUOTE: PPX

19 September 1975

Mr Bruce Barber
c/o School of Fine Arts
University of Auckland
Private Bag
AUCKLAND

Auckland City Art Gallery

Kitchener Street,
Private Bag, Wellesley Street,
Auckland, New Zealand.
Cables: Gallery Auckland.
Telephone 74-650

Dear Bruce

I have asked for the information you requested to be supplied and you will find it below.

Having extra staff has not been without some difficulties as one of our permanent security staff is on holiday abroad and one wishes to take his family away, and of course one is required to work during the day. As we only have four, we are left with one person to do a night shift, which he has kindly agreed to do.

The information you require is:-

Charles Marshall Saturday 5.30 p.m. to Sunday 8.00 a.m. which is because of penalty rates a total of 27½ hours at \$2.5578 per hour (would you believe four decimals) and I guess that makes a total of \$70.3395.

Sunday 5.30 p.m. to Monday 8.00 a.m. 29 hours. There is a difference in penalty rates (blame Sunday for that), a total of \$74.1962 which gives a total of \$144.5357.

Because gallery staff do not usually commence work until noon, another security staff member has agreed to come in from 8.00 a.m. to 12 noon, his name is Doug Mitchell. Penalty rates make 68 hours and at \$2.774 per hour (a more senior person) \$22.182.

Total for both is \$166.7177. On top of this must be taxi fares (for Sunday 8.00 a.m.) \$6.00. The grand total is \$172.71 (note two decimal places for grand total).

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John'.

JOHN MAYNARD
EXHIBITIONS OFFICER

A BOY'S GAME

Two boys pick a side, and there is one den only. They toss to see which side keeps it. The side which wins the toss then goes out and when the boys have got a good distance off, they cry "stocks". The boys who keep the den run after them to catch them; when one is caught his capturer counts to ten whilst he holds him and cries "stocks". His prisoner is taken into the den. If they are all caught the other side turns out but if one of the other side can manage to run through the den and cry "stocks" all the prisoners are released and can go out again.

English Dialect Dictionary.

A POSITIVE CONVICTION

. . . his activities would be curtailed as a result of an indiscriminate use of his powers. He agreed that he had overstepped the mark. It had been revealed to him that a challenge was on the way and he sensed that sooner or later there would be enough incriminating evidence against him to lead to a positive conviction.

With this realisation he felt that any act he entertained or did would have to be symbolic.

. . . he locked the front and back doors . . . closed all of the windows and drew the curtains. He began to tear at the wallpaper, then left off this to rip up the carpet. He systematically hid every sharp object he could find . . . masked the light switches and plug sockets with tape. He turned the taps on in both the bathroom and the kitchen . . . stopped the ball-cock and released the valve in the cistern so that the toilet would overflow.

He was thinking of three balls . . . the sign of the pawnbroker.

. . . moving to a large chest of drawers in the corner of the bedroom he extracted from the rear of the third drawer a mandrill mask . . . one fashioned from rubber and synthetic hair. He had worn it to parties on several occasions. He put the mask on so that the face of the mandrill protruded from the back of his head and then lay face downwards in the centre of the living room floor and waited for the house to float down the road.

Even if he only thought these thoughts on such and such a day of the week and at such and such a time of the day . . . that in itself he thought would be meaningful.

. . . his was not a brokerage firm in the true sense of the term, for he and his operators just accepted orders from customers without placing them on the market. The bucket shop operator in fact gambled on his customers' bad judgment and that he would be able to buy or sell stock at more favourable prices . . .

PRAXIS POINT

“... we all have one common profession and interest ... that's why we should stick together ... you know the old adage ... birds of a feather ... there's no reason to starve ... I'm sure we can work this out for the benefit of all concerned.”

“... what we should be doing is developing new skills ... be adaptable ... I'm tired of vacuous gestures ... *ignotem per ignotius* ... that's what that is ... we must be adaptable ... so that the next time a crisis such as this comes along we'll be prepared for it. At the moment we're all too specialised ... no sense in being slaves to the system ... change now or pay later that's what I say.”

“... I thought that I'd be the last person to hear you talk like this ... you're absolutely right of course ... we must strike while the iron's hot ... otherwise we will become like priests whose stocks are so tight about their necks that they threaten to choke them if they laugh.”

“... alright ... but how must we go about it. It seems too confusing to me ... what should we do.”

“... easily done ... we forget about the principal *tertium quid* ... learn new skills ... unlearn old ones ... de-specialise for six months of the year ... choose one at the same time as the other ... this and that ... never more an either/or system ... nor a black or white ... take or out of the language ... or you will become a slave to its use ... in fact a little more pragmatic behaviour wouldn't go amiss.”

“... but you're both dealing with what is essentially surface material ... we all know about the iceberg and what lies beneath ... surely the third part or even fourth part to any thing ... act ... behaviour is important. I do realise that the either/or situation is only a portion of the truth ... never the less ... fundamentals do exist ... and so too dichotomies. However it seems to me that shifts of emphasis ... often between two poles are not to be neglected ... It has often been shown that the problem may have something to do with the models we construct for history ... even the history involved in a line of words or a particle of speech ... it's all human and the margin for error is wide. We all work within that ... it's inescapable ... however we may view history. We must never forget that we are part of the process. We must criticise ... even in the face of criticism. I contend that there can be no higher realm for us to occupy. We must observe with good faith ... we should work within the confines of our own territory ... with what we have been given. Though the boundaries may be flexible we should never take them for granted in our quest ... our enterprise.”

“... this could be viewed as the blind leading the blind.”

"Well . . . yes but three parts of or is pragmatic behaviour . . . something you've been disclaiming . . . get rid of it you say . . . it seems to me nothing short of anarchy. Lift or out of the language and what are you left with . . ."

"... but."

"No . . . we are left without doubt . . . away goes a distinct form of criticism . . . even our epistemological tradition becomes redundant . . . all through just lifting one conjunction out of the language . . ."

"So we're left in . . . puris naturalibus as it were."

"... or less."

"Right . . . we're no fools . . . let's re-evaluate where we stand . . . reassess the situation . . . criticise each other if need be. But let's do it positively . . . I think we've all had enough of negative thinking . . . let's explore the anomalies and anachronisms as they exist . . . relearn the language if we have to . . ."

"... In the beginning was the need."

THERE WAS ONCE A WORSHIP OF NATURE INSTEAD OF STOCKS AND STONES

“... no sense in dealing with the other group any more ... at least that's what I feel ... don't you agree ...”

“I said there is no sense in dealing with the other group anymore ... especially ... especially if we don't really want to ... don't you agree ...”

“... what's that ...”

“I said that there's no sense in dealing with the others if they have ideas of that nature ...”

“... eh ... what's that ...”

“I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE ANYONE TREAT ME LIKE THAT ... no sense ...”

“Ah ... the fence ... keep the cats out of the back yard ... good idea ... should have had one built before now.”

“Nonsense ... there's no fence.”

“... you're right ... no sense in doing that ... no matter how high you build it ... they'll still get in ... climb over or go around ... go about their business and dig up the flower beds just the same ... cunning little devils.”

UNITED NATIONS DAY

GOOD TIL CANCELLED

LABOUR DAY

THE CHART READER WAS ONE OF THE FEW OUT OF THE COMPANY OF
MANY WHO REALISED THAT THE POLITICIANS STOCK-IN-TRADE OF A
DOZEN CATCH WORDS WAS A METHOD OF SELLING AGAINST THE BOX.

THE HEURISTIC MODEL

On the beach . . . a young man proceeds to draw a large ring in the sand . . . he moves from north to south in an anti-clockwise direction and then back towards the north again. The sand sprays left and right of the right index finger he is using to complete the task . . . walking backwards . . . slowly. The line which began as a point in the north marries the point in the north . . . a well practised circle . . . perfect. Practice makes perfect. From high noon to low sun to high noon again.

After the task had been completed the young man stood for a time . . . his back to a small group of spectators standing some distance away to the south-west . . . their backs to the sea. Soon . . . in a slow and deliberate fashion . . . as if he had contemplated the idea for some time . . . the young man drew a folded slip of white paper from his right jacket pocket and then a small smooth and round black stone from his left trouser pocket. Unfolding the paper he walked to what he presumed to be the exact centre of the ring . . . then holding both the stone and paper horizontally and at arms length and shoulder height . . . one hand . . . the right over the other . . . the articles sandwiched between . . . he deftly flicked both together into the air. They fell together . . . dead centre of the ring.

The young man . . . his eyes fixed to the centre markers walked slowly . . . backwards to the edge of the ring. He stood for a few seconds and then walked quickly to the centre of the ring again . . . bent towards the stone and then proceeded to draw a straight line from the centre point to the periphery of the circle. This time he used his left finger for the task . . . centering it between his body. Having completed this he withdrew from the circle and inspected his efforts. He sat down . . . legs crossed. The audience became restless . . .

After some time had elapsed the young man rose and turned round to confront his audience. His eyes were closed. He opened them and began to speak.

"You have just witnessed a significant act . . . why . . . because I intended that it be so. You may assume that my eyes have been shut for the duration of the performance . . . just as you may presume that the circle I have drawn is a perfect circle and that the centre I have indicated is the true centre of that circle . . . it follows of course that the radius too is true and that the diameter which we can deduce from the centre point and radius would also be true. This is self evident . . . of course . . . and these positions . . . if you doubt them may be tested empirically. However I am about to illustrate to you why I consider this to have been a meaningless act carried out in a meaningful way. This is the significance of it . . . ideas locked into position may not change . . . I do not like my cup of tea too hot . . . because . . . it's too hot. A natural. Falsity and truthfulness may be deferred . . . meaningfulness in relation to meaninglessness is another matter. What kinds of problems may we find . . . will they be real . . . false . . . Maybe in this act there is no problem other than the apparent notion that I did all with my eyes closed.

Let us examine this peculiar piece of behaviour . . . analyse. You may notice that the stone and paper is now fastened to the ring yet before I drew the connecting line it rested in a relatively unfixed position . . . it became the centre of the circle

after the line was drawn and not before. You may have also noticed that the circle was known first . . . in fact prior to the centre point and the radius. To all intents and purposes I have constructed a circle from the outside. Is this a meaningless conclusion to draw from the situation . . . false or true. Can we construct a circle from the outside . . . what do we include and what do we exclude. Of course you may say that this is all relative . . . and anyway circles are known . . . constant. Size . . . placement . . . width of defining boundary may change yet there is a known and constant shape . . . unalterable. Any deviations may be singled out and the form thus rejected from the special category . . . circle.

My basic premise here was . . . that I could draw a perfect circle with my eyes closed within a prescribed period of time and a specific space. What could we deduce from the act of my drawing another circle this time with my eyes open . . . especially if it turned out imperfect . . . or less perfect than the first. Would this be like the proverbial blind man who has been conditioned through his blindness to perceive reality in a different way from one who can see. Suppose that this blind man suddenly has the ability to see . . . is this a new world he sees . . . one conditioned by his disability . . . what problems would he encounter. He may be incapable of perceiving reality as others do . . . a new situation . . . he must relearn . . . modify his behaviour to suit his new surroundings. If I had always drawn circles with my eyes shut . . . would I have difficulty drawing them with my eyes open . . . were they imperfect initially . . . and did I merely believe them to be perfect. What is the fundamental property of a perfect circle . . . it is perfectly round . . . mathematically perfect.

Let's move to another plane . . . ostensibly less absurd . . . the implications anyway. The syllogistic enterprise. I've yet to meet someone who can draw a perfect circle eyes open or closed. Some wouldn't know a perfect circle from a pile of salt. If we were to take two tosses of a coin . . . of the either/or variety that is if there are two separate faces . . . or of the and/or if the two faces are the same . . . drawing a perfect circle . . . I can . . . I can't. Given this simple proposition and its opposite . . . and attaching any other statement we wish . . . all circles can be drawn . . . we can draw any conclusion we wish . . . no . . . wait this is a false example . . . I'm jumping the gun. A syllogism is a form of reasoning . . . where two given propositions . . . premises are . . . stated in some way . . . either written or spoken . . . and where they have a common middle term . . . and . . . from this a third is deduced. This may be termed the conclusion. The middle term is absent from this third statement . . . let's see . . ."

The young man draws a pocket dictionary from his left trouser pocket. The crowd grows restless. A few begin to move away towards the land . . . a track up from the beach.

"... wait . . . here we are . . . syllogism . . . the perfect example. *Omne animal est substantia . . . omnis homo est animal ergo) omnis homo est substantia*. O.K. we could construct a valid syllogism . . . which would pertain directly to our problem . . . our meaning in absurdity. Given a) all circles are rings . . . and b) all rings are round . . . then our conclusion c) all rings are rings. We could apply the classic rule here . . . called by some the indirect reduction rule . . . which says that a) . . . b) and conclusion c) is a valid inference . . . then a) . . . non c) . . . over non b) is a

valid inference also . . . this owing to the validity of the primary conclusion or more correctly inference . . . we find that a) all circles are rings . . . right . . . non c) some rings are not round . . . and non b) some rings are not rings. But when is a door not a door . . . when its ajar. Both patented absurdities . . . of course all rings are rings . . . no matter what their gender. Do we accept contradictions such as these. Are they inherent in the way we speak . . . see things or reason them out afterwards . . . the language. Maybe . . . taking this to its logical conclusion . . . it may mean the end of criticism. Accept contradictions and absurdities and we are at sea . . . all at sea. Dumb . . . another bit of theatre . . . the epitomy of thoughtlessness. A waste of time."

One member of the audience suddenly speaks. The others turn to view the outlaw in their midst. "... I'm an idealist . . . I can afford to be stupid."

IS CRITICISM THE ONLY ART LEFT FOR THOSE WHO WOULD
ATTEMPT TO AXE THE HELVE?

