legacy. To me, the surrealists’ legacy of sexuality as a subject in art—with or without Freudian associations—seems second only in import to their use of the subconscious—dreams, fantasies—as a subject.

SR: Because of the surrealist movement, the surrealist woman artist was given a legacy to be naughty and brazen, but she also became nervous. Janine Antoine’s video of wringing hands shows them as no longer either restricted or protected, as in Merit Oppenheim’s Pair of Gloves, and a surreptitious hand holds a flower under the nose of an anxious pig in Lindee Climo’s oil painting Pig with Moly Plant (1996).

BLW: Oppenheim’s grey-blue suede gloves, with their delicate, painted veins, vividly demonstrated the historical distance of the original surrealist movement. I suddenly realized how long ago this movement happened—in the 1920s and 1930s, when soft, ladylike gloves were the norm. The animism of these elements and objects—hands, shoes, a mirror, a child’s dress—is one aspect of this show that rings true to me. Such vivid linking of apparent identity and associative potential is sometimes dark and sometimes humorous, and always elevated beyond considerations of the artist’s gender. In fact, several of these pieces—like Cross’s jarring cow-teat shoes—transcend the original models.

SR: What I find so interesting is that some works do transcend the original models, and I think it is because they evoke a feminism. The materials are soft, caressable and decorative. Flowers proliferate. Personal messages dominate. In art of this moment, content concerning women’s issues is being updated politically. This has culminated in an art form beyond the purely visual that is a hypertext format. Surrealism has completed its literary-art cycle.

BLW: That is a wonderful perception, and it goes beyond my original notion that the opening up of content was a great part of surrealism’s legacy. Moreover, if the women of the original surrealist movement were struggling to express themselves in the profound way offered by surrealist theory and beliefs, the contemporary artists who followed them seem liberated and able to create simply as artists, as human beings who then choose to focus upon their femaleness as part of that humanness.

SR: This is an important show for the implication of the surrealist legacy in general, not for the uneven quality of its art. The fact that the early women surrealists existed and depicted their “stories” is legacy enough. Women artists came out of the closet.

EXPERIMENTAL ARTS

Manege Hall, St. Petersburg, Russia, 1–11 August 1998.

Reviewed by Mikhail S. Zalizadev, Vernost str., 13-132, St. Petersburg, Russia 195220.

The St. Petersburg Central Exhibition Hall (also known under its historical name, Manege) was the main scene of action for the second biannual Festival of Experimental Arts. During the festival, more than 200 artists from 15 countries exhibited performances, installations, dance and other projects at the Manege Hall and other locations throughout the city. Among the various forms of art at the festival, there were collage-paintings and photo-montages, action-painting performances (some of them accompanied by musical improvisation), body-art displays, sculptures (among them, kinetic works made from non-traditional, “everyday” objects and materials), installations with music recordings and video/film components, as well as examples of computer graphic art.

Artistic companies from Russia (Interstudio Another Dance a.o.), the U.S.A. (Paula-Josa Jones Performance Company) and Austria (Lux-Flux) presented several “choreo-dramas” (dance performances that are very different from traditional ballet) and “happenings.” The St. Petersburg State University of Air/Space Structural Devices exhibited a large-scale project entitled Informational Space Behind the Looking-Glass; according to the author’s conception of this project, it is addressed “to the problem of a human personality in the virtual world.” The artist Andrey Melnik, together with the St. Petersburg KEY computer center, produced his synthetic art composition, The Theater of the Alive, which combined real and virtual elements, and the Hatoyama Itiro Electronics, Acoustics and Music School Studio (which is affiliated with the St. Petersburg State Conservatory) gave three concert performances devoted to the history and contemporary state of computer music.

The program of the festival also included a research conference examining philosophical, socio-cultural and aesthetic problems engendered by the new role and significance of information media in the contemporary world. The main subjects for discussion at the conference included “The Third Millennium: Strategies and Tactics,” “Illusions and Commodities,” “Original Symbol-Production” and so forth. The artistic accomplishments demonstrated by the festival participants were often paradoxical and sometimes eccentric but, quite unexpectedly, only the lesser part of them were directly connected with the application of electronic and computer technologies in art. In this respect, the international seminars Art Space-Ship and The Third Reality, held in 1994–1995 in St. Petersburg, appeared more “technologically saturated” (with regard not only to advanced technologies but, first and foremost, to artistic results of their use). From the viewpoint of propagating non-traditional forms of contemporary art, however, this festival has undoubtedly been (and remains) valuable, because these art forms, although they have been known around much of the world for a considerably long time, are still not very widespread in Russia.

THE TOUCH FESTIVAL

Amsterdam, Holland, 14–18 December 1998.

Reviewed by Rahma Khazaam, 3 rue Poliveau, 75005 Paris, France. E-mail: <rama@club-internet.fr>.

A December day in Amsterdam. STEIM’s Touch Festival is under way, and strange, untoward bursts of sound are resounding through the Frascati Theatre. In the venue, members of the public are queueing up to try out the MIDI Conductor, a pair of interactive glove-like instruments equipped with sensors that trigger sounds as the player moves his or her hands. The Little Web proves equally popular: by moving a finger across this web-like structure of interconnected harp strings, the player can trigger a symphony of electronic sounds in real time.

These devices on show at the Frascati Theatre were built by STEIM, the Amsterdam-based electronic music research center. Over the years, STEIM has been developing instruments that call for physical gestures and performance skills, which have helped to take electronic music out of the studios and...