



IAN BREAKWELL'S UNWORD

VICTORIA WORSLEY

UNWORD 2: an event by Ian Breakwell at the I.C.A. Oct 17, 1969

The prologue to the event took place in the main I.C.A. gallery and stemmed from the following letter written by Ian Breakwell to the sculptor Ray Barrie,¹ 8.10.1969...

"Dear Ray,

John Hilliard tells me that you are very emphatic about the fact that all your work so far is in your opinion worth nothing, that you want to forget about and would be glad to get rid of it so that you can start afresh;² well I wonder if you are interested in doing just that, because if so I can help you; I am doing an event at the I.C.A. on the evening of Friday Oct. 17th and would like as a prologue to the event to destroy an exhibition of modern sculpture: it would be laid out in the gallery where the audience could look at catalogues which could be printed, before passing through to the event area; only when the sculpture began to be smashed up before their very eyes would they begin to realise that all was not straightforward. You could either smash it yourself or otherwise I have a gang of willing lads who would be only too pleased to do the job....."

On the 17th the sculpture [Fig. 1] was sawn up and bagged in refuse-sacks.

The audience then passed through to the performance area to find it filled with seemingly impenetrable sheets of paper stretching from ceiling to floor (15ft high) and covered with words (random extracts from Ian Breakwell's prose texts.) [Fig. 2]

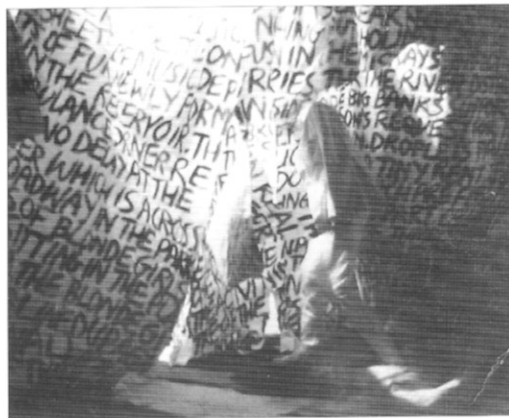
Two films were projected onto the front wall of words. The first film lasted three minutes and was called "Language Lesson"; the second film, also lasting three minutes was called "Bio-Mechanic Man". A third film was then projected onto the sheets of words, a film demonstrating how to shear sheep; simultaneously a tape-recording of eye-sight test dialogue began to play. Both tape and film continued throughout the subsequent action.

During the subsequent action a film of an aero-engine destroying itself was run continuously onto a side wall in forward then in reverse, and gradually the film itself was physically destroyed by the projectionist.

front cover

Ian Breakwell performing UNWORD 2, 1969

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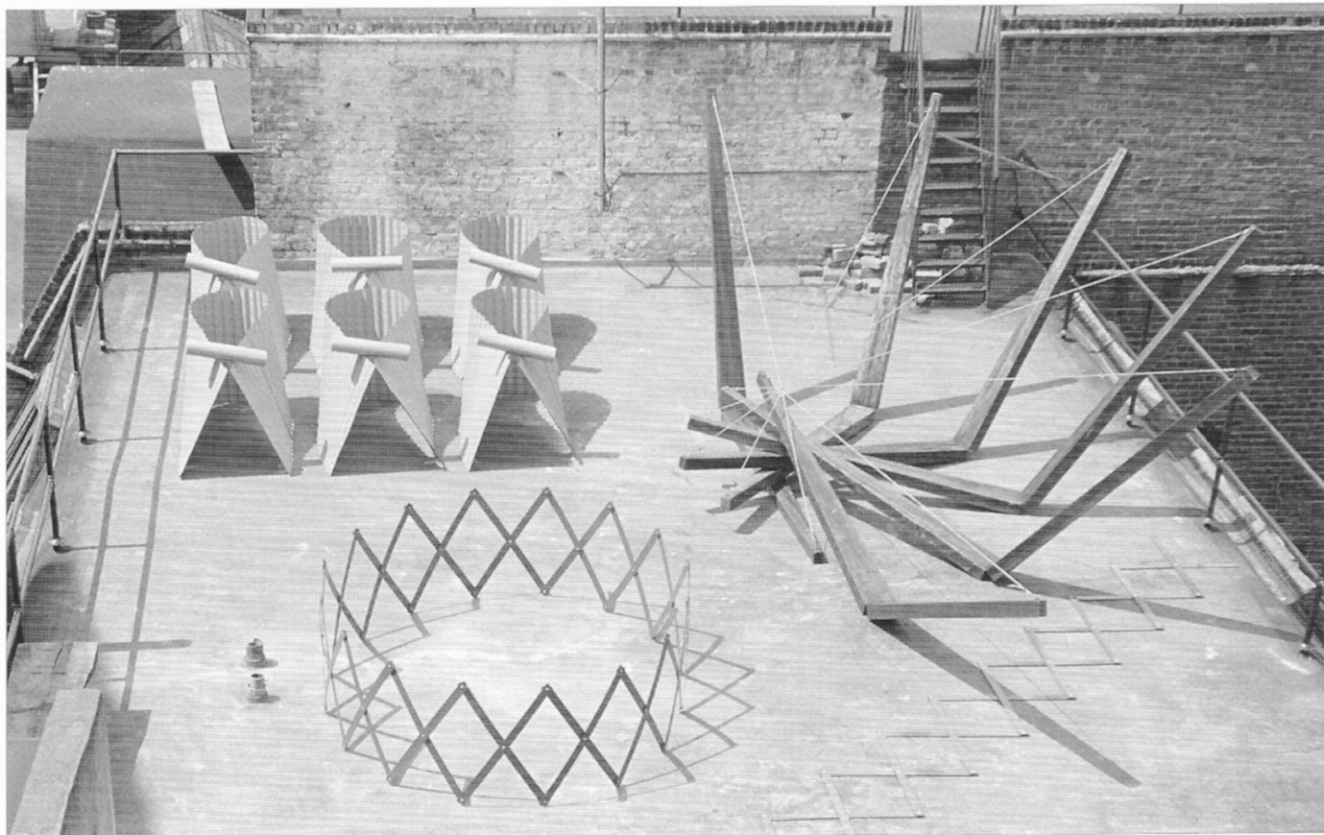


Fig 1
Sculptures by **Ray Barrie** 1967-8

© Ray Barrie

Fig 2
Photographs of UNWORD 2, 1969

© Ian Breakwell & Mike Leggett

Five minutes after the beginning of the tape and film, Breakwell appeared from out of the forest of words and slowly began to bite at the sheets and to tear down the sheets of words with his teeth. As he tore down a layer of words another would be revealed, until eventually he reached the back wall of the room, and the removal of the last sheets of words revealed a seated girl, her body completely enclosed in a white straight-jacket. On the front of the straight-jacket were stapled a dress, stockings and shoes in the appropriate places; a hat was on her head. Her face remained expressionless.



The projected film-image, which had inevitably increased in size as each layer of word-sheets was removed, now covered the area of the back wall which included the seated girl.

Breakwell pulled off the clothes which were fastened to the girl's straight-jacket. He nailed the clothes and hat in the outline of a figure onto the wall beside the seated girl. He then took the torn sheets of words which covered the floor and stapled them to each other and to the girl's straight-jacket until the girl and the floor area were covered with words in a kind of robe which stretched to the feet of the audience.

Breakwell exited and John Hilliard entered wearing a polythene suit and carrying a crop-sprayer filled with black paint on his back; he sprayed the complete word-robe.³

Ian Breakwell, c.1969

Breakwell's matter-of-fact description⁴ of UNWORD demonstrates his highly rational and calculated approach to a performance based on the principle of transformation through destruction. The multi-media absurd event was 'a collage of activity extending through any length of time' as part of an 'event-process'.⁵ The film of UNWORD, made with Mike Leggett, has recently been acquired by Leeds Museums & Galleries with the aid of the Henry Moore Foundation and the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund. The following account of the work is based on a series of interviews made with the artist in 2004–5 for the National Life Story Collection Artists' Lives project and the archive material related to UNWORD which is in the Henry Moore Institute Archive.⁶

The performance at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, was the second of four UNWORD events made during the course of 1969–70, all of which differed slightly in content and in relation to the space in which they took place. The first was staged at the Compendium Bookshop, London, 20 June 1969; UNWORD 3 was performed at Bristol Arts Centre, Bristol, 17 February 1970 and UNWORD 4 at Swansea University, Swansea, 30 January 1970.

UNWORD is part of a post-war art based on actions which has come to be described under the all-encompassing epithet of 'performance art'.⁷ At the time, artists gave these works a plethora of names including Happenings, events, environments, performances and actions. What is common to performance art is that it has a temporal dimension and foregrounds the process of production rather than the finished object. Action-based art was also a 'response to the threatened ontological condition of life itself in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the advent of the atomic age'.⁸ The fragility of creation in the face of global annihilation led to a production of art that was defined in terms of the dialectic of creation and destruction. In 1968, Jeff Nuttall, the artist, writer, anarchist and jazz musician, identified this approach in his book *Bomb Culture*. He wrote that for art, 'the future is



Fig 3
 'Words: Rearrangeable Environment
 with lights and sounds' by Allan Kaprow,
 1962

Photo © Robert R. McElroy/Licensed by VAGA,
 New York, NY and Research Library, The Getty
 Research Institute, Los Angeles (980063)

void... The only way to deal with void is by a game of chance, some absurd pattern of behaviour. The complete void of the future reveals the fallacy of logic and rationality. The void is infinite and thus absurd. Consequently, the only human activities which can be of any use in one's progress into infinite void are absurd practices'.⁹

The earliest forms of conceptually derived performance came from America. A key exponent was the composer and artist John Cage whose 1952 'Theater Piece No. 1', at Black Mountain College, was a collaborative multi-focused presentation using music, poetry, projection of films, and paintings. Taught by Cage, Allan Kaprow presented the first Happenings in 1959 and developed all-over environments, an integral part of which was a performative event. In 'Words',¹⁰ 1962, by Kaprow, [Fig. 3] words were roughly painted on panels and spectators were invited to rearrange them. Although this bears close visual similarity to the later word environments of UNWORD Breakwell was apparently unaware of American activities.¹¹ Instead, these ideas filtered through British-based artists – informed by European existentialism, the Dadaists and the French Surrealists – and particularly those who were involved with the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS).

DIAS took place in London in September 1966 and was an international event that attracted nearly 100 artists and poets, mainly from the fields of Happenings and Concrete Poetry, whose work responded to the theme of destruction as a social and aesthetic phenomenon. [Fig. 4] The leading organiser was Gustav Metzger who had written his manifesto on *Auto-Destructive Art* in 1959. A key example of his approach was his 'South Bank



Fig 4
Poster for DIAS designed by
John Sharkey, 1966



Fig 5
'Soft Skoob' by John Latham, 1964,
books on canvas and spray paint
Courtesy John Latham Estate and
Lisson Gallery, London

Demo' in London, 1961, where he hung three huge tarpaulins in red, white and black (in homage to Malevich's Suprematist paintings) and, whilst wearing a protective gas-mask, sprayed them with hydrochloric acid so that they immediately disintegrated. On the organising committee of DIAS, Metzger was joined by the Concrete Poets, John Sharkey, Bob Cobbing and dom sylvester houédard. Other participants who were a key influence on Breakwell were Mark Boyle and Joan Hills – who were experimenting with projecting films and slides that revealed the process of destruction of the objects projected or the film/slide itself¹² – and John Latham. From the late 1950s Latham had been producing actions and assemblages using books called 'Skoob' (books spelt backwards) [Fig. 5], the most famous example of which was when he burnt his 'Skoob Towers' (from 1964). He had also used a spray gun on his assemblages, as an index of the temporal act of painting.¹³

UNWORD emerged from these approaches and attitudes and Breakwell acknowledged the influence of DIAS on its conceptual framework:

What was interesting was the fact that the festival was based on an idea that seemed to be philistine: destruction as opposed to creation, and yet it was all done by artists. It was not about the end product it was about process... people were finding their way towards a kind of art that didn't necessarily form something from the unformed into a final state... You take bits of metal and you weld them together and you end up with a sculpture, well, this reverses that process. You start with something and you get rid of it and traces of what is left may or may not be interesting. You're not too bothered what the end product is, there may be a photograph as a memento, but the actual ashes of the burnt thing are not going to be religiously saved, they're going in the bin. The whole thing is talking about

an art which is process-based as opposed to end product-based... Also there is a political element... Metzger...was a refugee from the Nazis, very anti-capitalist... and an original member of the Committee of 100¹⁴... as was Nuttall, very much against the scientific establishment and the military and ecologically aware... and there was a lot of violence, but ritualised, in a lot of the performance stuff going around at the time – everyone seemed to be wrapped up in bandages ... my own performances, the UNWORD series for instance, was very influenced by DIAS because they are performances of deconstruction, disassembling... something gets built, it gets dismantled, torn up, shredded, brought down and reused. So it's all about disassembling and dismantling and recycling, everything being a process with no real end to it at all.¹⁵

Although he did not take part in DIAS, before he moved to London in the summer of 1968 Breakwell came into contact with many of its participants through the alternative programme of exhibitions and performances he curated at the Bristol Arts Centre.¹⁶ By word of mouth, he attracted artists such as Ivor Davies, Jeff Nuttall, Ron Geesin, and Mark Boyle and Joan Hills, who showed their 'Son et Lumière for bodily fluids and functions'. [Fig. 6] Bodily fluids ranging from sperm to tears were projected through a microprojector and accompanied by amplified body sounds. In June 1967 he curated, with Gustav Metzger, an exhibition called *Shock*.¹⁷ He recounts how they met and the exhibition came about:

Fig 6
Mark Boyle and Joan Hills performing
'Son et Lumiere for bodily fluids and functions',
1967
© Boyle Family



There was a strong connection with the British participants in that festival [DIAS]... Gustav Metzger... had heard through people like Nuttall and Mark Boyle the things I was doing down in Bristol and he suddenly turned up one day with a bin liner over his back with a lot of documentation of the DIAS in London and also a very large... assortment... of the Vienna Actionists¹⁸ like Otto Mühl, Günter Brus, Herman Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler... doing their... self-mutilating and rolling around in plaster and blood and guts. Metzger proposed putting on an exhibition on the spot but we already had one on the walls. The only available space was the corridor outside the restaurant... So we put up the exhibition there overnight and on the inside of the restaurant were the Vienna Actionists all rolling around in offal, bandages and sewing themselves up, and slashing themselves with razor blades and pouring blood over each other. Of course within two days the exhibition was taken down because of so many complaints from diners who couldn't eat their meals with all this disgusting stuff around them. So it was a very short lived exhibition but there was very briefly a DIAS exhibition in Bristol, after the London one.¹⁹

Whilst still in Bristol and then after moving to London, Breakwell became part of an alternative counter-culture arts community. In London he knew and went to The Better Books bookshop on Charing Cross Road, run by Bob Cobbing, which was a central meeting place for the international literary and artistic underground. Better Books not only sold a vast range of alternative literature, it hosted poetry readings and performances that took place in the basement. On Saturday evenings the blinds were pulled down and were used as screens for the early meetings of the London Filmmakers' Co-operative, which Breakwell attended. He notes that 'The number of people in London interested in these kind of things at that time was less than 100 so they would all get to know each other... you can't believe how small it was'.²⁰ The *International Times*, a weekly London newspaper founded in 1966, also catered for the arts counter-culture, largely because one of its writers was Jeff Nuttall who enlisted such people as William Burroughs to write a weekly column. It also provided listings of all the alternative scene's events and its offices were above the Indica Bookshop and Gallery. The Indica had opened in 1966 operating as an art gallery showing artists such as Mark Boyle and Yoko Ono and acted as a meeting place. Similarly, a counter-culture arts complex called the Arts Laboratory in Drury Lane²¹ acted as a gathering place to eat, browse second-hand books, and see performances, events and film screenings. These places brought together the same people and Breakwell describes the effect of being part of this:

It's bringing me into contact with a lot of other people but it's showing me how to not just make the art but do something with it and it's breaking down all the barriers between the media. It's using everything now... [it] lets everything loose, suddenly there's projection, film, music, all kinds of things and it's all the same to me from this point onwards, by virtue of all being different it's all the same, it's all art.²²

The concept of 'intermedia'²³ came from Fluxus which ignored the traditional divisions of medium specific practices, such as painting

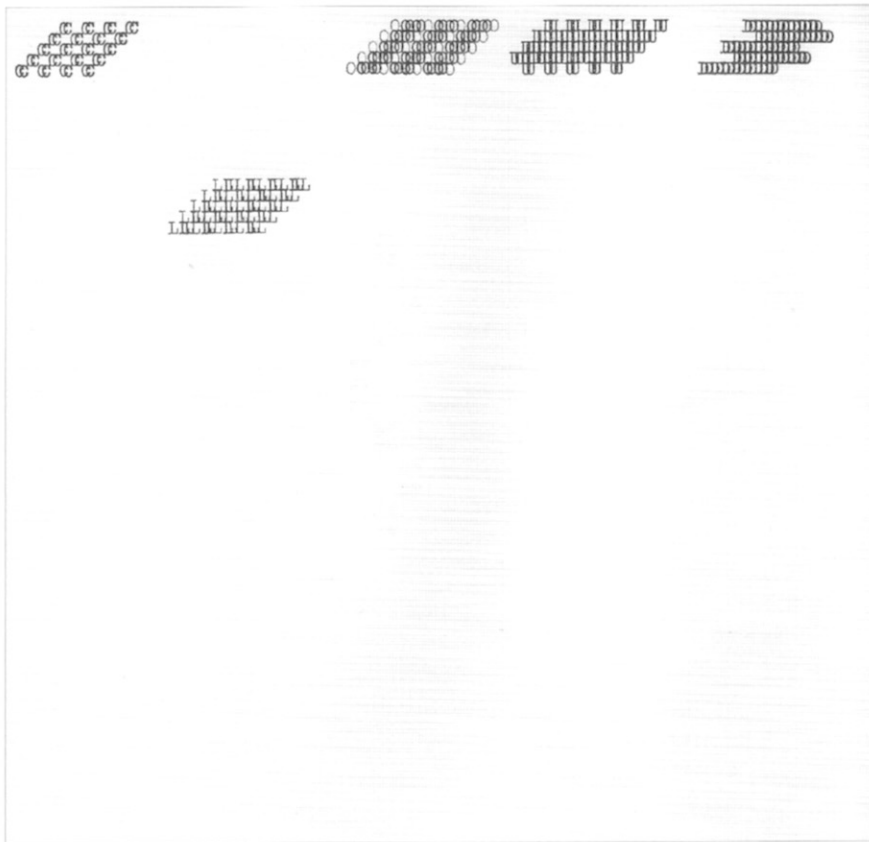


Fig 7
 'Cloud Formations' by
 dom sylvester houédard, 1965

or sculpture, in favour of conceptual work that crossed the boundaries between media. Fluxus gave a particular prominence and new role to language. This was a key approach for Breakwell, who always defined himself as much a writer as an artist. Through running a bookstall at Bristol Arts Centre he came into contact with a number of significant publications. These included works published by Dick Higgins' Something Else Press, particularly the first English translation of Daniel Spoerri's *An Anecdoted Typography of Chance*, and other Fluxus-related publications such as those by Georges Brecht, especially his work 'Water Yam', 1963. This was a box containing 'event-scores' which were sets of minimal instructions for performances,

between a sentence and a word in length. What intrigued Breakwell was that Brecht left everything up to the interpretation of the reader/performer who could respond in any way they chose or do nothing at all. In distinction to conventional theatre's basis in narrative, Brecht offered what Breakwell termed a 'Zen-vaudeville'²⁴ of disconnected formats. Breakwell notes, 'that kind of reduction ... is a central factor in my work... I have always been fascinated, throughout my life, of shrinkage to a central point...and it's metaphorical as well, you're reducing everything to a zero point'.²⁵ He describes a particularly influential meeting, whilst at Bristol Arts Centre, which was important to the conceptual underpinning of UNWORD:

This guy comes in and he'd look cool now and this is 1967... this guy's got a completely shaven head... black shades... and a complete monk's outfit with a tassel and bare feet and sandals and he said "John Furnival said I should come here and ask for someone called Ian Breakwell... I'm dom sylvester houédard²⁶ ...and the reason I am dressed like this is that I'm a monk and I live in Prinknash Abbey and I do Visual Poetry and I show at the Lisson Gallery in London" [Fig. 7]... I said... "As you can see there's nobody around... accept me because there's no performance on" ... "Oh what are the performances like?" I said "well I don't go to them actually... I've been to one or two but they're really boring, it's not the kind of theatre I'm interested in, but I'll tell you what I do like doing, I like

going when they're not performing and just looking at the set on the stage and putting the theatre lights on, and maybe it's going to be *Rookery Nook* or the *Mousetrap* or something; I sit there and imagine all kinds of strange scenarios that could take place in this setting ... I prefer the setting without the play, actually they're between productions so I don't know whether there's anything there or not". So he said "Shall we have a look?" ... I opened up the theatre and ...switched the stage lights on and there's just one big spot... and there's no set at all... all there is is a spotlight onto this stepladder which casts a shadow onto the white cyclorama screen. So we sit down and... dom sylvester, for twenty minutes, talks straight off the top of his head about the void and whiteness and Buddhist, Tantric references to emptiness and removal and the shadow and the colour white... and I'm sitting there absolutely transfixed and eventually he stops... I said "I thought I read things into things but I have just never seen so much got from so little" and he said "Yes, but wouldn't it be much more interesting without that set of steps?"²⁷

These ideas relate closely to the Zen-like negation²⁸ of UNWORD in which the whole environment is gradually destroyed until it reaches a vanishing point. The 'UNWORD Manifesto'²⁹ provided much of the content for the word environments. This is a series of hundreds of words all with the prefix *un-*, acting as a dissolution of the words' meanings. This is compounded as Breakwell physically destroys the words during the performance, 'the author literally eats his own words'³⁰ and dematerialises the subject.

Breakwell was aware of the increasingly fluid relationship between language and objects through his contact and part in the international Concrete or Visual Poetry movement. At Derby College of Art he co-edited, with John Hall, a little magazine called *Exit*. The final issue, *Exit 5/6*, 1968, took the form of a polythene bag which contained various examples of Visual Poetry, including work by Cobbing, John Furnival, Sharkey and houédard. Although, at this point, Breakwell only had contact with most of these artists by mail he discovered this type of art had no geographical

Fig 8
Photographs from 'UNSCULPT', 1970
© Ian Breakwell & Mike Leggett



boundaries and you could operate from anywhere. In the same way that Concrete Poetry uses words and letters as elements of composition, UNWORD is about the nature of language at a conceptual level where words become things. Peter Fuller wrote that Breakwell's use of language is about 'the status of the word itself, its relationship to internal images and the external world... Breakwell treated words as things, as if they were both objects and physical images'.³¹ UNWORD came out of the disparity which Breakwell saw in the way conventional theatre is rooted in and begins with words and the way that its visual manifestation is only addressed as a backdrop or an afterthought. He was strongly influenced by what he identified as the 'alternative theatre tradition: the theatre of visual spectacle, illusion and tableaux'³² which included everything from the *Commedia dell'arte* to Variety shows, the circus and Punch and Judy. He viewed performance, in the widest sense, primarily as a visual action and so, 'in UNWORD I used the words visually, as the scenery, words dwarfing the performers so that the words might have as physical a presence as a grove of trees or walls or advertising hoardings, a forest of words'.³³

Breakwell went on to produce further work based on word environments including a number of images under the title of 'Wordscapes', 'Wordwalls', shown at Camden Arts Centre, 1969, and a set for Alan Burns' play *Palach*, 1970, which was based on the Czech student, Jan Palach, who committed suicide by self-immolation in 1969 in a political protest against the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia. Shown at the Open Space Theatre in London, Breakwell covered the theatre in sheets of paper painted with words. A series of events closely related to UNWORD was a collaboration with John Hilliard called UNSCULPT, at the London New Arts Laboratory. [Fig. 8] Breakwell describes the event:

At 8.00p.m. Sat. 28th Feb. 1970 the exhibition commenced with a retrospective viewing of three large pieces of sculpture made by John Hilliard. At 8.30p.m. Hilliard took a microphone and announced that there would now, as advertised, be a change of work on display, the past work to



be replaced by new work built on the spot. Before this happened, however, the work in the gallery would be offered for sale, to quickly complete the process of making/displaying/selling that is assumed of work of this kind. As each of the pieces came up for sale, Ian Breakwell and two assistants³⁴ began to wrap or shroud them in paper covered with the word UNSCULPT, effecting a visual transformation of the exhibits. This procedure being complete, and no one having offered to purchase any of the three pieces, Breakwell, Hilliard and the two assistants, armed with sledgehammer, axe, hammer and spanner, began to demolish/dismantle the sculpture and to dispose of the remains into a rubbish 'skip' outside the gallery, thus clearing the space for the erection of the first new work.

The events of the opening, recorded up to this point on video-tape, were now played back to the 'audience'. At the same time Hilliard and the two assistants commenced the erection of a structure built of scaffold poles. As the last pole was positioned, the gallery lights were extinguished, and ultra-violet (black) lights were switched on. Hilliard then began to paint the scaffolding with fluorescent blue paint, so that the form emerged under the light as he proceeded. When the fluorescent structure was complete the opening of the exhibition terminated.³⁵

The exhibition continued in the following weeks as Breakwell and Hilliard alternated between removing the other's work and replacing it with his own and the gallery became both an exhibition and a studio. UNSCULPT, like the destruction of Ray Barrie's sculptures in the prologue to UNWORD, was an explicit statement of the artists' disaffection with conventional object-making. Their destruction was an act of removing their practice from the nexus of commercialisation into something ephemeral and non-commercial.

Action-based art's transience was resistant to commercialisation but there was still a need for an objectification of the process, a need to leave a trace, largely through documentation. This desire did not come from the art market (although ultimately it led to commercial exchange) but from the artists themselves. Mike Leggett's³⁶ background as a photographer and film-maker was the basis of several collaborative projects with Breakwell. He met Breakwell in Bristol in 1966 when he was working in television for the BBC. Leggett had accumulated a collection of film and sound 'oddities' gathered in the course of his work and the audio-visual aspects of UNWORD were these 'found' elements. These were performed as projections with the soundtrack played from a tape recorder for each of the performances. The filming of UNWORD however was not merely to document the performances. Leggett was observed by the audience as an implicit performer who was free to move at will and film wherever and whatever he wished. [Fig. 9] The subsequently processed film footage became part of the multi-projection elements of the next UNWORD performance, which was also filmed, processed, and then projected in the next performance. The final black and white film is a montage of footage from UNWORD 2, 3 and 4. Leggett writes, 'The governing dictum whilst combining the three films into one was to remove all points of reference



Fig 9
 Photograph of
Mike Leggett filming **Ian Breakwell** during the
 performance of **UNWORD 4**, 1970
 © Ian Breakwell & Mike Leggett

and DISCONTINUITY between the three films'.³⁷ Filmed in stopframe so that only one or two frames per second were exposed, and originally shown on a Spectro Analysis projector (usually used for scientific examination) that would project at a speed corresponding to this time-scale, the progression of static movements, like a fast slide show, produced a 'discovered drama... and truncated animation effect [with a] visual shock of changing the picture on the screen'.³⁸ Where still photographs were discovered to be an inadequate means of recording the first performance of UNWORD the film is analogous to the temporal aspect of the performance and provides a subjective version of the events through Leggett as the photographer/performer.

In 2003 Breakwell and Leggett digitally reconstructed the UNWORD film enabling it to be projected to full screen size at the correct projection speed of two frames per second in combination with the original soundtrack. It was first shown at the Anthony Reynolds Gallery in 2003. The film was conceived as another stage in the event-process and allows the viewer to re-experience and become part of the process of the performances, for as Breakwell stated, 'There is no end product'.³⁹

This essay is dedicated
 to the memory of Ian Breakwell
 who died on 14 October 2005

- 1 Ray Barrie (b.1946) studied sculpture at St Martin's School of Art, London, 1966–69, under Anthony Caro, William Tucker and Phillip King.
- 2 Barrie was making sculptures which were a critique of the 'New Generation Sculpture' of the 1960s which he found 'were embellished with figural overtones both in colour, form, title and ... literary narrative... what I found more challenging, was to strip away the embellishment in the welded and moulded form and work more directly with industrial materials... the sculpture was distinct and engineered. What I would call British Minimalism'. Barrie had spoken with John Hilliard about the problems of storing and maintaining the pristine condition of sculpture. He had already taken a conceptual approach to this problem for the exhibition *Young Contemporaries*, at the Royal Institute Galleries, London, 1968. As the exhibition was selected through the submission of photographs of works Barrie decided to exhibit these photographs rather than the original sculptures. I am indebted to Ray Barrie for providing this information and sending images of the works used in the Prologue to UNWORD. Quotation taken from a letter from Ray Barrie to the author, 14 March 2006.
- 3 Edited version of a text written by Ian Breakwell in the *Papers and photographs relating to Ian Breakwell and Mike Leggett's UNWORD*, Acc. No. 2005.455, Leeds Museums & Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive) hereafter Breakwell/Leggett Archive, HMI.
- 4 This relates to the style in which Breakwell writes his 'Diary' work. Michael Archer notes that artists, including Breakwell, were rejecting the idea that art was authenticated by emotional expression and sentiment and instead took a practical approach, often becoming critic, theorist, historian and artist. See Michael Archer's essay in *Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain 1965–75* (Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2000). Breakwell worked in various media but used the form of a diary throughout his career; started in 1964 as a purely visual work the diaries oscillate between text and image and a mixture of these. Extracts from his textual diaries have been published as *Ian Breakwell's Diary 1964–1985* (Pluto Press, London, 1986). The 'Dairies' also formed several series of television programmes, produced by Anna Ridley of Analogue Productions for Channel 4.
- 5 Ian Breakwell's statements from 'John Hilliard and Ian Breakwell' in *Studio International*, September 1970, p.95.
- 6 References to the interviews made with Victoria Worsley will be given as Ian Breakwell, NLSC, with the respective tape number and side. These are available in the British Library, the Henry Moore Institute Library and Tate Archive. Breakwell donated the majority of his extensive archives to Tate in 2005.
- 7 The term gained currency in the mid-1970s and many artists felt it was inadequate because it suggested an analogy to theatre. See 'Editorial against a definitive statement on British Performance Art', *Studio International*, Jul–Aug 1976, p.3.
- 8 Kristine Stiles 'Uncorrupted joy: international art actions' in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949–1979* (Thames and Hudson, New York, 1998) p.228
- 9 Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1968) p.67. Nuttall was one of the pioneers of Happenings in Britain, most notably as one of the founders of the performance group, 'The People's Show' in 1966. He also wrote an early book on the subject: *Performance Art: Volume 1: Memoirs and Volume 2: Scripts* (J. Calder, London, 1979).
- 10 Kaprow's book *Assemblage, environments & happenings* was published in 1966 and includes two images of installations of 'Words'. I am indebted to Martha Buskirk for this information.
- 11 Ian Breakwell, NLSC Tape 14, Side B, where Breakwell states he was unaware of American Happenings, and Tape 10, Side B, where he discusses how Cage's ideas 'took a long time to surface'. Kaprow and Breakwell's actions were very different but they appear to be thinking in very similar ways, for example, in 1971–72, after the UNWORD performances, Kaprow wrote a two-part essay called 'The Education of the Un-Artist' reprinted in Allan Kaprow, *The Blurring of Art and Life* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993).
- 12 See J. L. Locher, *Mark Boyle's Journey to the Surface of the Earth* (Mayer, London, 1978).
- 13 See John A. Walker, *John Latham: The Incidental Person – His Art and Ideas* (Middlesex University Press, Middlesex, 1995). Although the influence of DIAS and Metzger on UNWORD is stressed in this essay Latham had a far greater influence on Breakwell's art as a whole through, for example, his 'Book Plumbing' event at Better Books, 1967, and Latham's work for the Artist Placement Group of which Breakwell was an active participant. I am indebted to Felicity Sparrow for this information.
- 14 The Committee of 100 as part of the The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was set up in 1960 to organise Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA), such as mass sit-ins and blockades.
- 15 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 16, Side A.
- 16 Breakwell had moved to Bristol after studying painting and printmaking at Derby College of Art (1960–64) to study for an Art Teachers' Diploma at the West of England College of Art (1965).

- The Bristol Arts Centre ran a traditional programme of art exhibitions, mainly of local amateurs, alongside its largely amateur dramatic theatre programme. Breakwell left a comment in the Visitors' Book about how bad the exhibitions were and was invited by the owner to run his own programme on a voluntary basis. In between theatre shows Breakwell arranged performances which he organised and funded through ticket sales. Breakwell gives an account of this in his NLSC interview, Tape 10.
- 17 At the same time Metzger also gave the lecture 'The Aesthetic of Revulsion' at the Bristol Arts Centre.
 - 18 Although Metzger was not a member of the Vienna Actionists (Wiener Aktionsgruppe) he was a significant promoter of their work.
 - 19 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 16, Side A, also recounted in a slightly different version on Tape 10, Side B.
 - 20 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 16, Side A.
 - 21 The Arts Lab in Drury Lane closed in 1969 but many of its original participants had left in late 1968 after a policy disagreement with Jim Haynes who had set it up in September 1967. The dissenters set up 'The Institute for Research in Art & Technology' (IRAT) and this also became known as The London New Arts Laboratory. It was based in Robert Street, Camden, London, and was in operation between 1969–71. I am indebted to David Curtis and Mike Leggett for this information.
 - 22 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 10, Side B.
 - 23 Dick Higgins coined the concept 'intermedia'. See his 'Synesthesia and Intersenses: Intermedia', 1965, originally published in *Something Else Newsletter*, No. 1 (Something Else Press, New York, 1966). Also published as a chapter in Dick Higgins, *Horizons, the Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1984).
 - 24 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 19, Side A.
 - 25 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 12, Side B.
 - 26 John Furnival (b.1933) and dom sylvester houédard (1924–1992) were both based in Gloucestershire; together they set up Openings Press, 1964, and organised many exhibitions of Concrete Poetry.
 - 27 Ian Breakwell, NLSC, Tape 10, Side B. This passage is taken almost verbatim from a section of Ian Breakwell's book *An Actor's Revenge* (British Film Institute Publishing, London, 1995) p.11 entitled 'Bristol 1967'. I am indebted to Felicity Sparrow for this information.
 - 28 For a further discussion of artists who were working with the idea of the void see Clive Philpot 'From Nothing' in *Live in Your Head*, op.cit., note 2.
 - 29 Towards the end of the 2003 reconstruction of the film Breakwell reads the UNWORD manifesto as a voice-over.
 - 30 John Hilliard 'Brief notes on the UNWORD events', May 1970, Breakwell/Leggett Archive, HMI.
 - 31 Peter Fuller, *Art and Artists*, May 1974, p.22.
 - 32 Ian Breakwell in *Continuous Diary and related works 1965–1978* (Scottish Arts Council, Third Eye Centre Ltd., Glasgow, 1978) p.36.
 - 33 Ian Breakwell 'UNWORD series: 1969–1970', c.1970, Breakwell/Leggett Archive, HMI.
 - 34 One of the assistants was Richard Deacon who had been a student of Breakwell and Hilliard between 1968–69 when they were teaching at Somerset College of Art, Taunton.
 - 35 Ian Breakwell 'Presentation of work by Ian Breakwell and John Hilliard at the London New Arts Laboratory: Feb 28 – Mar 21 1970', c.1970, Breakwell/Leggett Archive, HMI also published in 'John Hilliard and Ian Breakwell' in *Studio International*, September 1970, pp.94–95.
 - 36 Mike Leggett is an artist, curator and writer currently based in Australia. He worked closely with Breakwell on two further films, 'Sheet' (1970, black and white, 16mm, 21 minutes) in which a three metre square linen sheet appears in various architectural and indoor and countryside locations as a focal point and 'One' (1971, black and white, 16mm, 15 minutes, digitally reconstructed in 2003), a film of a performance which took place in the Angela Flowers Gallery to celebrate its first 'birthday'.
 - 37 Mike Leggett 'Statement of explanation' [of the UNWORD films], c.1970, Breakwell/Leggett Archive, HMI.
 - 38 Ibid. The fragility of the original film footage has meant that until now, the UNWORD film has only been shown on a few occasions. David Curtis, who was the film-programmer at the New Arts Laboratory recalls that the screening of the film had a 'kinetic/sculptural presence...[and the Analysis projector presented] a series of stills that sort-of implied motion, but denied it. The projector made a high-pitched continuous buzzing noise (background motor noise) overlaid with a very distinctive ker-chunk every time the frame changed. It was quite hypnotic'. e-mail to the author, 14 February 2006.
 - 39 Ian Breakwell 'Notes relating to UNWORD', 1.6.1970, Breakwell/Leggett Archive, HMI.

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