



MOVIES

By Pat Aufderheide

Blade Runner is a delicious exercise in late industrial aesthetics, a popular film that deserves a curator's consideration. It's also an imaginative projection of late-late capitalist paranoia (40 years from now) done by high-tech poets. (Director Ridley Scott made *Alien*; the tech credits roll out the names of what surely must be half the people who have ever done effects for the studios, some of whom describe their project with enthusiasm in the latest *American Cinematographer*.) But its visual poetry has nothing to do with its narrative prose. A movie whose supposed theme is the defense of humanity against the inhuman becomes one about the power of a technological society to destroy everyone's personality and to shatter community.

Two radically different—and equally interesting—commentaries on the perils of modern lifestyles meet without merging. The plot is taken, with both too great and too little fidelity, from Philip K. Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Harrison Ford plays Deckard, an ex-"blade runner" or bounty hunter of androids. A mega-corporation is producing ever more-perfect androids, and one of them, in fact, Rachael (Sean Young), is so perfect she doesn't even know she's an android. When androids get out of control it's the police's job to "retire"—that is, kill them.

Several from the latest batch have run amok, killing people in their search for a way to prolong their four-year life span. Deckard's old boss dragoons him into the job of hunting them down, sending out an underling (Edward James Olmos) to keep an eye on him. The rest of the film takes up Deckard's struggles with his own apathy, his growing love for Rachael, and his hunt to kill the other members of Rachael's peer group.

But the movie isn't really about Deckard's troubles. It's about the world he lives in, a world of greed, mistrust, paranoia and a discontent that stems from false promises—a deluge of things substituting for a network of relationships.

The movie takes the conditions of a highly technologized late-capitalist society to logical extremes. On the ground, life looks something like a nightmare version of urban Japan today—ancient and ultramodern cheek by jowl, overcrowding, a raucous confusion of entertainment, food and goods, a constant assault of retail advertising. The options seem many but the comforts are few. Above the ground, though, American-style corporate luxury sets the tone, with spacious suites and super-soothing lights and sounds. Just off the crowded streets are wastelands of decaying old apartment buildings, nearly empty remnants of community.

The look of that world dominates the story. Gigantic sky-



The androids (above, Daryl Hannah) want to meet their maker.

Poetry from the soul of the new machines

scraper facades that echo patterns of computer microchips turn the wonders of modern hardware inside out. Matte effects create dizzying convincing 3-D views, which we survey through windshields of efficient little rocket-pod police cars puffing up and down the eerie night landscape of Los Angeles.

This hyper-artificial world might be succinctly summarized in the coldly glowing eyes of the mechanical animals and the androids, whose impassive gazes punctuate the film. But these filmmakers were not interested in succinctness—the riot of gadgets here adds up to downright self-indulgence. One character, a genetic engineer, lives in a house full of living toys, creaky semi-humans who fall somewhere between 19th-century British mechanical dolls and R2D2 in design. A lab scene looks like Frankenstein's workshop as imagined by Dante and drawn by Bosch.

Deckard's apartment is encrusted with looming decoration that crosses Mayan sculpture lines with computer chip patterns. Costumes emphasize the theatrical—stark white face paint, for instance, and sado-masochistic lines in street wear.

The sound track shakes you with stereo explosions and carries you along in anticipation and dread with synthesized wistfulness by Vangelis (*Chariots of Fire*). Auditory clues are cleverly inlaid—for instance street babble in which key words are repeated almost inaudibly.

It's a world compulsively overcrowded with information, much of it untrustworthy and all of it exhaustingly self-conscious. Here everything and everyone—human beings and androids alike—are constructed. No—worse—are in construction, in the process of asserting their style, their affect, their do-it-yourself persona.

Not all the movie's technical

wit has gone into futuristic images. It also calls up images out of the past, mostly the movie past. The hero is a cynical Sam Spade-like private eye who looks like a visual echo when he stands under crumbling pillars gazing through drizzle at the facade of a rundown hotel.

The megacorp president lives like *Citizen Kane*, in solitary bedroom splendor. The android Rachael dresses as if she's not sure if she's in *The Big Sleep* or *The Devil Is a Woman*.

This borrowing from Golden Oldies was supposed to give the film a prefab element of character and personality. The '40s gumshoe, for instance, is established in our pop folklore. He's a person with both troubles and principles. His alienation is the self-protectiveness of the last moral man in corrupt California.

It doesn't work. The alienated poses of yesteryear don't jive with this postmodern world, where everyone is either zoned out or on the make. The filmmakers don't really believe in the humanity of their human beings.



The blade runner (Harrison Ford) hunts them down.

In their version of 2019, human beings no longer have relationships and androids are learning to love. In their future existential questions are crafted on laboratories.

But if technicians create the new philosophy it's the capitalists who turn it into tragedy. When Rachael says to Deckard, "I'm not in the business—I am the business," she isn't talking

about the limitations the laboratory put on her, but those imposed by the profiteering requirements of the android firm entrepreneur.

Philip Dick's novel had an entirely different rationale. The danger from the androids lay in their missing ingredient—empathy. Empathy was not just the definition of being human, but a key to the survival of the species.

Empathy "blurred the boundaries between hunter and victim, between the successful and the defeated.... It resembled a sort of biological insurance, but double-edged. As long as some creature experienced joy, then the condition for all other creatures included a fragment of joy. However, if any living being suffered, then for all the rest the shadow could not be entirely cast off.... Evidently the humanoid robot constituted a solitary predator."

With Dick's setup, the conflict is two-part. It's physical—the androids really are a ruthless menace, whether they want to be or not. It's also psychological—the bounty hunter suffers for his sins. To be human is to have a conscience.

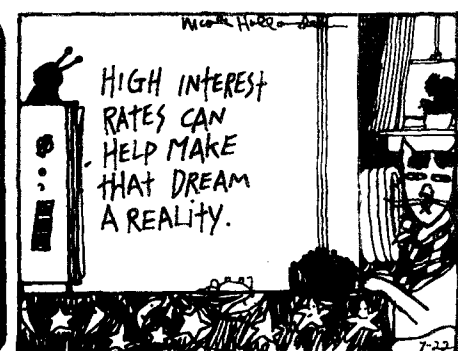
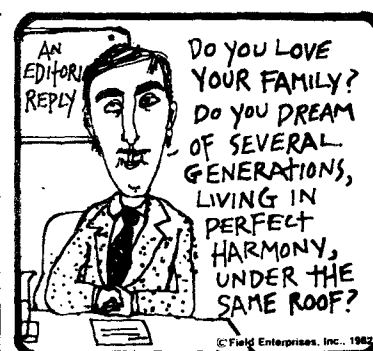
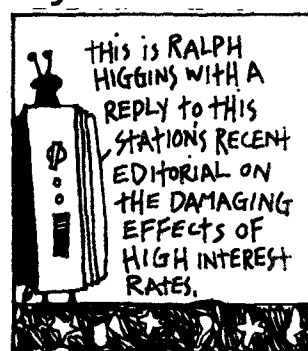
The Dick novel makes sense in other ways as well. This is a post-nuclear world where fallout has already killed almost all animals and eventually will make human beings who don't emigrate to "off-worlds" degenerate. The Earth, therefore, is depopulated and buildings stand empty. Animals are objects of religious reverence and also brisk trade. Those who can't get live ones buy clever artificial imitations. In the novel the detective isn't a loner but a harassed suburban husband, doomed to Earth because of his special job and driven to take the bounty contract for the commission, so he and his upwardly aspiring wife can buy a real animal. The movie kept many of these conventions without explaining them or incorporating them into its very different vision.

Even so, perhaps better than they planned, these movie-magic technicians have etched the dark implications of high-tech lifestyles, and shared their horrifying fascination with it. Their sympathies, as the ending shows, lie with the machines.

Meanwhile, maybe somebody could get a copy of Dick's novel, with its very different—and in some ways less pessimistic—vision of the human spirit, onto the bedside tables of negotiators at the next disarmament talks.

Sylvia

by Nicole Hollander



States

Continued from page 7

testified before a House subcommittee that she foresaw an end to federal assistance for enforcement of environmental laws. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) director Thorne Auchter plans a similar phase-out of workplace law enforcement.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that President Reagan is pursuing his strategy without regard to consequence, many California officials dismiss the New Federalism threat. An aide to Assemblyman Tom Bates says, "There is no sense in Sacramento that welfare programs are coming to the states. And we expect to be running Medi-Cal (the state Medicaid program) for some time in the future."

At the county level, a spokesman for supervisor John George says, "New Federalism is a long time coming. It will be opposed in Congress and by local governments across the country. Besides, it's apparent that the county government is not capable of financing the huge AFDC program."

Finally, an aide to Berkeley mayor Gus Newport comments, "New Federalism is all rhetoric so far—there's no back-up legislation. We don't believe anything Reagan says."

But the accumulated cuts in federal social spending are real enough. The 1981-82 Reagan budget trimmed \$152 million from Medi-Cal, \$113 million from the state's housing and economic development, \$279 million from education, \$42.5 million in transportation and will eliminate \$500 million from proposed sewage treatment plants in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. In all, California's share of federal spending dropped \$5.5 billion.

The Reagan cuts came just as the full impact of Proposition 13 hit California.

Passed in 1978, the property tax-cutting measure would have shut down schools and services in hundreds of communities if a state surplus had not been available. That surplus is now gone, and this year local governments face cuts of 25 percent or more in state aid. Since Prop 13 passed San Francisco has cut 1,200 jobs, Oakland 1,000, and San Jose and Berkeley about 200 each. And Santa Clara County—the home of Silicon Valley—faces a budget shortage of at least \$57 million this year.

The Prop 13 tax limitations on local government produced a dramatic shift in funding responsibility to the state. More than 80 percent of school district funds, for instance, now comes from state government. That added pressure has greatly increased tensions at the state capitol, where legislators have discovered that both the federal and local governments have shifted responsibility in their direction.

"Cities and counties should remind themselves that they lost their revenue after Prop 13—not us," says Assembly speaker Willie Brown. "We took out surplus and bailed them out, and that's something I'm beginning to regret."

This year's state budget of \$25.2 billion was the first reduction in state spending since 1943, an election-year program that included no new taxes and cut deeply into existing social services. The budget left out pay raises for 220,000 state and state university employees, cost-of-living increases for the 1,000 school districts in California and for 1.5 million welfare recipients, and greatly reduced state aid to cities and counties. Meanwhile, the state dutifully set up a "block grant advisory committee"—composed largely of local community group members—to make recommendations for still more cuts man-

dated by the 1983 federal budget.

Clearly, the combination of federal spending cuts and local tax limits have taken an enormous toll in the quality of social services in the state. But it has also done something much worse. It has institutionalized, perhaps for years to come, two levels of care based on class. The most obvious examples in California are health care and education.

One of the ways state legislators managed to balance the fiscal 1983 budget in late June was the so-called "Medi-Cal massacre." Over \$400 million in cuts were made in the \$5.1 billion statewide program. More important, historic changes were made in the way California provides medical care for the poor and elderly. From now on a special negotiator will choose hospitals, doctors and pharmacies from among those bidding for the job. Medi-Cal patients will then be allowed treatment only by those providers.

The bill also made a 10 percent across-the-board cut in rates paid for services, further shrinking the pool of bidders. "In practice," says research director John Bowers of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), "the only places bidding on these jobs will be county hospitals. The entire health care system will return to the days prior to 1963, when the Medi-Cal bill opened up mainstream health care for the poor."

The state budget also managed to leave "medically indigent adults," or MIAs, completely out in the cold. These are the so-called working poor, people who don't qualify for Medi-Cal and don't make enough money to pay for health care. Responsibility for the estimated 300,000 MIAs in the state was shifted to the county government, where treatment will be "contingent on the availability of funds," Bowers says.

Public education in California has been hit even harder by the combination of Prop 13 and Reagan cutbacks. "Since Reagan took office, federal education programs have been cut 34 percent, and bilingual programs have been cut in half," says Harvey Kahn, communications director for United Teachers of Los Angeles, a citywide joint NEA-AFT local.

Kahn points out that the great influx of women in the workforce in recent years has put tremendous new burdens on the public schools when they are least able to cope with them. "Two-income working families now depend on the schools for everything from baby-sitting to developing a child's analytical skills," he says.

"Yet starting pay in the Los Angeles school district is \$13,500—if you've got a family of four, you qualify for food stamps! Because of overcrowding in minority neighborhoods, 95 schools in the district are open year-round. We're using 15-year-old school books, and obviously

can't keep up with the current level of computer technology in the high schools. So the upper classes get out. You're left with the poor teaching the poor, and kids who aren't trained for the job market."

President Reagan's response to the crisis in the schools is tuition tax credits—up to \$500 a year—for families sending their children to private schools. Again presented as "local control" and "freedom of choice," tuition tax credits, according to Kahn, would cripple the public schools. He anticipates a major struggle by both the NEA and AFT during the next two years.

The short-term political reason for all this—from New Federalism to tuition tax credits—is that the poor can't fight back when budgets have to be cut.

Oakland city councilman Wilson Riles Jr. says, "Poor people don't have a lobby. It's that simple. The people are not organized."

The long-term reasons are a bit more subtle. From Reagan's early days as governor of California, he has publicly championed small capital over big capital, local interests over regional or national interests. He apparently believes—all evidence to the contrary—that the federal government is the principal restraint on "the mighty engine of democracy." In pursuit of those goals, he ironically offers great assistance to big capital by lowering national wage standards, environmental standards and social welfare standards. In the name of the states he serves to weaken national labor agreements with multinational corporations. To a degree, Wall Street will give him enough rope to do what damage he can.

But there is very little evidence to show anyone is fooled by New Federalism. Its support—by Southern, Western and rural officials—comes from proponents of laissez-faire, not states' rights. As a political philosophy it comes from the same stable as David Stockman's "Trojan horse." The U.S. economy is far too centralized and far too integrated overseas for serious reconsideration of the Federalist Papers.

Reagan's rationale for destroying the public welfare bureaucracy, however, is dangerously thin. The whole program could backfire if New Federalism breeds new militancy among those at the brink of permanent second-class status.

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Washington, DC 20009

The Citizens Party-National Office
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Washington, DC 20009

The Citizens Party of Illinois
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Chicago, IL 60602
(312) 332-2066

Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy
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Washington, DC 20002

C.O.I.N.-Consumers Opposed to Inflation in the Necessities
2000 P Street, NW, Suite 413
Washington, DC 20036

DSA-Democratic Socialists of America (formerly DSOC/NAM)
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San Francisco, CA 94110

Midwest Academy
600 West Fullerton Ave.
Chicago, IL 60614

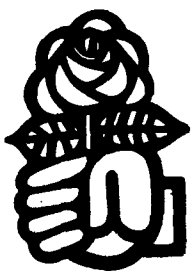
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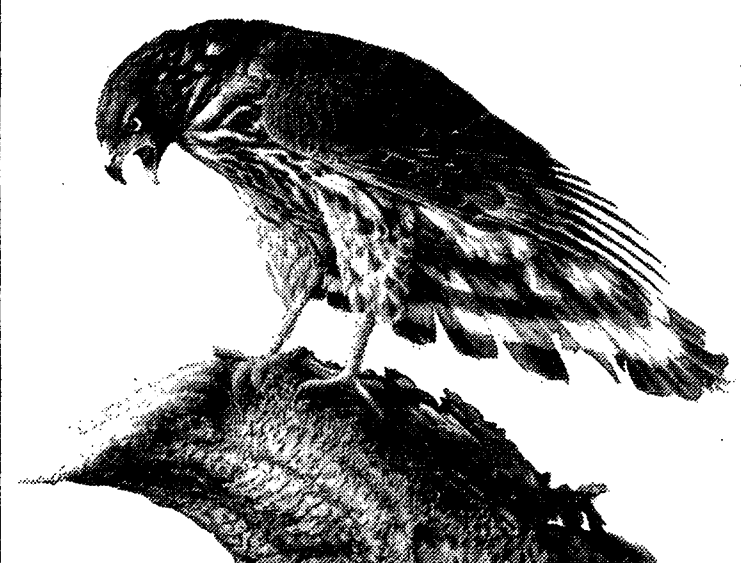
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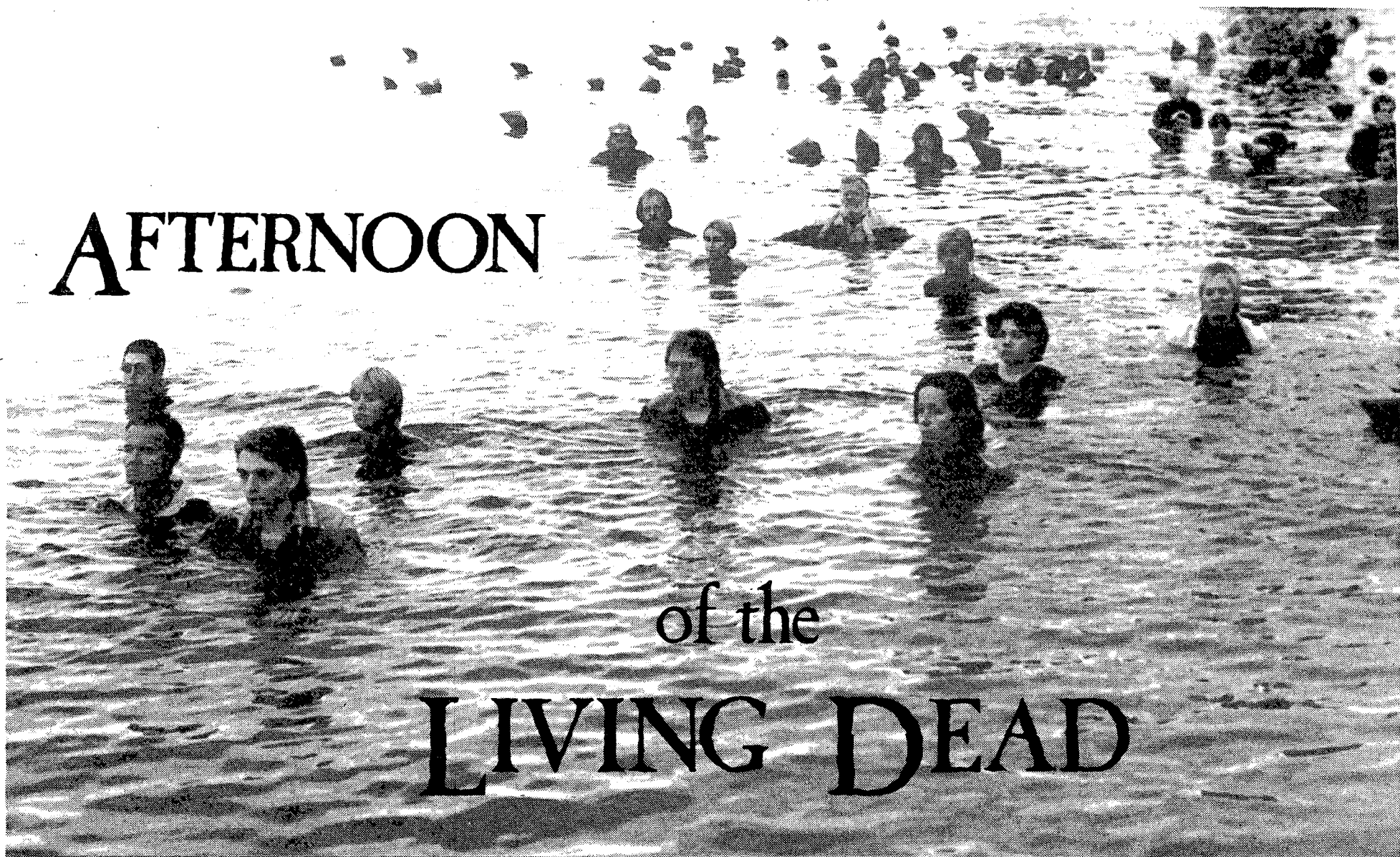
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Torben Voigt

By Lawrence Weschler

"I'M GETTING A CERTAIN amount of flak for this from people at other museums," Knud Jensen, the founder and director of Denmark's Louisiana Museum told me one afternoon early last fall, as he stood beside the magnificent Henry Moore bronze that caps his collection's magnificent sculpture park. About 100 feet down the bluff and then beyond the swath of lawn and fringe of sand, the Oresund glistened in the late afternoon light—a calm blue sea strait, and in the distance, hazy on the far shore, Sweden. On the other side of the Moore, the museum's wide lawn teemed with visitors decked out in all manner of festive attire, carrying banners and posters, gathering around makeshift booths, collecting literature, sampling pastries, and listening to poetry.

Knud Jensen had opened his museum, one of the finest repositories of modern art in Northern Europe (some 30 miles north of Copenhagen) to Scandinavian antinuclear movement activists. Thousands of visitors were converging from as far away as Oslo, Stockholm and Hamburg for a day of vigilance and celebration.

Jensen, a cheerfully amiable 65-year-old gentleman, slid the hollow of his palm along the hollows of his Moore. "I keep being told," he continued, "it's not a good thing to mix museumship and politics like this. But my co-workers here at Louisiana and I have gone to a tremendous effort to create this sanctuary for art, so that it will be here for our children and grandchildren. I guess we just consider it part of our curatorial responsibility to do whatever we can to make sure that they will be here to enjoy it."

Pastors and ecologists, hippies and businessmen ambled among the Calderes and the Arps. Some of them sported string about their wrists, and attached to the string, black plastic baggies hanging limp. If you asked what the baggies signified, their carriers simply said they'd been given them at the entrance, and then moved on.

The air was beginning to cool although the sun was still high in the sky when the bells of the neighboring church pealed six o'clock. It must have been five after six

before we began to notice; first one person and then another, and then dozens all over the grounds, frozen, shock still, in a deathlike trance. Children and matrons. Businessmen and teenagers. Old ladies and farmer-types. Frozen, deathly still, limp black baggies hanging by their sides.

Only not so still after all. You'd look away and then look again and they'd have moved—infinitiesimally. They were all moving, maybe a few feet each minute, but moving nonetheless—toward the bluff. Afternoon of the Living Dead. By 6:15 the zombies had coalesced into three vague groups: one proceeding out from the cafeteria terrace to the north, another down the gully that bisects the sculpture park, and the last proceeding across the wide lawn to the south—all moving, ever so slowly, toward and down the face of the bluff. The rest of us looked on, stunned. Some giggled nervously. Little kids ran up to the zombies and tried to distract them, to no effect. They simply crept on, pasty-faced—not even grim exactly, just absent—emptily compelled. Focused, isolate—Giacometti.

By about 6:45 the three columns had begun to converge at the foot of the bluff. Now they continued on out across the narrow lawn, toward the sand and the strait, utterly deliberate, utterly mindless. There were about 200 of them. Any laughter had stopped. The silence was incredibly immediate. Time itself seemed to have congealed.

Grass onto gravel onto sand. And they kept advancing, dreamlike. A few of them were quite fat; many were quite young; some gray-haired. Inevitable sleepwalkers.

Still, it came as a terrific shock when the first one entered the water. Or rather, failed to stop at the water's edge. The wavelets slapped across the man's shoes—a few minutes later he was immersed to his knees, and all the rest were following. They just followed him in, all of them—mindless and determined.

The water was cold, and their flesh seemed to rebel. Rampant goosepimples gave way to uncontrollable shivering. They continued on. As the small waves rose and fell, wet clothes clung to limbs and torsos not yet entirely submerged. This death march became suddenly intensely erotic. Cloth outlined sinew: thigh, groin, arm, breast, hair.

They were in it up to their necks before they began to veer (one child, in a mirac-

Performance art for disarmament in Denmark



Torben Voigt

ulous moment, erupted into tears as the water reached his waist—he sprang abruptly free of his trance. Humiliated, he bounded out of the water into the arms of his grandmother who'd been watching from the shore—the strangest figure of hope I've ever seen). The black bags bobbed by the veering heads, and moving parallel to the shore, the zombies now cut them free.

Downshore a bit, a low canoe dock thrust out perpendicular from the shore, and the zombie heads were presently

drifting underneath it. One by one, the sleepwalkers emerged from the water and filed—still trance slow, dripping, shivering violently—through the doors of a large converted boat house. Once inside, one by one, they snapped to. Friends offered them towels and cups of hot rum, and they grabbed them gladly. It took over a half hour before the last one made it through the door and back to life.

I entered the large hanger.

Kirsten Dehlholm, the leader of one of the columns, a woman in her mid 30s with sharp features, her hair punkishly styled, was drying off to one corner. "So," she said, a smile breaking across her previously blank face, "What did you think of our trained snails?" We were presently joined by Per Basse, a strikingly tall, handsome young man with a shock of blond hair, who'd headed the cafeteria group, and Else Fenger, a somewhat older, shorter and more conventional-looking woman, who'd led the lawn contingent. The three of them, along with architect Charlotte Cecilie, who wasn't present for this occasion, have been working together since 1977 (Dehlholm had previously been a sculptor, Basse a set designer and Fenger a lithographer), founding the Billedstøfteater.

"That translates roughly as Picture Theater," explained Basse, "or Theater of the Image. We are basically a group of performance artists interested in a theater built out of spaces, rooms, occasions, images, rather than literary sources. We often try to involve others in our conceptions—we usually stage them in public spaces around Copenhagen—the library, the museum, the Round Tower.

"We almost always work in slow motion, usually exploring themes from everyday life—eating, sleeping, walking—slowing things down to help people notice them. In a way that's what we were doing here—trying to find an image, a way of helping people to notice what is going on."

"Ordinarily our themes are not so overtly political," explained Dehlholm. "And indeed this particular performance wasn't so much political in itself as it was made political by its surround—an anti-nuclear festival."

I asked how the performance had come about. "We were contacted several months ago by the people here at Louisiana who were organizing this Peace Fest-

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