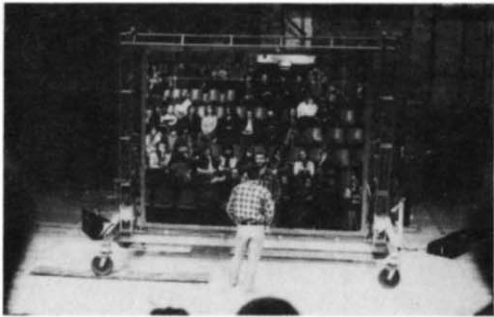


AUDIO ARTS



DAN GRAHAM



THE STATIC

at riverside studios London

Dan Graham and The Static

Dan Graham & The Static at Riverside Studios London

[Primary Information; 2016]

by **SCVSCV**



STYLES: performance art, no wave

OTHERS: Michael Asher, Jaques Lacan, DNA, Glenn Branca

Performer/Audience/Mirror

1. *the artist facing the audience and describing himself and the attitudes his movements signify*

Historical and cultural infrastructure collapses when islands become submerged in physical and cultural trauma, when fragmented art-narratives dissolve in flows of information, when history illegibly describes its movements and attitudes in the vacuous context of cultural post-performance.

The rhetoric of interactivity might describe archiving illusory art infrastructure as necessary, as niche, but also perhaps as insubstantial when compared to the promissory interactivity of infinite data access – the archive of the internet, or the relational and co-creative archiving that takes place during identity production and timeline dialectics.

Regardless, the location of minor performance in broad data-fields is uncertain. This uncertainty demands preservation; it demands pinning these practices down in space yet again, as done on Primary Information's new tape. A direct documentation of artist Dan Graham's 1979 performance at Riverside Studios London, side one of the tape presents the artist describing his own and the audience's movements and behaviors in different contexts, an echoing of performativity falling on the deaf ears of a fragmented, ghostly, but ever-present "public."

2. the artist facing the audience and describing their external behaviors

The tape's careful presentation of minor archival material is not only a consideration of Graham's entirely special performance, but a consideration of cultural transmission itself outputting in 1979, in 2016, and perhaps outputting into all foreseeable human exchange. Primary Information's archival release of the performance is a post-production of affective memory embedded deeply in urban and cultural infrastructure, an archaeology of assembled data not necessarily meant for machinic dissolution or fragmentation, but deep, considered, and undeniably *human* interpretation. By presenting a minor moment and minor commentary on the nature of art perception, the tape is placed into an endless archival field, the endless consideration of an artist auto-performing themselves linguistically across the stage of history. Considering how this subtly is often unconsidered in plenty of modern music contexts, Dan Graham's performance at Riverside Studios London is an enigmatic snapshot of a wholly different scenario – and an ever important one.

3. the artist facing the mirror (back to the audience) and discussing his movements and their signification

What draws our most studious institutions to lost or suppressed historical information, to elaborate on their device, their text, to arrange their often grossly special contexts anew? When the sources are obscure, their re-visitation helps create vectors of counter-memory in an ever-flattened discourse of readymade culture. Despite the performance's discomfiting and amusing presentation, Dan Graham doesn't come across as cynical in the slightest. Rather, it's a statement critiquing the very heart of transmission, how flighty language devices alter and leisure within social contexts. The audience shuffles, coughs, and fidgets uncomfortably throughout, while Graham points out every detail of their movement. The wavelength of the public's reception rises and falls in swells of humor or embarrassment. Graham – whose work traces and blurs lines between conceptual art practice in performance, video, film, and photography – has an identity and a field of work that *Performer/Audience/Mirror* contemplates wholly.

4. the artist (still facing the mirror) describing the audience and their movements through a reverse perspective

Even still, the libidinal conceptual drive to mimic and regurgitate the movements of the performer/audience does more than just to highlight the communication breakdowns evident within human ritual, more than to merely re-emphasize the complications of subject-object transmission. Although seemingly Lacanian in its affect – especially regarding the use of the mirror as a “mirror stage” of subject recognition – Graham's delivery is not just a linguistic/unconscious transmission of group-subject psychoanalysis in a performance context. Although an intervention into group psyche, the performance operates as a communicative *production* that moves catastrophically into the very heart of group narcissism, of breaking the entire notion of subjectivity apart: a performance of broken subjectivity deconstructing itself in a dastardly demonstration of mimicry.

The Static

Side two of the tape showcases a 40-minute performance of The Static, a No Wave group featuring Glenn Branca, Barbara Ess, and Christine Hahn who followed up Graham's performance at Riverside Studios. Much like the linguistic limits Graham clearly displayed in a performance context, The Static's fragment-movements of disembodied punk descend into wild brackets of schizo-communication. The instruments scribble riff-age widely, locking in for scrappy movements, falling apart regularly, or descending in unison as voices deliver aphoristic remarks directly.

Here, the alterity of No Wave as a genre is shown in true form, as a precise installation of the movement as it stood in 1979, as a sonic installation of plywood nailed and taped together haphazardly to gorgeous and ritualistic power. Although similar to Graham's performance in that it comes across as rooted in antagonism, the musical context allows the discord to be beautifully emphasized as solidarity.

Their counter-narrative is an esoteric but ever-pertinent discussion of urban-art infrastructure becoming *more* mutant, more incisive as information is flattened and consumed widely. The contemporary archival field may be flattened, but these performances withstand as enigmatic portrayals of denial and obscured transmission, one to help develop radical counter-memories as infrastructure collapses, as islands continue to submerge.