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George Baldessin

Imants Tillers:

Conversations with the Bride 1974

Occasional Images from a City Chamber

Occasional Screens with Seating Arrangements

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Biography

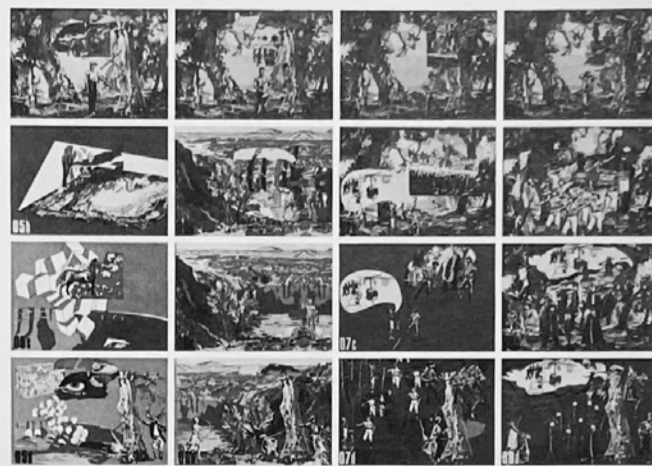
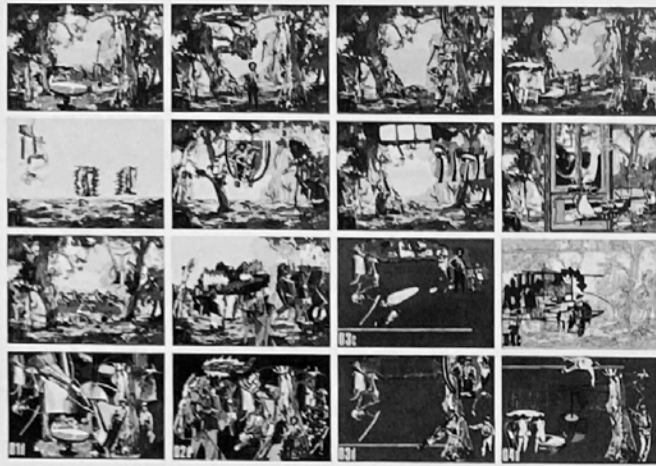
Born July 1950, Sydney.

1969/71 Studied Architecture at Sydney University.

1972 Worked with consulting engineers to gain experience and assisted in writing computer programmes. Graduated B Sc.(Arch) Hons. with University Medal. Concurrently produced various artworks.

1973 Part-time tutor in design at Sydney University. Worked towards first one-man exhibition.

1974 Held the position of designer/draftsman for landscape consultants in Sydney. Worked intensively on 'Conversations with the Bride'.



Conversations With The Bride 1974

Imants Tillers

'Conversations With The Bride' is a direct response to Marcel Duchamp's celebrated work 'The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even', known also as 'The Large Glass'. The Nine Etchings from The Large Glass provoked the uninitiated reaction that it was concerned with energy exchanges (such as the condensation of gases into liquids) and their facilitation by several machines. Following an initiation into the work through the notes of The Green Box, an ambitious but futile attempt was made to plan a strategy for re-creating it.

Film phenomena

A key principle of The Large Glass is the notion that the shadow cast by a 4-dimensional figure (an 'ideal object') on our space is a 3-dimensional shadow (Jouffret's principle).

Despite the apparent improbability of this relationship, the concept of higher dimensions is a mathematical reality and n-dimensional spaces are commonly used in information and communication theories.

A simple analogy may give further credence to this principle. Consider a world which has only 2 dimensions; whose objects and inhabitants have area but not volume. This world is not entirely without thickness but exists as a thin membrane, like a film of oil on water. It exists concurrently with the events of our everyday world and occasionally 3-dimensional objects penetrate and pass through the membrane. To an inhabitant of the membrane, this is an unaccountable event.

The object appears mysteriously as a point, line or plane depending on its orientation at the moment of entry and it appears to develop or grow as its successive cross-sections are traced by the film. Its subsequent and inevitable exit is equally mysterious.

As witness to this phenomena, the inhabitant of the membrane is in an analogous position to ourselves. He can guess but not verify that these changes occurring continuously are the manifestations of an object or entity of a higher space.

A similar situation can be described by considering the projection of shadows from a stationary 3-dimensional object onto a flat screen, by a moving light-source.

A delay in glass

A logical consequence of Jouffret's principle is the proliferation of manifestations (related to a unique ideal object) on the lower plane. In the context of film phenomena, assuming the continuous movement of the object through the membrane, this set of manifestations (as distinct cross-sections) depends on three factors:

- 1 The angle of inclination (taken from the central axis of the object) relative to the film.
- 2 The orientation of the object around this axis at the point of impact.
- 3 The measurement of the various cross-sections taken at discrete intervals during the passage of the object through the film.

This last factor represents an artificial but convenient situation, since movement of the object is in fact continuous. It is only by 'freezing' the sequence of change at finite intervals that the cross-sections can be separated and examined, frame by frame, as on a movie reel.

A comparison can be made between these sectional outlines (trapped instantaneously within the transparent film) and the constituent images of both the Bride and Bachelor's Domain in The Large Glass (appropriately subtitled 'A Delay in Glass'). Not only are these images the 2-dimensional perspective projections of 3-dimensional objects but also they are part of the mechanics of The Large Glass — a series of events and transformations not evident in this frozen state but whose occurrence is nevertheless described in The Green Box.

If Jouffret's principle is indeed operative in The Large Glass then each image is not simply the unique projection of an object from a higher plane but rather a single state from one of its many possible trajectories.

The property of being found

Another consequence of Jouffret's principle is that manifested objects cannot, because of their a priori existence, be invented or created but merely found, discovered or unearthed.

This facilitates the inclusion of Duchamp's Readymades as logical, even inevitable elements in a discussion of the 4th dimension.

Many commentators suggest that Duchamp, by the arbitrary selection and nomination of particular mass-produced objects (with perhaps an alteration in their context or function) elevated them to the status of art. For example, his 'Bicycle Wheel' (1913/64) is a bicycle wheel, inverted on a stool, and 'Fountain' (1917) simply a urinal removed from its normal context.

This conception of the Readymade has given rise to two major trends in recent art.

- The democratization of the art object, so that anything and everything can be art if it is so nominated.
- The reliance on an institutionalised art context to authenticate these objects as art.

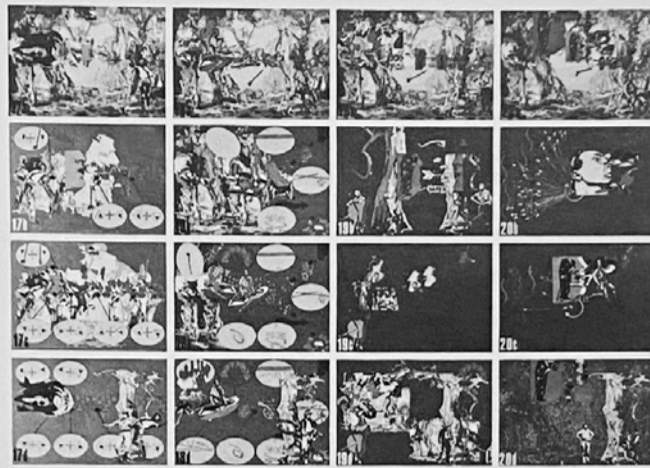
Also, with the recent dematerialisation of art and the emergence of conceptual art, there is the recognition that art is really information processing and not necessarily working from data or in the form of objects, so ideas and acts as well as objects can be nominated as art. These issues of context and re-definition of art tend to obscure the unique relationship that exists between Readymades and ideas present in The Large Glass.

Octavio Paz in his essay "water writes always" in plural suggests that Duchamp, rather than expanding the notion and domain of art (in an avant-garde sense) was interested in re-establishing a past tradition in art:

"Duchamp did not hide his admiration for the art works of the past that were incarnations of an Idea, usually religious in nature. The Large Glass is an attempt to renew that tradition within a radically different context, a-religious and ironic." Duchamp's own notes indicate that the Readymade is far more mysterious and indeterminate than a simple act of nomination:

"Specifications for Readymade. By planning for a moment to come (on such a day, such a minute) 'to inscribe a readymade'. The readymade can later be looked for (with all kinds of delays). The important thing is just this matter of timing. This snap-shot effect, like a speech delivered on no matter what occasion but at such-and-such an hour. It is a kind of rendezvous."

IMMANENTS



The readymade behaves like a free agent or independent entity. It is not the product of a conscious choice, instead, one waits and meets it. The most pertinent aspect though, is the need for the readymade to be inscribed at a particular moment. Without this operation, the status of the object, according to another note from The Green Box, is merely *ready-found*.

The second assumption

To explain the relevance of this distinction, it is useful to construct a simple model (based on points made so far) to account for some effects of Jouffret's principle.

- 1 4-dimensional objects ('ideal objects') cast 3-dimensional shadows on our plane of existence (Jouffret's principle).
- 2 A unique ideal object can project an infinitesimal array of such shadows on the lower plane (The consequence of proliferation).
- 3 Each 3-dimensional shadow is not a static, constant object but one that changes its form in relation to the passage of time. The shadow in fact is a trajectory of successive changes in the state of 3-dimensional objects (by the analogy of film phenomena).
- 4 The successive states in the trajectory are normally continuous but can be *frozen* at particular instants to enable their examination (The Delay in Glass).

Now a stable object in a state of inertia, such as the ready-found (before it becomes a ready-made) does not have a trajectory of changing forms and consequently cannot be conceived as the shadow of an ideal object (by Statement 3). However, if this object, in its constancy, were assumed to be in fact *frozen* or a *delay* in a trajectory of changing states (by Statement 4), then it would form part of such a trajectory and thus bear a residual relationship to an ideal object (by Statement 1).

Waiting for 'the moment to come' at which 'to inscribe a ready-made' (ie. the specification for a Readymade) constitutes an acknowledgment of a particular moment ('a delay' or 'an instantaneous state of rest') as such, a *frozen* state. Thus the readymade necessarily bears a residual relationship to an ideal object, whereas an uninscribed ready-found whose state remains simply inert, does not. In fact, in The Large Glass itself, the central image of the Bachelor Apparatus is the projection of a readymade (The Chocolate Grinder).

'Conversations with the Bride' makes two major assumptions:

Assumption 1.

The Large Glass is one state in a trajectory of a shadow of the particular ideal object A.

If this is so, Duchamp as an inhabitant of this world could not be responsible for creating ideal object A nor its shadow so his act in executing 'The Bride Stripped Bare, by her Bachelors, even' was an act of discovery; he found the shadow and recorded one of its states at a particular instant. (By the property of being found).

Assumption 2.

It is possible to find another shadow cast by the same ideal object A and record another of its states at a particular instant. Thus 'Conversations with The Bride' cannot re-create The Large Glass but rather can attempt to rediscover Another Large Glass in a parallel but dissimilar form.

The second assumption irrespective of its validity or *truth* forms the guiding metaphor and activating principle of 'Conversations....'

The table of residues

The table of residues is a sub-set of 'Conversations with the Bride'. It is a visual component of the work and consists of 112 numbered images which can be arranged in 4 Rows (a, b, c, d) and 28 columns (01-28), as a table of elements.

The images, as unique elements or as a system, do not claim to be a duplication of The Large Glass but rather are tangential to that aim. They contain strong references to this problem and even relate to a method of obtaining solutions, but avoid being a part of such a solution. Each image is a composition or construction of various figurative and symbolic elements. None of these internal elements has been created specifically for the work: all have existed in some form, partial or complete, in an environment of images external to 'Conversations....' The composition of each image has not been the result of an arbitrary or imaginative act but rather the outcome of an algorithm, a calculus or machine of logical transformations acting independently and simultaneously on several of these elements.

The bachelor's condition

- Consider row A in the table.

Each discrete image (01a to 28a) is composed from the same set of elements — a landscape, a woodsman, axes, a foreground tree and a complex composite image with diminishing elements. These elements undergo a change of state from image to image (for example 01a to 02a, 15a to 16a). While changes of state are normally continuous, here they have been *frozen* into finite steps or discrete moments.

It is sufficient to indicate a number of sources for both elements and transformations to suggest the principles of discovery in operation.

The landscape, for example, is a mirror-image of Hans Heysen's 'Summer' (1909) and its various states are part of a seasonal cycle effected by small but finite changes in hue. The woodsmen, on the other hand, have their counterparts in real people in 'Rain forest trees of Australia' and the sequence of their personality changes are coupled with the sequence of axes in their clockwise rotation.

The complex composite image within each element of row A is altogether of a different type. Each is the graphic and literal expression of a story by Virginia Woolf, 'The moment: Summer's night', which describes the subjective experience of time during the change from twilight to nightfall.

This story was analysed according to its sentential relations, coded into a form suitable for cybernetic modelling techniques, then visual elements and symbols were found and substituted into this simplified semantic structure.

Perhaps the most important ready-found input into row A comes from J G Frazer's 'The golden bough'. Despite the vivid scene it describes, its application does not add any new elements. Instead, it changes the context of the existing elements and what they mean.

Frazer describes a woodland grove near the lake of Nemi (Diana's mirror) and on this sacred grove a grim figure of a man, sword in hand, peering warily about him as if at every instant he expected to be set upon by an enemy. This man was both a priest and murderer; the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to hold the priesthood in his stead. Succession by the sword was the rule of the sanctuary.

The priest was also the guardian of a certain tree in the grove, held to be the incarnation of the roman goddess, Diana. Thus, as king of the wood, he had for his queen and bride, Diana herself. Diana, however, did not bear a simple one-to-one relationship with this tree but could in fact assume many forms. There was a belief for instance that the sacred place or landscape was not simply the abode of the goddess but was in fact the goddess. The forces of nature were concentrated in the divine presence and this presence diffused throughout the physical surroundings — the trees, water, hills, sky and clouds.

Thus the dream-like vision of Heysen's 'Summer' threatened by the woodsman's axe is inverted in meaning: the destroyer becomes a protector and is himself destroyed; indirectly by his own protectorate.

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Taken in the context of 'The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, even', the series of images in row A are known as 'The Bachelor's Condition', since the combination and transformation of their various internal elements correspond to changes in the bachelor's condition.

The bridal principle

□ Consider row D in the table.

The images (Old-28d) similarly undergo transformations in their constituent elements. But these occur in finite steps of far greater size than in row A. Their trajectory relates to that of an argument or method, concerned with the duplication of The Bride in the terms expressed by the second assumption.

This argument, called 'The Theory of the Method' is set out in 14 sections, each with 2 major points so that a unique idea relates exclusively to each of the 28 images.

A key section, for example, is 'The Method of Equivalence'. It outlines the two-fold approach which could be employed in the re-discovery of Another Large Glass. The sections preceding 'The Method of Equivalence' examine The Large Glass and deduce the plausibility of this approach.

"... various conceptions of equivalence are examined: for example, ideas associated with rational procedures such as the mapping of one structure into another; the theory of sets and groups; and such topics as the mediation of transformation functions between 2 systems of attributes. Parallel with this approach the phenomenon of coincidence is examined as a type of equivalence function.

Coincidence is defined as the occurrence of two events or two images simultaneously in time, without a causal connection between them but with a strong connection in terms of their respective meaning contents."

The method results in two components — a rational and irrational one.

The rational component analyses the apparent structure of The Large Glass into an abstract form and then substitutes new images into that structure.

The irrational component proposes the necessity for neutral vehicles into which unconscious contents can be projected. The vehicle is analogous to a transmission channel in communication theory; if it produces its own message it acts as noise which distorts the message from A to B. The neutral

vehicle in this context is thus a transparent structure, susceptible to chance and to unknown configurations, with no intrinsic meaning of its own.

The subsequent sections compromise the 'Method of Equivalence' into a practical method. This method involves:

- 1 The accumulation of images by a process of unexpected discovery and an analysis of the structure of their depicted events.
- 2 The generation of a set of functions associated with the mathematical notion of 'Moments of Inertia' (such as moment arm, couples, parallel force system, the transfer of axes, products of inertia, etc.). These functions are given metaphoric values so that they are capable of acting on the pool of ready-found images to form a variety of different configurations.
- 3 The analysis of The Large Glass into an abstract form.
- 4 Matching of combinations of inertial functions (in both the mechanical and metaphoric meanings described in Point 2) against the coded structure of The Large Glass until a satisfactory approximation is found.
- 5 The substitution of appropriate images from those accumulated (Point 1) into the configuration found above (Point 4).

The 'Theory of the Method', however, has its graphic expression in the images of row D in residual form. The central idea of each section is condensed into a unique simplified principle and the corresponding image merely illustrates it.

For examples, image 2d is activated by the principle of 'reverse development'. The constituent elements of this image are the historic precedents in Duchamp's earlier works of The Bride in The Large Glass.

Image 5d is activated by the principle of 'film phenomena' and it illustrates the analogy already extensively discussed.

Similarly, image 11d, activated by the principle of 'transmission of shadows', demonstrates a rational procedure for modelling a part of The Large Glass (The Chocolate Grinder) using the neutral elements from row A.

Thus, if row A corresponds to the transformation of 'The Bachelor's Condition', then row D corresponds to the transformation of 'The Bridal Principle' in that its images are concerned with the revelation and re-discovery of The Bride.

Moments and couples

The two intermediate rows B and C represent the collision of both forces.

The 'bachelor's condition' filters through to rows B C and D, particularly his experience of 'The moment: Summer's night'. In fact, the composite image of row A is distributed evenly among the other three.

Conversely, the 'bridal principle' tries to map each image of row D into the corresponding image already determined in row A, using the particular logic ascribed to it by its principle. For example, in 05d the principle of film phenomena validates the appearance of the landscape of 05a as a cross-section of the cube in 05b.

The collision between the bachelor's condition and the bridal principle can be depicted as a literal scenario: Consider Column 02.

The Bachelor's Condition:

The bachelor stood in a sylvan landscape; the scene of a strange and recurring tragedy.

He listened to the hum of a plane and the explosion of a motorbike on the road and thought to himself that when one is young the future lies upon the present.

The bridal principle:

Meanwhile the bride asserts her continuity beyond her role in the 'Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, even'. She attempts to project herself into the sylvan landscape of the bachelor by a 'principle of reverse development' involving the successive interpolation of her historical precedents.

Rendezvous with configuration P.

Within the Table of Residues, there is a rational basis for connections between each image. On the other hand, as an installation on aluminium stands, the relative position of adjoining images is determined by a disinterested arbitrariness. Further more each image is part mirror to facilitate the 'coupling of moments'.

This occurs when the fixed image is *coupled* to the reflection of another image at the node formed by the stand. The couplings necessarily exist only at the moment of perception and depend on the position and height of the viewer within the grid. If several viewers simultaneously *couple* different images a configuration of coupled moments results. (A number of tall spectators are particularly potent for the system.) Different configurations are convoked and dissolved from instant to instant depending on the combined perceptions of all spectators within the work.

This notion of 'coupled moments' results in a structure susceptible to chance or at least it allows acausal connections and unpredictable configurations to occur within a set of structured images (The Table of Residues) tied to the unknown trajectories and observations of spectators.

There is a theory that the events of human lives are merely the words spoken by one deity to another. It could be imagined that a sequence of configurations of coupled moments, formed from composites of subjective perceptions ('perceptual objects'), are also the projections on manifestations of a meaning. Suppose at a particular time there occurs a continuous flow of configurations equivalent in meaning to the trajectory of the shadow of ideal object A and that this flow was frozen at the particular set of perceptual objects nominated as Configuration P. Configuration P would then be a parallel form to The Large Glass (by assumption 1 and assumption 2).

Although manifest and integrated within the work, this configuration would necessarily occur unnoticed to all spectators. Nevertheless, if it were possible to notice when Configuration P occurred, at that instant and only at that instant it could be inscribed as a readymade (The property of being found).

The point, then, of 'Conversations with The Bride' is that the re-discovery of The Large Glass cannot be consciously constructed — it must be found within a structure amenable to its expression at a given moment. It is a kind of rendezvous.