

The sports Laughing Star

July 21 2001



Dangerous ambitions

changing the rules of the game after the event



Training days

Bear Days laughter the harder it gets



Waiting for results

see D.Harms fixtures for future interventions



Laughing Bear in Freedom Square, Tbilisi, Georgia. (counterproductions)

BATAILLE TAKES LAUGHTER TO TASK

The question – the meaning of laughter which remained hidden – was from then on in my eyes the key question (linked to happy infinite laughter, by which I saw right away that I was possessed), was the puzzle which at all costs I will solve (which, solved, would of itself solve everything). For a long time I knew nothing other than a chaotic euphoria. After only a few years, I felt the chaos – an accurate image of various beings in a state of incoherence – gradually to become suffocating. I was broken, undone, from having laughed to much, such that, depressed, I found myself: the inconsistent monster which I was, empty of sense and of will, frightened me. (Bataille, 1988: 66)

It needs to be said that this spinelessness, this cowardice, very exactly conforms to human nature, for which hypocrisy is undoubtedly a vital aspect just as the skeleton is the most vital part of the body. But, on the other hand, the very mechanism of hypocrisy could equally well be represented as a simple backward movement taken in order to leap more effectively. No one today is interested in the play of transpositions other than by habit and in a more conventional and odious way than ever. It seems from now on we are reduced to leaping. (Bataille 'The Modern Spirit and the Play of Transpositions' Documents 8, 1930 quoted in Ades et al : 242 – translated from the Hungarian by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Samuel Richardson with afterword by D.D. Sterne)

"I've no idea your cabin was like this," She says. "Quite a display – eh?"

Peter Jules replies, with a winking smile.

She is looking at a knife. He picks it up and deliberately cuts into his hand. A thick reddish blood instantly rises to the surface. We see Juliette at once horrified and transfixed. Her tongue passes through her open lips, quivers in the air, as if tasting the bloody scent with pleasure: the pleasure of his pain – "Maybe we'll look back on it and laugh!"

Jacques said: 'I pray because you never know. But whatever might happen to me, I wouldn't either cheer or complain as long as I can remain in charge of myself. Basically I'm inconsistent. I rush to extremes and forget both my principles and the lessons my Captain taught me. As a result I laugh and cry like a moron.' (Diderot 1999: 139)

TEMPTED BY LAUGHTER YOGA reports Charlie Fox

FOR LIGHT LAPSES Read Swimmingly & Skip

Reading Rameau's Nephew as a theatrical argument for and defense of the Diogenes practices of materialism - taken deliberately to its extreme - but for the 'moral', that higher purpose. As a portrait of the unburdened libertine life (the life of the Nephew) but with the vital addition of that ghostly figure. Here the figure of the vagabond nephew coalescing into the enlightened Thinker Diderot, together metamorphosing to combine into Philosopher Diogenes, or by swapping the dissolute secondhand finery of 18th century Paris with the rough cloak of wool, and replacing the Parisian home's of the wealthy with the dust of Athens' backstreet – this switch or radical alternative - something Diderot, just as he is forced to fictionalize Rameau's Nephew, could not very well countenance; that he, Diderot, had mused on the conclusion of his more enlightened philosophy and found underneath it, the parallel conclusions of a resolute materialism (an almost nihilistic determinism), or more precisely and positively the unparalleled material wisdom of the true Cynic who has passed through the burning furnace of knowledge and concluded the simple truth that we can only know or act on those things that are part of us, or associated within the circumference of our brief life. This is our lot, our human responsibility to know our nature, and act within it circle - as he says of Voltaire rather to have saved the good name of Calus than to have written Mahomet (Diderot: 67). And the only possible solution to this, this startling modern vision, this unerring conception of human existence, to leaven the unsettling truth with aha...laughter *Passages to read aloud*: anything in italics and/or with * *Passages to avoid*: anything you are squeamish about *Passages to enjoy*: anything that tickles your imagination

In the recently published *Persia in Peckham* in the section 'The gentle art of corner shopping' the author Sally Butcher exhorts the customer to "Smile more, please." Humour plays a large part in the everyday work of the small shop and business. counterproductions seek to support this heroic struggle of independent shopkeepers to survive the seemingly inexorable spread of supermarkets, big finance and bullying urban development. Within the fluid, everchanging flow of people that make up the extraordinary diversity of South East London, the independent business keeps the community alive. So, smile more, laugh now and cry less. Things can only get better.

To celebrate this independence, counterproductions presents three posters at Space Station Sixty-Five. These mantra posters offer salutary advice to the passer bys and residents of South East London, helping them to negotiate the stresses and strains of inner-city living. All Signed Posters £5.00 (ex.p+p)

'An eminent ENGLISH CHEMIST, DR CHARLES HENRY MAYE, SET OUT TO ESTABLISH IN A PRECISE MANNER WHAT MAN IS MADE OF AND WHAT ITS CHEMICAL VALUE. This is the result of learned researches: "The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to make seven cakes of toilet soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium sized nail. And sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorous would provide 2,200 matches. The magnesium would furnish the light needed to take a photograph. In addition, a little potassium and sulphur, but in unusable quantities...." (Journal des Débats, 13 August, 1929, in 'Man', 4, 1929)

And hiding in the photographs of Jacques-André Boiffard, of a Bronze balloon, a stone can, a grimacing carnival mask (is that Robert Desnos lurking behind one of them), the Abattoir images of Lotar, and the texts, the Corpse Newspaper (*Un Cadavre - "Mort d'un Monsieur"*). This suggestions that 'the world is purely parodic, in other words, that each thing seen is the parody of another; or is the same thing in a deceptive form.' (Bataille 1927-39 : 5)

RACING RESULTS

Public Performance, Laughter Events

2003-2009.....

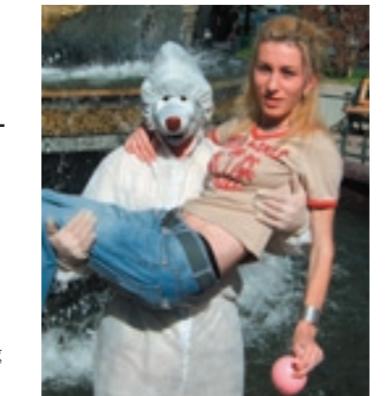
- 12.09 Return of the Repressed, *Urban Bear Life Recipe no.5*: Portman Gallery
- 11.09 *Hut(m)bell(oh) Pie*: The Hub, Wunderbar Festival, Newcastle
- 10.09 *Laughing Bear*: With The Happy Band, Free Art Fair, Barbican.
- 03.09 *Pain et Circuses*: Urban Bear Research Centre, Montague Arms
- Urban Bear *prowlathon*: Peckham Race
- 09.09 *The Happy Band*: Nunhead Arts Festival
- 06.09 *Pie Roulette*: Laughing Bear Guest Appearance Black & White *Barricade*: with Police and Violence, Sassoong Gallery
- 03.09 *Bun sh sh House*: Mobile Conference, Peckham Space, Field Projects, South London Gallery
- 02.09 *Laughing Bear Has tonsilitis*: Peckham Square
- 01.09 *Pipe for peace*: Propeller Island, Thurloe Place, South Kensington
- 01.09 *Laughing Tea & Barricade Your Day*: Café Gallery projects
- 11.08 *Laugh Now, Smile More, Cry Less*: Space Station Sixty Five Project Space
- 10.08 *Leapin with Spiritual Promises from Lost Prophets*, Cosmicmegabrain: Cordy House, Curtain Road
- 09.08 *Laugh Now Please*: Beirut, London, Istanbul
- 08.08 *Leap in to avoid*: Cosmicmegabrain Project, Centre Dagher, Ashrafieh, Beirut
- 07.08 *Twilight Scavenge*, Laughing Bear, Café Gallery Projects
- 07.08 *Smile More Please* – Small Life Recipe no.1 International Day of the Smile, Persepolis
- 07.08 *Small Life Recipe no 2 – How to make an Axis of Evil Trifle*: Persepolis, Consume Peckham
- 06.08 *Urban Bear Research Centre*: Space Station Sixty-Five Carny Town, Portman Gallery
- 05.08 *Laughter Lab*: Shunt Vaults, London Bridge, London
- 03.08 *Guantanamo Trifle*: 2: Book of Blood, Sacred Festival, Chelsea Theatre
- 01.08 *Laughing Bear in Spitalfields*: Urban Bear Behaviour, Spitalfields Festival
- 01.08 *Guantanamo Trifle*: Lab Night, Roehampton University
- 12.07 *Pavilionesque*: Soup Kitchen in Peckham Square, Laughing Bear in Freedom Square: Art Caucasus 2007, One Stop Project Tbilisi, Georgia
- 09.07 *Pyrotechnic Arms & Nunhead Arms*
- 05.07 *Pie Roulette*: Laughing Bear Guest Appearance Black & White *Barricade*: with Police and Violence, Sassoong Gallery
- 03.09 *Bun sh sh House*: Mobile Conference, Peckham Space, Field Projects, South London Gallery
- 02.09 *Laughing Bear Has tonsilitis*: Peckham Square
- 01.09 *Pipe for peace*: Propeller Island, Thurloe Place, South Kensington
- 01.09 *Laughing Tea & Barricade Your Day*: Café Gallery projects
- 11.06 *Shibboleth the mini opera*: Dilston Grove, A Barrel Load of Laughs with Diogenes: Performance Lecture, Roehampton
- 11.05 *Trifle* a laughing menu based on complex physics: Café Gallery Projects
- 10.05 *The Artists United* – Spike Island Studios, Bristol
- 06.05 *Ursus' House*: with Koli National Park, North Karelia, Finland
- Callisto's Dreamwork*: Kolin Rynnan Artist Residency, Finland
- 12.04 *Face Food 7* – Intercultural Food Fair, Peckham Square, London
- 11.04 *"A Cuppa Turkish"*: Café Gallery projects, BAG, Southwark Park
- 02.04 *Food Face 5 – Face it, it's yours*: Café Gallery Projects
- 11.03 *Food Face 3 – Face it, it's yours*: Café Gallery Flotation, for It's a circus: Camberwell Swimming Baths, London
- 06.03 *International Day of the Smile*, Persepolis



Danil Harms selections

Fixtures (Exact Times & Locations tbc)

- 01.2010 Four and a half laughable situations. Launch at Roehampton University
- 02.2010 A fountainhead of laughter, Situation 1: FieldSpace, Peckham Square
- 03.2010 Lecturing, Hectoring Bear, Situation 2: Space Station Sixty-Five
- 04.2010 Laughing Bear and the Happy Band, Situation 3: Tate Britain & Millbank
- 05.2010 Tied up in Laughter, Situation 4: Old Medical Theatre, Kings College



The LAUGHING Star

LATE LONDON EDITION
MONDAY JULY 21 1969
NO. 59,999 SIXPENCE

Another great issue: "You will just have to take my word for it"
In the Event of Laughter, open wide, breath in, then smell it out

SPECIAL EDITION
5.55AM JULY 21 2009
NO. 34567 PRICELESS £2

UB takes first steps into history at 3.39 am

ON THE FLOOR AFTER PERFECT TOUCHDOWN

News: D. Kharms

It is alleged that on the 20th July UB (aka Urban Bear) traveled through international airspace to land at Rafic Hariri Airport, South of Beirut. Only twenty-four hours later, after careful and meticulous preparations UB ascended to the 8th floor of a Tower Block in the Ashrafieh District of Beirut. Years of training and planning hinged on these few vital seconds. UB made his final safety checks.

Then at precisely 3.39 am Greenwich meantime UB made the fateful leap into a void. A little dazed and confused he landed heavily but safely on the cushioned concrete floor. Afterwards UB was amazed to find he was still able to laugh, and reportedly said: "woooah". He left the assembled company to return earthwards. Later on that night he found in the backstreets of Hamra sweets and ice cream to die for.

He falls awkwardly on the ground, everything is silent for a moment as everyone looks at that point, at the head, bashed by the thoughts conjured by this shambolic re-enactment; what has been very fast and frenetic up to this point, with all the cameras and crowd hustling around falls into a slow motion of silence; the prone figure on the ground, with the underlined size of de Menezes crooked on the ground: so very silent, and still despite the traffic rushing by. A stillness now in the looking and the thinking before, or at, or in the action. We picture the scene on the tube below. Transfer it from the street here into the crowded rush hour carriage below, and see the fragile life lying there felled, as the police tear open tomato sauce sachets.

Falling into an infinity of possibility, laughing, Urban Bear drops willfully into a void and disappears into the powdery smoke, and burst balloons and splitting inflatables fly up. What sort of conjuring trick and stunt is this bear trying to pull off as he collapses in an untimely heap of fur? A levity, leaping out of the animal, released in these impulsive bodily gestures, performed fragments. And the grand Edwardian Bathing Hall with its balcony shrouded in darkness, falls eerily silent. Stillness descends, only the water shimmering with the flash of a camera and the light from a single floating spotlight. I garble into the cardboard megaphone 'A Short History of Flotation - Part 1' and without pausing, turn, stride out along the wall.

Then almost in a trot, dropping the megaphone, I turn onto the poolside and leap nonchalantly into the glassy water.

Through the careful feeding of the artist woven together the predicament of the former Soviet satellites with the Russian President Vladimir Putin,



animal sexuality, love across species, bestiality, the work of Oleg Kulik, wooing, parenthood, a goat, and consensual versus violent penetration (forcing your head into a cow). He has had fun with this one: "This piece is meant to be provocative."

"This was the picture that first revealed the true uncaring heart of Karen Matthews. As police search desperately for her daughter Shannon, she throws her head back and roars with laughter.

Mirror photographer Phil Spencer was so concerned at her bizarre behaviour two weeks after Shannon went missing that he showed his snap to family liaison officers. ... he went on 'Karen was in a world of her own and had not seen me. All of sudden she burst into fits of laughter. Seconds later she spotted me and immediately went serious again'.

A teenage girl J. who acted as a 'honeytrap'... led S. T. into an

ambush in a cul de sac. The teenager bled to death. J. , who was 15, laughed as the gang caught up with him, walking away as they began twisting the blade. As he lay on the ground S. T. cried: "I don't want to die."

Testing the long term effects of weightlessness on the body was impossible on earth. They would need to test this in Space. Here again are Waite, McCarthy and Keenan recalling their kidnap, that moment after Keenan's release when McCarthy was moved to a new hiding place. John McCarthy goes on to recount this first meeting between himself and Terry Waite. McCarthy is lying inside a tied sack in the dark boot of a large Mercedes car, feeling for once that there is a bit of room for him to move around. Then he hears the boot door open. A large heavy sack-like object drops onto him. Thrump. Terry Waite inside that sack, having been unceremoniously thrown into the boot, says to the lump that is under him, "This is a very big boot, isn't it?" And John McCartney replies, "It was until you got into it." Laughter, silly simple laughing.

The BBC journalist on the 24 news desk reads out the official Police Statement, and his indignation rising, begins twisting the story: "The protesters, while the police and ambulance men were trying to resuscitate the man, were throwing missiles at them!" Subsequent mobile phone footage showed police hitting Ian Tomlinson and pushing him to the ground. The incident that led to his death: "When news came to the Corinthians that Philip and the Macedonians were approaching the city, the entire population became immersed in a flurry of activity, some making their weapons ready, or wheeling stones, or patching the fortifications, or strengthening a battlement, everyone making themselves useful for the protection of the city. Diogenes, who had nothing to do and from whom no one was willing to ask anything, as soon as he noticed the bustle of those surrounding him, began at once to roll his tub up and down the Cramneum with great energy. When asked why he did so, his answer was, "Just to make myself look as busy as the rest of you."

(Lucian Historia, 3)



Bear takes the first leap into the void. (photo, Laura Mitchelson)

A Yak for our times:
A group of foreigners came on a visit to this city. They came and saw the fountains and the city squares. And everything they saw made them laugh. And the citizens laughed with them and the artists laughed back. And they all laughed at one another. They saw sheep and goats, monkeys and apes, a bear and a yak all tied up. By the roadside and out by the mountain passes they saw them being slaughtered. And they laughed all together. The foreign artists laughed at the bear and the sheep laughed at the monkey and the yak laughed at the sheep. And everyone, laughed at the artists.

They laughed so much that some of them couldn't speak, in fact some of them laughed so much they couldn't breath. And the yak and the monkey and many innocent citizens died, died a choking death. Laughing and slaughtered, without a moment to catch their breath, slaughtered and laughing.

INSTRUCTIONS for free gifts as games:

Laughter-perruque: A wig that would hide again all that folly, another layer of clothing, a fringed moustache to cover up your joy and shame.

Haha barricade: a ribbon in the dark, in the corridors of life, rummaging among the corners, our barricades: tie them up, twist them, turn them over.

A manna poster: Fold it out, up and in. chant it, say it, think it, do it - Hold high your placard and cry: Laugh Now Please.

Inflated: Floating, Falling and Falling.

Inflate the balloon, tie the bag with the thread, load it up and let go. Best results for flight: a windy day and helium.

Cards containing visuals for suggested activities including: card platform, haha barricade, face it, laughter-perruque fashion, street laughter events, laughter yoga, avoiding laughter

Newspaper Poster: Manifesto of (de)light and levitation.

Travel Advice – Journey into laughter's depths but watch out for squalls and please follow this expert advice: A smiling British artist dressed like a polar bear emerged from a Restaurant on Freedom Square. He wore a cheap Disney style Baloo mask and clutched a plastic bag. The young woman who works behind the till was a little surprised by his appearance: "It was a bit surprising to see that but he'd been in the toilet for a long time. They're from London and this is a vegetarian restaurant after all".

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(Tips on make-it-up & facial hair)

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Page 3,2 Photograph by Peter Fraser