

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Mulholland, Neil, "Vivre sa Vie," *Frieze*, May 1999

## Vivre sa Vie

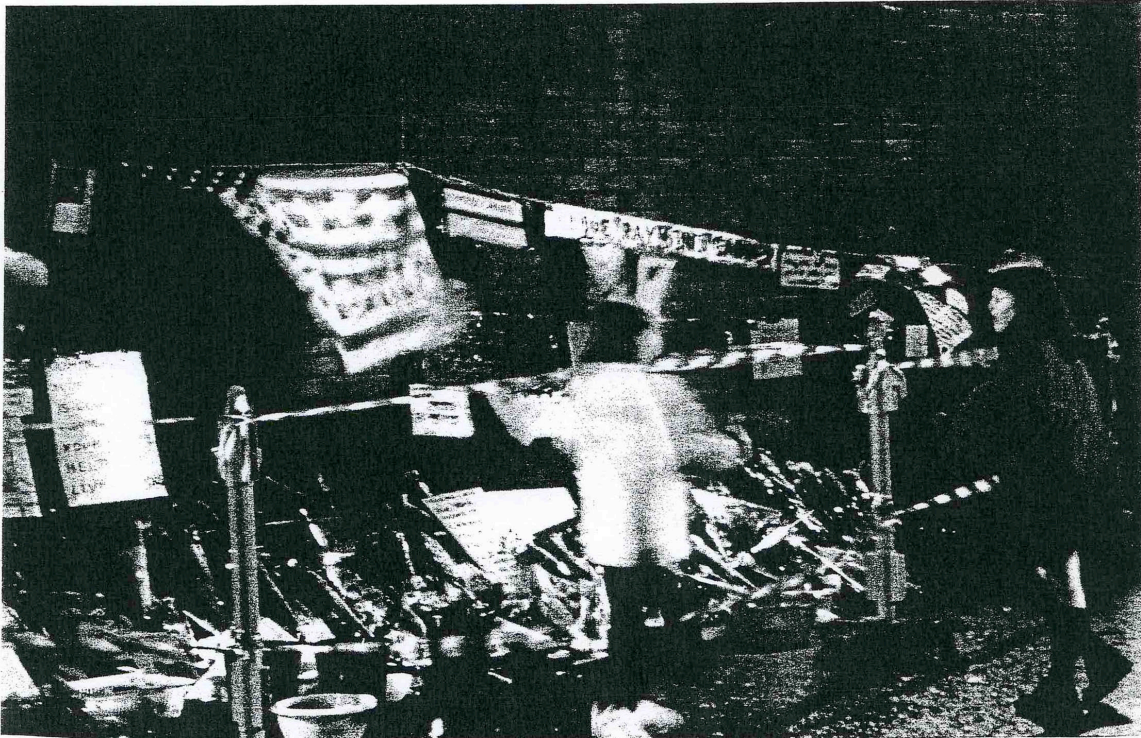
Various locations, Scotland

A series of exhibitions, talks, workshops and conferences across 13 venues in Edinburgh, Glasgow and northern Scotland, 'Vivre sa Vie', organized by Tanya Leyton, displayed an apt sense of unsolved expediency, testifying to a sense of openness about what French

contemporary art might be. However, in keeping with the exhibition's ambiguous title, which could be translated as either 'it's my life' or 'to live another's life', many of the artists selected share a concern with social engagement and interactive art. Most notable were consumer culture-jammer Matthieu Laurette and Thomas Hirschhorn, who has displayed his altars in the poorest neighbourhoods of Paris because 'even famous people don't die in the centre'. Fashioned from discarded urban detri-

tus, Hirschhorn's altar to the writer Raymond Carver was placed against the wall of a Glasgow tower block in the Gorbals. A sociologist's paradise, the area predictably fits Hirschhorn's anthropological will to art. In this context the Carver shrine appeared peculiarly alien, particularly for a city seldom host to public works that pay such scant regard to the specifics of site. Claude Closky, meanwhile, was commissioned by New Media Scotland to produce an interactive work, avail-

able at [www.mediascot.org/closky](http://www.mediascot.org/closky). Fabricating his own version of *Tetris*, Closky allowed surfers to gape in blank absorption as his score accrued. The interaction here is entirely feigned, as it is for spectators at sporting events. This was a farcically zealous 8-bit bulldozing of technologically overdetermined art which, in keeping with Closky's oeuvre, showed an obsession with taxonomic games and the futility of spectacular virtual conquests. Recently in France there's been much



Thomas Hirschhorn  
by Raymond Carver  
2006  
not to view

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ate over *solidarité économique*, a ndbite encouraging marginalized ups to set up their own community- ed projects rather than rely on public private sector support. This familiar del for socio-cultural regeneration emed to have been adapted by the iris-Berlin based design collective .ESS, who displayed their *Shop Project* (2000) – dysfunctional *bricolage* anti-ashion for women – at Glasgow's Trans- mission Gallery. A similar approach was taken by the Oberkampf artist-run gallery initiative Glassbox, the great independent hope of Parisian art. Glassbox invited Scottish-based artists to submit proposals to be displayed as an exhibition entitled 'Duplex' at Edinburgh's Collective Gallery. While the brief was cordially open, the short notice given meant that few proposals were submitted, which left the show a bit threadbare. No micro-economy can survive without solidarity, it would seem. Whether intended or not, the failed outcome of Glassbox's project had its benefits. 'Duplex' could be read as an appropriation of Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics: put simply, the idea that art is a game whose rules constantly mutate, a vision much in line with the general curatorial ethos of the 'Vivre sa Vie'.

The show followed hot on the heels of 'Plano XXI', a large multi-venued exhibition of contemporary Portuguese art held in Glasgow and curated by Antonio Rego. For some, such events are symptomatic of a professionalization of art in Scotland. Big, however, can sometimes be beautiful. Polar opposites to the transparency of Glassbox, the mammoth video installations at Glasgow's Tramway gallery conform more readily to the kind of blockbuster work normally found in such international extravaganzas.



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Philippe Parreno's (*Credits*) (2000), a video of dry ice, coloured lights and a wind and rain machine, accompanied by flourishes of gnarled guitar twanging, evocatively transforms a rather banal *mise-en-scène* of bare trees covered in brightly coloured polythene bags into a mini road movie. Ostensibly, this is a rank deconstruction of the conceits used by filmmakers, in itself a well-worn trope of contemporary video art. (*Credits*), however, is surprisingly effective, mainly because it appears to have no axe to

grind over the mesmerizing impulse. Pierre Huyghe's video diptych *3rd Memory* (2000) sees John Wojtowicz narrate his failed heist at the Chase Manhattan Bank in Brooklyn on 22 August 1972, an exploit that was subsequently dramatized by Sidney Lumet as *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), starring Al Pacino. Wojtowicz explains that Pacino in *The Godfather* (1972) was the original inspiration behind his note to the Brooklyn bank staff: 'This is an offer you can't refuse. Signed the Gang.' The old

marauder then gives an assured performance simultaneously playing himself and directing his co-stars, while the Lumet flick intermittently plays on the opposite side of the split screen. In other hands this subject matter might be little more than vapid metatextual boil-in-the-Baudrillard, but Wojtowicz's seductiveness holds *3rd Memory* back from the brink by encouraging identification and generating sustaining pleasures.

Neil Mulholland