

“MADNESS AND TRANQUILITY”

Captions by Richard Foreman

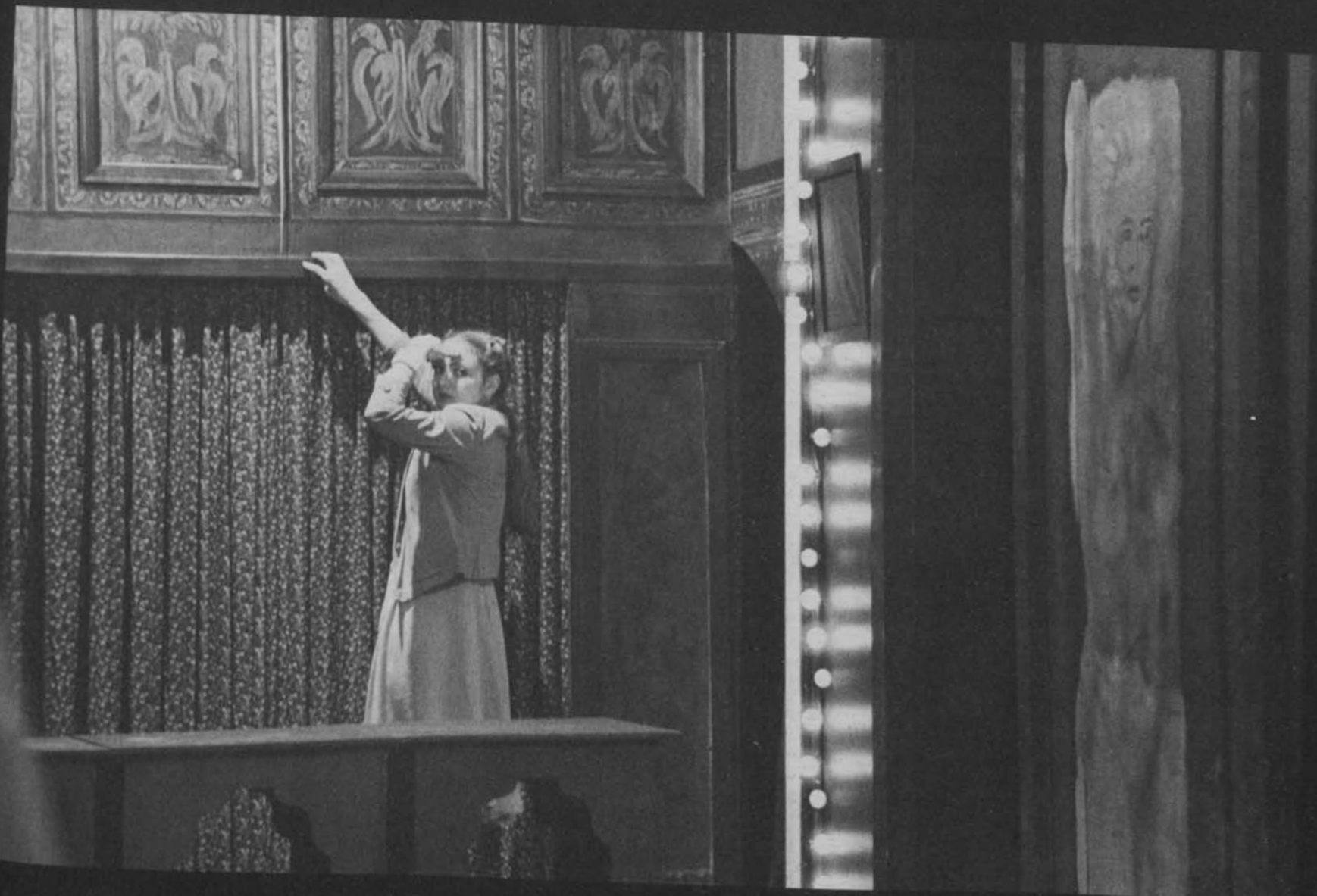
Not, as it happens, a scene from the play, but a moment from Berenice Reynault's film about the "play that never opened". Richard Foreman standing in the midst of his abandoned scenery, about to read a section of his article "The Carrot and the Stick" — which explains some of his many methods for tricking himself into the production of art.



These photo's are from rehearsals of my play "Madness and Tranquility", which was abandoned before opening night after three months of rehearsal last year. The play was about the "glamor" status of terrorist acts — bored, exhausted, Western middle-class consciousness.

R.F.

Photographs by Robert Del Tredici



Yolanda Hawkinds holds her head, as the man in her life has just gone off to shoot people in the streets. Since the play was concerned with a decadent and exhausted West in which the images of terrorism provide glamor and energy, it is appropriate that she cast a glance back at a relevant icon.

Scotty Snyder as mother-earth-death — really, her character was "the world". Here, photographed, she smiles — as she was of course never allowed to do in the play.

Kate Manheim, at the front of the stage — (which, as it approached the audience, began to slope upward so that a character approaching the spectators walked "up-hill" toward them, getting suddenly taller, as it were, suggesting a sort of "theatrical close-up") — wearing a priest's headdress which reverberates, somehow, with the tip of her racing car just visible behind her. The authority figures (of Western culture) all seen as fast drivers — and the banal whiff of sophistication that implies.





At a certain stage in rehearsals, the last scene involved a terrorist riding away on a (painted) horse. So two icons met, and dissolved into space — as painted horse and live rider traveled up-stage into the "sunset" shadows of the full eighty-foot depth of our (now abandoned) Soho loft-theater — which indeed WAS chic in its insistant factory-like discomfort, its exhilarating terrorist spacial extravagance, and its complete (by N.Y.C. fire-law and building department standards) and total illegality. In addition, one can see that she who holds the gun (Kate Manheim) is — before the fact, immortalized in art (the painting behind her) which another shall "enter" and ride away on as he is shot at both inside and outside the picture frame.



My plays being about "pointing to things" which then deny their coherence as "pointable-at" objects (or even "lookable at" objects) — Kate Manheim here speaks to the audience (my plays being full of such asides) so that they will have to deal simultaneously with assertion and with totally hermetic yet disruptive activity — these two things always, at the same time, contradicting each other in the most aggressive way.



Someone has been kidnapped. The motives, emotions and language are the most banal possible. This photograph "lies" about what was theatrically present at this moment, for it seems to me evocative of a play about real people, which "Madness and Tranquility" was not. Or — perhaps in rehearsal I did not succeed sufficiently in wrenching the play away from the "people" who inhabited it, and that was why the production was abandoned.



Kate Manheim downs a coke — surrounded by furious people. Coke — provocatively drunk — arouses the emotions the coke-icon is really about. The shape of the coke-bottle is the shape of the female body, of course, and to be most exhilarated in the drinking of that bottle, to tilt it so the liquid streams down the throat, is to burn. One cannot achieve icon status — without terrorizing on some level. "Madness and Tranquility" — feeding off each other. Opposites being, of course, the conditions necessary for any sort of "visibility". And art — primarily concerned with visibility — being intimately tied up with everything it wants to reject. ■

*Robert Del Tredici was living and working in New York when he photographed this play in 1979. He is now teaching film and photography in Montréal and has recently published **The People of Three Mile Island**, a book of photographs and interviews documenting the year following the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island.*