

# MOBIUS NEWSLETTER

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Some people have asked, who is Mobius. Mobius is Jude Aronstein, Marilyn Arsem, Joan Gale, Dan Lang, David Miller, Mari Novotny-Jones (on leave), Mario-Erik Paoli, Bob Raymond, Julie Rochlin, Jonathan Scheuer, and Victor Young. With Lauri Liverman as our wonderful intern. We were a performing group before we were a space, and we're still a performing group, but we also run this space and make it available for other artists in town to show work. As long as it's experimental. We also have a board of directors who are Sarah de Besche, Geoffrey Bush, Donna Gelfand, Steve Lydenberg, and Tony Naden. And they are planning a wild fundraising party for February. Oops, no more room.

## RELATIVE CONDITIONS (Three Maternal Legacies)

Presented by Mobius Theater

November 9 - 18

We have been working together for eight months. We began with looking at the memories we had surrounding our mothers, and the subsequent 'maternal legacies' we carry. Some of the concerns we initially encountered were issues of self-concept, territoriality, and inner personal reality versus outer reality. From the memories we developed movement and text which we felt expressed a state of being in the memory and also in the moment.

Presently we are focussing on the three of us working together. We have become intrigued with the way we act and react around one another. This stems from our interest in seeing how much of our mothers we bring into each present moment. We tried sitting around table and just seeing what happened. We brought in objects from our pasts and things to play with. We talked and talked and talked, but nothing happened. We began to see that we were unable to say anything about the three of us as a group. We were too worried

about hurting someone's feelings, or about protecting ourselves, for anyone to be really honest. It was like a first date when both parties want everything to go well, so neither gets the least bit personal and both people go home bored and alienated.

Lately we have become obsessed with the idea of taking risks. We have asked Leni Gross, a psycho-dramatist, to work with us in helping us to verbalize or enact the present moment, which we tend to avoid.

What has emerged is a piece where the memories are countered with our always "relative" relations with one another. Our evocative memories now serve as an area of private concern within a larger context which includes each other and the audience. We are attempting to expose ourselves . . . even if it is to expose our reluctance to be exposed!

As of October 1, we have a fair amount of the structure of the piece already planned. It will move from the memories presented in last May's works-in-progress program, through a section in which we

separately perform simple yet personally evocative tasks (for example, arranging flowers) while talking about the memories which come to mind during these tasks. Interspersed with this will be a group section, of an undetermined nature as yet, very much concerned with the present moment. We are considering taking polaroid pictures or slides during the "more difficult" group moments, so that we and the viewers can look back upon the evening in order to obtain a different perspective.

If required to make a simple statement as to what this piece is about, we would say that it is a snapshot of who we are at the moment of performance. And, like a snapshot, if you look closely you learn a whole lot more about the people involved that you might at first glance. Our hope is that in the honesty of the performance will come vivid and dynamic images that stick with the viewers and inspire them to ask questions about themselves.

-- Jude Aronstein  
Julie Rochlin  
Victor Young

ON THE EMERALD NECKLACE:  
A VISUALIZATION

Presented by Ron Wallace

November 13 and 14

The VISUALIZATION is another piece in an ongoing series of works derived from Ron Wallace's focus on the Emerald Necklace. On both days, he will walk the Emerald Necklace by himself. In the evening, he will give an unembellished monologue, lasting about one hour, which will describe that day's walk. These evenings will be the culmination of a month-long series of one-on-one walks done on the Emerald Necklace itself.

Following each visualization, there will be a reception during which photographs and maps, documents of the Emerald Necklace walks, will be shown.

MEDITATION PIECE

SOUND ART AT MOBIUS (part 2)

PARADISE 3 a radio controlled performance/installation  
NEW PYGMATIC FUNCTIONS FOR THE ALL TV ORCHESTRA  
a 12 channel video installation

By Megan Roberts and Raymond Ghirardo

November 30 and December 1

Roberts and Ghirardo will give a free public lecture on Thursday, November 29, at 7:30 p.m. at the M.I.T. Film/Video Section. They will also lead an informal workshop at Mobius on Sunday, December 2, at 3:00 p.m.

Megan Roberts was trained as a musician and composer, and has a strong background in theater and dance. Raymond Ghirardo, a sculptor with a formalist background, is currently working on large indoor and outdoor sculptures and continued experiments with new plastics, and electronic and mechanical applications. They write:

We seem to spend equal time on our separate arts and our collaborations. There was no set agreement to do this, it just works out that way. It is difficult for us to explain or analyze our collaboration. There's no separation between our living and working relationship. Very seldom do we say, "OK, let's sit down and work on this idea." Generally one of us will get part of an idea and we'll bounce it around for awhile to see if it will pick up missing parts and turn into a whole idea. It's when a partial or complete idea keeps coming back often enough that an actual work takes shape. This way of working has made it impossible for us to remember exactly which of us had what idea. This question of individual inspiration and authorship is further confused since periodically, through long association, we will reverse roles. Raymond will take over composing electronic sound sections as well as building and designing the necessary circuits. Megan will find herself completing the drawings and models.

In 1978 we began work on a very large and complex performance and participatory installation, "Assembly Line". This work for movement triggered sound, which was based on and functioned like a factory, involved the coordinated action of 7 performers choreographed to activate 36 separate electronic and mechanical devices. In 1982, it was shipped to West Germany for installation and performances at the Spiel- und Klang-Strasse Festival in Essen.

Around 1979 Raymond started taking a more active role in the video. The first two works considered true video collaborations were completed while we were living in Minnesota, and a third, "Life With Ray", was begun. "Life With Ray", the first part of a thirteen part series still in progress, is a more straightforward narrative than previous works and was completed in Texas. This work won the Grand Prize in the prestigious Tokyo Video Festival, which resulted in a trip to Japan from our home, then in Wyoming.

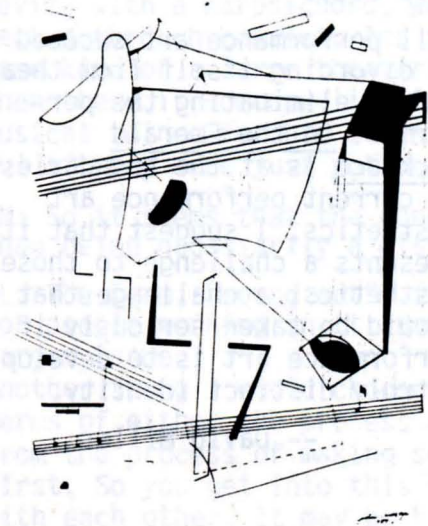
We move around a lot. To date we have relocated 15-16 times, the last seven the more extreme (in distance) due to teaching appointments, residencies and fellowships. We've been variously identified as California, Minnesota, Texas, Wyoming or

## BOSTON PERFORMANCE ARTISTS

New York artists; also as sound artists, video artists, installation, kinetic or performance artists, and a sculptor and composer. That's fine. The diversity of media seems natural to us. It's a result of the collaboration, but more importantly, it's a result of the nature of the idea we feel strongly about expressing. Some ideas require a time based medium, some do not. Some ideas are launched by a fascination with a particular image, others by a verbal or musical concept. We take in all sorts of stray ideas.

Megan has described the "Life With Ray" series as concerning American life, some politics, some more small wonders of technology, some new parables, some values and ethics and phobias, and many other things we find interesting or frightening or funny. This could probably describe all of our work.

-- Megan Roberts  
Raymond Ghirardo



by Justin Saragoza of Las Vegas, Nevada. Composer, Improviser, artist.

Presenting works by  
Bill Codington  
Joanne Rice  
Victor Young

December 7 - 15

IF YOU CAN'T FIND IT, YOU  
DON'T NEED IT  
-a new work for performers,  
text, computer, and devices.

( from beyond the simulated melodramatic procedures and management consultant comic books it consisted mainly of soap opera industrial sound poetry voice electronic sounds and various formulas distracted audience for simulated machine noises thumps groans a combination that will take a form related to the further modifications of distress )

A turkish pasha is surveying the field with his glass. An aide-de-camp rides up. "All our artillery has been captured." The pasha strokes his beard philosophically and says, "Fortunately it was not paid for."

-- Bill Codington

FINDING A COMFORTABLE POSITION is a performance for five people with an audio tape. Visualized in the performance is a constantly changing environment. This is realized by two performers who begin by classifying and identifying the audience, then designing the audience into a definite structure. Their action is constrained by an audio tape and a third performer, who acts as a physical method of defining actual time. The second set of performers are sensitive to the space as a whole. Gradually their space, or territory, is eroded by the activities of the other performers. The realization of the construction is dependent on active participation by the audience. The intent of the

performance is that a comfortable position is found. The passing of time and shrinking of space are the central concerns of Finding a Comfortable Position.

-- Joanne Rice

### LETTERS FROM JAPAN

There are pieces of human bone melted in bricks. There is a piece of granite, exposed like some photographic paper in a shadow graph of a body turned to gas. The curator of the museum grows black fingernails. In bottles there are things that grow on living beings but they do not look human. They are not cancer but grow and when cut away, grow again, as though they are supposed to be part of the body. We have changed the shapes of our bodies but there is no way to understand what has happened here.

The city is no different from any other Japanese city. Everything is new, there are no old temples or shrines, but otherwise there is no difference. People stop to watch the sunrise. It seems special. Everyone seems to notice. It is a small miracle each day.

So why is it so hard to leave? Everything feels so familiar and yet I can't understand what happened here. It seems like I've lived here. It seems like I've spent my childhood here, never quite understanding. It seems like home. Perhaps it is home for all of us now.

On December 26th, I was the last person to ring the Peace Bell in Hiroshima. It hurt a lot.

-- Victor Young

1980's definition:  
experimental:  
not financially viable.

-- Ellen Rothenberg

"The Flexible Zealous Approach  
to XPRMNTLSM"

"Experimental Theater" is code. The derivation of the term, i.e. experimenting with new forms of presentation, even with new or non-conventional objectives, is only a part of the meaning of experimental theater. Defining the core of the art is like finding the 100th name of God, which can never be known, yet is the one true name. Like Beckett's Unnameable, we can describe its manifestations, even name some of its attributes, but the key to understanding it (aside from experiencing it) is to recognize that experimental theater is a principle, not a category. It is the principle that the essence/fullness of a subject is alive and that its most direct expression is the most beautiful. Experimental theater is extreme nuclear art.

-- Dan Lang

## YOUR RAVING REPORTER

Ron Wallace's current performance, On the Emerald Necklace, is the first performance art work that I have experienced that has nothing to do with theater. The work, which takes the form of a walk through the entire Emerald Necklace system of parks, is radical even in this pluralistic age, and may provide a focal point for an aesthetic of performance art which clearly separates it from theater. This separation has been long maintained, often desired, and not, to my mind, achieved till now.

Most of the arguments for the performance/theater dichotomy assume that theater is a literary art form, due to its traditional association with drama (a very different thing). Without the space for a detailed argument on this point, it must be said that this is a serious mistake concerning theater's fundamental nature. The only basic material of theater is the living performer, in body, voice, movement, heart, intellect and spirit. Even the most conventional production of the most ordinary script is impossible without bringing into play forces which are non-"linear", non-literary, and cannot even be written down. In performance, which is the only place that theater exists, there is no written language, no playwright, no literature. The script-into-performance process is alchemical.

Most work called "performance art", whatever its sources, intentions, issues, or strategies, comes nowhere near divorcing itself from the basic condition of theater.

The recently-noted and lamented trend toward more "theatrical" performance art is really an expansion to include (and sometimes subvert) a range of older styles and vocabularies, not a debasement of a still-fledgling art form by a conservative older medium.

On the Emerald Necklace completely escapes any association with theater, not because of subject-matter or external form (an 8-hour, 15-mile walk), but because it has no performer/audience relationship. Ron, as the artist and creator of the piece, does not simply deliver a series of anecdotes while showing you points of interest; rather, he is the facilitator of an experience which must be co-created by each person he walks with. On the Emerald Necklace is, in fact, a true work of conceptual art realized in a living event which refers to no other existing medium of art. The concept here is "The Emerald Necklace" in its historical/social/botanical complexity; its realization is visceral, tangible, and has the potential to seriously affect one's relationship to this city.

Will performance art succeed in divorcing itself from theater by eliminating the performer? On the Emerald Necklace is at the boundaries of current performance art aesthetics. I suggest that it presents a challenge to those aesthetics, a challenge that should be taken seriously if performance art is to develop a truly distinct identity.

-- David Miller

BOSTON PERFORMANCE ARTISTS

INTERVIEW: RICHARD LERMAN ON SOUND ART

(Richard Lerman is the series director for Sound Art at Mobius.)

DM: How would you describe what sound art is, both on its own and particularly in contrast to new or experimental music?

RL: "Sound Art" is a very general term. It contains new music or electronic music, certain kinds of performance art which use sound as a strong part of the image or the process, and a range of things which might be thought of as pure visual art, such as installations with a focus upon sound or the nature of sound. So that is what it means to me. In this series, I have already been questioned why certain people were on the series, as opposed to others, and one of the things that I was going for is a very wide range of sound artists, including people who are working in what might be called more traditional musical forms, and people who came to sound art completely from a visual art. I'm thinking specifically of Paul Panhuysen and Johan Goedhart from Holland, both of whom have studied architecture and town planning and stuff like that. A lot of what they do is based upon the work they do in those fields.

DM: I had the impression that there was some intention to define sound art in contrast to music, but it seems that that is not the case. I wonder if you could talk historically, about sound art predecessors or works that might have been called that in previous decades.

RL: That's a tough question, but I can think of some examples. Maybe some of Charles Ives' stuff, where two marching bands would come in together. Perhaps one could say that's just another form of music, but it's also a kind of phenomenon where you have to deal with the way sound behaves in space. Now Ives was able to hear his father, who in fact was the real radical, march two or three bands at once to save time, and he must have heard the sound reverberating around in the Danbury, Connecticut town square off the buildings. That is a kind of sound art phenomenon, where space affects the sound.

Scriabin did something where he had certain keys move a certain color, and he wanted there to be lights projected, colored lights, and in fact that piece was just recently done with a big laser setup out in Iowa.

There are people who built sculpture like Bertoia, where the emphasis was not only on how the sculpture looked, but what it sounded like.

DM: Even though the Ives and Scriabin examples are clearly in the realm of music as it's usually imagined, they point to things beyond that form, such as the activity of sound in space or a correlation with color and form.

RL: In fact, in early times, a few hundred years ago, there were some people who built a device with a harpsichord, where, when you plunked on certain keys, colors would be projected through candles. And there was a guy in the U.S. who travelled around with an organ, some kind of a large theater organ where shapes and colors were projected out.

Then there is someone like Conlon Nancarrow, who is a composer making piano rolls as a musical thing. For him it was straight music, but now I think that they would look beautiful if they were just put up on a wall.

DM: So it seems that the concept of sound art locates one focus for intermedial works, rather than being necessarily a distinct art form.

RL: The term, "sound art", is so general and so open that it could make a very great problem for people working in it. How do you really hone it down and make it good? That gets to be a larger issue.

Another thing I would choose to emphasize about sound art is that one can approach it in terms of either the process or the image. For example, a person in music might approach it from the process of making sound. Someone from the visual arts might treat it as an image first. So you get into this funny area where the process and image kind of become mixed up with each other. It may be hard to discriminate which came first, the process or the image.

DM: What kind of work are you doing at the present time? How do you clarify the concept of sound art for yourself now?

RL: Well, at the present time I've been working with common objects, for example, window screens, aluminum foil, credit cards, paper money, different kinds of paper, which I'm making to function as microphones. One fact about sound is that when you're in a room or when you're outside and you hear a sound, everything around you vibrates too, with that sound, everything. And therefore, is there a way to get the sounds lifted off of objects? To lift sound off of objects such that you hear the sound amplified but it's now amplified with the flavor of the object from which it has been lifted.

DM: Like, what does the window screen hear that you can't hear?

RL: It's also like a kind of print, just the idea of lifting a plate off of a paper. So all these objects have different qualities, and in performances I want these "microphones" to be visible. I want the audience to realize that it's a microphone, when it's used. A trombonist plays into a piece of aluminum foil and you see it, and you also then realize that this thing vibrates in a certain way and that's how it sounds. But, to carry that further, I've installed some of those things outdoors for long periods of time, and simply made tapes of how the environment affects the object in terms of making sound. Then by making a tape of that, you can play that back and recreate what happened during that space of time, or in that space or that kind of weather.

At this place (Mobius) I put a stainless steel microphone out the window and the sound of the pigeons came through. Here the pigeons' and gulls' sounds came through very nicely, as did the sound of the typewriter, as did the sound of the wind.

DM: What about your own background? How did you initially get involved in this work?

RL: I got into this stuff through music, electronic music and contemporary music, which I was drawn to when I was sixteen. That means I've really been listening to very contemporary music since 1960. So when I got to college and I studied music I didn't have to be "trained" to like modern music like everybody else has to be. I had in my ear that ability or that desire to listen to a different kind of harmonic structure other than good old tonal music.

DM: Do you recall any particular pieces that clicked on light bulbs for you?

RL: I got very much involved in jazz, playing trombone at that time. I was listening to people as varied as Stan Kenton, Cannonball Adderly, Coltrane, Ornette Colman, just the whole sweep of it. I was taking in all of it. But then at one point I heard a performance of a piece by Darius Milhaud called "The Creation of the World". That is a very jazz-like piece, it's very far out, it's got very complicated rhythms. So hearing that got me into contemporary music. The first time I heard electronic music, it was probably by Otto Luening and Vladimir Ussachevsky, who were doing stuff very early, and I just said, "Oh my god that's what I want to do."

DM: My last question has to do with the idea for the series at Mobius. What prompted you to get it going?

RL: What prompted me really was that I just got sick and tired of waiting for something to happen in Boston. The first thing I did actually was that I went in and spoke with the people at the Mass. Council, and I said, "Look, here's what I'd like to do. There are people who've never been seen in Boston, who deserve to be seen. Boston should see more of this kind of work, to keep up with what's going on."

The other thing that I felt really strongly, having travelled around a lot presenting my own work in Europe, is that it's kind of mind boggling to get to Europe at some kind of a festival, and at this festival you have people's work from fourteen different countries. Now in America you can't do that, it doesn't happen too often. What we have here is more of a kind of regional thing, and even that is not exploited very much.

I think that, for a long time, people in Boston have depended upon other spaces: for example, the ICA, Mass. Art, the Museum School, and BF/VF, all with limited budgets. It's true that the ICA has a less limited budget than we do, but they are also running a different kind of organization, and are not able to take the kind of risks that we can. And I think that instead of my feeling angry at them, and saying "why don't they do something", at this point I say let us do things ourselves. Just do it ourselves, and get it done.

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a new performance piece by Mobius Theater

FRIDAYS THROUGH SUNDAYS, NOVEMBER 9 - 18

8 pm/\$6.00

RELATIVE CONDITIONS  
(Three Maternal Legacies)

TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13 and 14

presented by Ron Wallace

8 pm/\$4.00

ON THE EMERALD NECKLACE:  
A VISUALIZATION

SOUND ART AT MOBIUS (part 2)

THURSDAY THROUGH SUNDAY  
NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 2

intermedial works by United States artists  
Megan Roberts and Raymond Ghirardo

(Fri and Sat)

Performance/Installations:

8 pm/\$6.00

PARADISE 3 and NEW PYGMATIC FUNCTIONS  
FOR THE ALL TV ORCHESTRA

Workshop at Mobius  
(Sun) 3 pm - 5 pm/\$3.00

Lecture at the M.I.T. Film/Video Section  
(Thu) 7:30 pm/free

FRIDAYS and SATURDAYS, DECEMBER 7 - 15

8 pm/\$5.00

BOSTON PERFORMANCE ARTISTS  
If You Can't Find It, You Don't Need It  
Finding a Comfortable Position by BITI Codrington  
Letters from Japan by Joanne Rice  
by Victor Young



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WORKS-IN-PROGRESS - JANUARY

Mobius will present a weekend of experimental work in all mediums, January 25 and 26. Artists interested in showing work should call 542-7416 for information. Ask for Marilyn.

Stretch, Strengthen and Tone class with Lisa Lepore, Tuesdays and Thursdays, at Mobius. Call Lisa at 889-2980

MODERN PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS:

Paul Winter's Miss Gaia/Earth Mass  
Second Annual Performances

Sunday, Nov 4  
Symphony Hall  
8 pm

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An Evening with Gramavision Records:  
progressive recording artists in concert:

Friday, Nov 30  
Berklee Performance Center  
7:30 pm

Jamaaladeen Tacuma            Bob Moses  
John Scofield                 Anthony Davis  
James Newton                 John Blake

\* \* \* \* \*

Ornette Coleman and Prime Time

\* \* \* \* \*  
Saturday, Dec 15  
Berklee Performance Center  
8 pm

Mobius is funded in part by the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, a state agency, and by a grant from the Boston Arts Lottery. Sound Art at Mobius was made possible by a New Works grant from the Mass. Council on the Arts and Humanities. 5 Evenings/October is funded in part by Meet the Composer, through the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Mass. Council on the Arts and Humanities, and The National Endowment for the Arts.

**MOBIUS**

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