



Edge Of An Era panel event at St James's Church, London

Edge Of An Era

St James's Church, Clerkenwell, London

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, there was a great, dirty city called London. It was filthy, it was rich; it had great avenues and mansions and it also had poky, tangling lanes – the residue of an even older historic past. It was in the warehouses and workshops among these lanes that Edge Of An Era asks us to return to, to a strange London in which more things were possible than today.

Organised by the Live Art Development Agency, in collaboration with performance artist Helena Goldwater and curator Rob La Frenais, once editor of *Performance* magazine, Edge Of An Era was a one night event of guided walks around Clerkenwell, performances, commissions (including Morgan Quaintance's Bow Gamelan Ensemble film *Anne, Richard & Paul*) and conversations. Marking the 30th birthday of EDGE 88, a 12 day festival of performance art that took place in the same Central London spaces three decades ago, 2019's Edge was many things at once: a commemoration, a celebration, a performance of performances, a reunion, a marking of what once was and the legacy with which it now challenges the present day.

As a curatorial and commissioning organisation, the Live Art Development Agency has always asked, through its presented works, the most pertinent questions: how do the intersecting histories of artwork connect? What networks and what meanings do they make? Walking with La Frenais around some 12 locations, each venues where EDGE 88 had held events, we stood, and looked dimly back at the ghosts of our former selves. We stood above the underground cells of the old House of Correction, the space where Alastair MacLennan had installed the torn flags and partly burnt pianos that made up *Bled Edge*. MacLennan had returned for

this evening and reiterated for us *Bled Edge*'s contextualisation within the politics of Ireland and the UK. In 1988, peace of sorts was on its way. Now Brexit makes us – and the Irish border – jittery. The Kingsway College close by had been another venue in 1988. Now, it has been gentrified: security guards shooed us away. The delight of this strange walk was to look back and remember or imagine. Many of the original artists had turned up for the jaunt. Outside 8 Northburgh Street – then a desolate office block given over for free by estate agents to a performance art festival, now a building of dull purposes – memories began to unravel. Had Stuart Brisley's *Bourgeois Manners* been on the middle or the top floor? No, he'd been on the bottom floor, said Mona Hatoum. She'd presented *Reflections On Value* on one of the higher floors, and it had been an artwork that helped her pivot her thinking into new directions. People still agreed that, 30 years on, Carolee Schneemann's *Cat Scan* – a performance in that building which featured several performers, projections of various images, including cats, video monitors and junk – had been unforgettable. "She was practically snogging the cat," muttered one voice from out of the crowd.

Back in the central space of St James's Church, Quaintance's film – using much unseen footage of Bow Gamelan's Richard Wilson, Anne Bean and the late Paul Burwell – recalled the ensemble's sou'westers and rubber boots, and their marvellous capacity to sit by the Thames shore making panpipes operated by blowtorches, salvaging fragments from past ruins. Bow Gamelan operated in territories where health and safety legislation was thinly writ, the sparks from their arc welding leaving vital light traces falling down on old London, to recall the past and illuminate the present. Louise Gray

New Ear Festival

Fridman Gallery, New York, US

The Fridman Gallery's fourth annual New Ear Festival was the first in its new location on Manhattan's Lower East Side; it made good use of its larger home with five evenings of music, video installations and a workshop and a performative echo of its old Tribeca space.

The series included performances by Bob Bellerue, Brian Chase, Leila Bordreuil, Susie Ibarra, Charmaine Lee and Luke Stewart, as well as video artist Mary Lucier doing a realisation of her former husband Alvin Lucier's landmark *I Am Sitting In A Room* and a screening of the documentary *Milford Graves Full Mantis*.

But it's on the standing room only penultimate night that the programming becomes reflective, with Taylor Deupree and Stephen Vitiello crafting a new piece using recordings from their 2018 New Ear appearance. Adding to the layering,

the evening marks the release of an LP, *Fridman Variations*, featuring an edit of the 2018 concert and another reworking of the material (co-released with Deupree's 12k label, it's the second release on the Fridman imprint, the first being a 7" also featuring Vitiello).

With the performances on the ground floor of the gallery, the smaller basement is given over to a video installation by Eric LoPresti. *Center-Surround* is at first funny and soon frightening in its directness. A pair of projections meet in a corner of the room, one showing Aikido demonstrations, the other displaying in simple font the dates and code names of the 2067 nuclear explosions in history. With one fall and concomitant thud of a falling body per explosion, the two hour loop makes for a flatly comedic and horrific presentation.

The evening's performances open with another bit of uncomfortable humour in the form of an instructional lecture

by media artist Nadav Assor. Speaking through a headset mic from behind an overhead projector and amplified surface, Assor lectures the audience on the proper removal of layers of some unidentified subject in what seems to be a cartoon surgery. He speaks in a monotone as he cuts and tears layer after layer, each a different, vibrantly animated surface. "Once you're this far in, this deep, you can't really trust your judgment," he announces as he furrows deeper, the sound layering into a swarm of insects.

Dorit Chrysler next plays a set with theremin and prerecorded sound dedicated to composer Laurie Spiegel (who is in the audience) but more beholden to Clara Rockmore, the first master of the instrument. Atmospheric passages are intermingled with Camille Saint-Saëns' *The Swan* (which Rockmore played on her 1977 debut album) and Chrysler's own eerie techno pop. Projected kaleidoscopic

images and vistas in red and yellow are cast upon two walls by Lary7, creating a large shadow of Chrysler in the otherwise dark room.

The room grows even darker when Deupree and Vitiello play the last set of the night, laptop screens and an E-bow providing the only light. Slow loops and small grinds build against ringing tones and the 'wrong' sounds of Vitiello's acoustic guitar: strings against frets, fingers against strings, visceral and tactile.

The piece builds in density but not in content, making lovely music of more of the same. Ten minutes in, Vitiello puts down his guitar and the sounds start folding in on themselves, loops becoming percussive, then watery. It isn't anything particularly new, but it is quite beautiful, and presumably they have until next year's edition to make it fresh. Kurt Gottschalk

Christa Holka