

BANANA FISH



LE DERNIER CRI

MOSQUITO BAIT

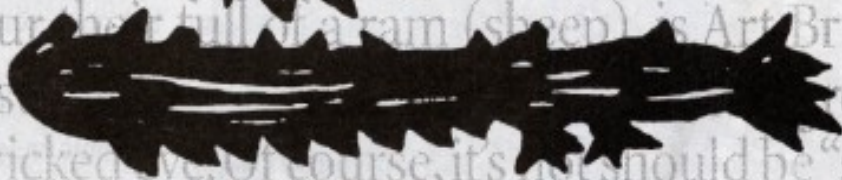
Interview and translation by Eva Revox

Introduction by Naohiro Ukawa, translation by Peko-chan



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"This is the workshop where Le Dernier Cri silkscreened books are made. In front, to your left, Anne Gaëlle the binder glues the hardbacks. Across I'm putting together the "sandwiches," small, accordion-shaped books. The shed behind me hides a water faucet where Stephan Pneu is cleaning a frame au karcher. A bit farther Pakito is silkscreening, sweating on that exhausting table, and with one arm Lionel picks up the screened pages while telling "liquid jokes of the head." In the meantime the exhaust fan makes a racket.

When the 200 pages are on the drying racks and all the ink cleaned up, we all go have a drink at Chez Charles."

—Caroline Sury, from *Caroline et Ses Amis*. Translated by La Poubelle



Voilà l'atelier où se fabriquent les livres en sérigraphie du Dernier Cri. En 1er plan à gauche, Anne-Gaëlle, la relieuse colle les "Cartons dur" livres longs et durs. En face, je façonne les "Sandwichs", petits livres en accordéon. Derrière moi, la cabane où un point d'eau où Stephan Pneu va nettoyer un cadre au karcher.

Plus loin, Pakito est en plein tirage, assis sur cette épuisante table de sérigraphie à un bras diabolique, attrape les feuilles sérigraphiques en racontant des blagues "liquide de la tête" dans le vacarme de l'aspiration. Quand les 200 feuilles sont sur les chaînes de séchage et l'encre ramassée, nous allons tous boire un coup chez Charles.

EVA REVOX: What lead you to silkscreening?

PAKITO BOLINO: During the '80s, I trained myself on the job when I was working in a studio that was taken over by l'APAAR (Association Pour Adultes Avec Réserves), who published American artists such as Charles Burns or Mark Beyer in Europe for the first time. Once I got kicked out, I started doing photostat books by myself in very lim-

ited editions, eventually realizing that what I was doing was rather pointless, because nobody gave a shit about such cheap, homemade zines.

I swear I did at that time. Why'd you get kicked out?

For the simple reason that the boss, who had nothing to do with the editor, couldn't stand the kind of books we were printing. They were bringing credit and

a semblance of notoriety to his studio, but not according to his ambitions. He pretended to be interested only in art with a capital A and despised all those moronic underground publications. But the stronger the pressure, the stronger my urge to print books. The situation came to a head when we ended up printing Savage Pencil's *Corpsemeat* during our own holidays, paying the boss as if we were his customers. We turned the

studio into a real mess. We were working night and day, plain drunk and stoned. The result of our labor was an amazing, wonderful, lush object in full, lurid color. It became a collector's item quickly. Now people'd pay about \$100 to get it.

I bet I could extort an extra 50 if I mugged the buyer. What did you do afterward?

Well, I didn't have a job anymore, or a home, either, so I decided to escape from France with Caroline [Sury] to join Valium, a Canadian graphic artist and an old friend of mine who was running his proper silkscreening studio in Montreal. We stayed there for a few weeks. As soon I was back in Paris, I couldn't remain idle; I felt compelled to get my own studio, too. At that time, I was playing in a band called La Mâchoire. We were practicing in a semiofficial squat in the suburbs. When I was there one day, I noticed a seemingly unused silkscreening studio in one of the buildings. I looked straightaway for the manager, a guy called Kevin, and signed a contract with him. At last I was able to create my own editions: *Le Dernier Cri* was born.

What kind of education do you have?

I studied at l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Angoulême, in the west of France. Back then, I was expecting to draw some comix, but when I realized what a shithead milieu I had plunged into, I oriented myself toward graphic zines, rockish literature and underground music—everything that seemed to emerge from the same kind of energy. That's how I started playing in a band called Les Plaies Mobiles with the very few friends I had at school.

Did you graduate?

Indeed! For the final exam, I did an installation that included animation and a synchronized soundtrack by my band.

For my taste, that was the ideal situation. I built a small cardboard movie theater in which the audience was made up of characters with huge dicks, who were also featured in the film. Everything was made of painted cardboard cutouts. I cut five individual holes inside, one for each head of the board of examiners. Each member had to insert his head in order to see the film. It forced them to face the screen without being able to look at each other, while the music was blaring

straight into their ears. From the outside, I could see nothing but five butts standing at different levels. It was pretty tempting to kick them!

Kick ass, man! What about you, Caroline?

CAROLINE SURY: Before I met Pakito, I was studying at l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux. I was already silkscreening on my own and helping friends with *Hello Happy Taxpayers* magazine, mostly



A page from "Le réserve de têtes" by Valium



oriented toward hardcore, industrial and experimental music, but with room for graphics, too. I was the singer of a band called RWA; my boyfriend was the bassist. I met Pakito through common friends and we both hooked up in Paris.

What were your first publications?

PAKITO: Our first project was to publish every two or three months a silkscreened graphic bulletin under the name *Le Dernier Cri*. Eventually, we started printing books by individual artists. We felt comfortable having the studio at our disposal for quite a while, which allowed us to print our books and, according to the deal we had settled, make a little money from printing jobs ordered by Kevin. In

fact, we depended on his goodwill, because we hadn't gotten our own equipment yet. We've got the same kind of problem with the film we're shooting right now: we're depending on the goodwill of the television station. We can't make any decisions about it and have no control of the editing because we're not managing the budget, which is pretty small. Everything is controlled by the production staff. That's an upsetting situation. Once the film is finished, I'm planning on keeping a few cameras and a rostrum so that we can make films in the future. We prefer to have our own equipment and the same autonomy as we have with our books.

How do you select which artists to publish?

It's not really a selection; most of them

are acquaintances or people I met in Paris who share the same passion.

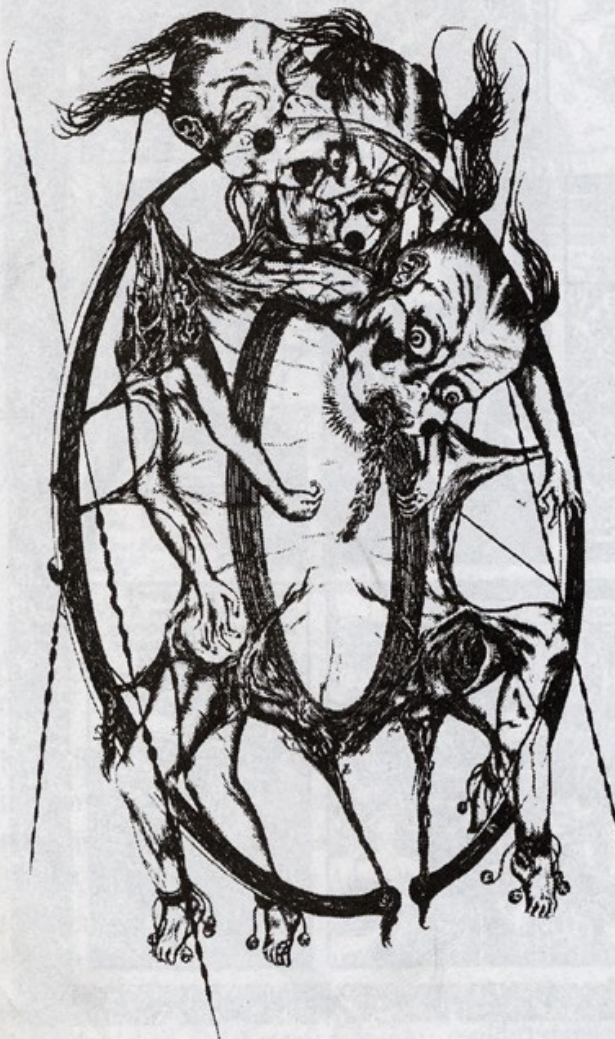
Could you mention them?

Pfffmp! There are so many! It would take a hundred years.

I'm a patient boy.

Some of them are people like you, who gravitate around our structure in Paris; Kerozen used to make photostat books in collaboration with Pigassou and turned up silkscreening with us; Poincelet runs *Lune Product*, which rounds up similar artists like Donato di Nunno and Nuvish; Fredox and Laetitia run a collective publication called *Stronx*, packed with gruesome photomontages...

Sounds like a schizophrenic version of The



The foxy magic of Nuvish, left, and Kéiti Ōta, right

Cartridge Family.

Sometimes I attempt to get in touch with artists whose work I'm keen on. I send them samples of my work and look forward to hearing from them. I might meet an artist by chance while I'm visiting Un Regard Moderne, a bookshop-gallery in Paris that distributes underground pol-lutions from the entire world and is a kind of headquarters for outsider artists. There's no place like it anywhere else. You can find any oddity there, from home-made Finnish comix to erotic portfolios to a catalog by an obscure performance artist dating from the '40s. The salesman, Jacques Noël, originally worked in another bookshop, Les Yeux Fertiles, which is more geared toward literature. He's the soul of the shop. Le Dernier Cri

wouldn't exist without his support. We owe him a lot of respect.

Do you ever experience cultural gaps with foreign artists?

Only with Americans. I might be wrong, but it seems like they figure that nothing's going on outside their territory, that they're the fuckin' center of the world.

They'd say the same thing about Froggy's wonderland.

I don't belong to any frog species. Each time I send books, either to Finland or Japan, I usually receive a good response. I've been corresponding with Kéiti Ôta for five years. We regularly send our productions to each other. I kept harassing him to make a book until he sent me 30

original drawings. Crazy! I was impressed by his confidence. Same thing with Matti Hagelberg, a Finnish artist. I pestered him for a year and a half because I'm fond of his work. Le Dernier Cri always has tons of projects, but our structure is not expanding. It's even more reduced now that we're in Marseille. Since we've been installed here, we haven't found anybody to give us a hand. Nobody here seems receptive to our kind of pictures. There aren't as many people connected to that network as in Paris. We're usually doing everything by ourselves. I'm not complaining, but it's a shame we can't expand more. People who aren't familiar with us might imagine a large structure with



Scenes from psycho wonderlands by Kerozen, left, and Matti Hagelberg, right

to film their universes and the footage will be animated by pixellation afterward. The paintings will move on the walls, the sculptures will appear and disappear... these sorts of tricks. Such a combination has never been done before. In the world as we know it, those universes are usually separated, having nothing in common, supposedly. I'm interested in making this clash happen.

What prompted you to move to Marseille?

The situation with Kevin was becoming unbearable. There was too much pressure between us. I could easily feel it was about to fall through very shortly. Kevin hit upon an *idée fixe*: kickin' us out—me and all the people I was working with. The same kind of situation was happening in the meantime with our roommates. It was about to explode at any moment. At that time, we went to Marseille for an exhibition organized in a record shop. We uncovered La Friche, an old tobacco factory, lent by the town council to a cultural association, formerly oriented toward theater, but allowing more and more room for different forms of art. Little by little, workshops, rehearsal studios and artist residences got created. It's a boundless space with many buildings. People who stay there must have a specific project for a specific period. It was perfect for us. I presented our project to Ferdinand Richard, the program director and founder of l'AMI (Aide aux Musiques Innovatrices), an association that organizes an annual jazz/experimental festival, in the tradition of musicians like Fred Frith or Eugene Chadbourne. Not the most violent kind of music, but still experimental. I placed our books in his hands, he showed them to the managers of the place, and one week later I had a positive answer. We spent a few months creating a clean, usable studio; we had to

build partitions and buy devices for silkscreening. At first, all of our equipment was manual, making our task slow and exhausting.

Having experienced it, I can confirm it's tedious work. How do you manage to do everything by yourself, considering you're only two people?

We're wondering ourselves. It's a full-time job, that's for sure. We'll die with ink on our hands! We have no time left for anything else. We spend more time printing and manufacturing books than drawing our own stuff. It's frustrating in the end.

Your labor is our pleasure.

CAROLINE: We're working, we're working and we're working—result: it works! We never take vacations. That's why it felt liberating to make this new film. Making all these sculptures, paintings, and drawings is a lot of fun.

Could you explain the silkscreening process to those ignoramus yankees?

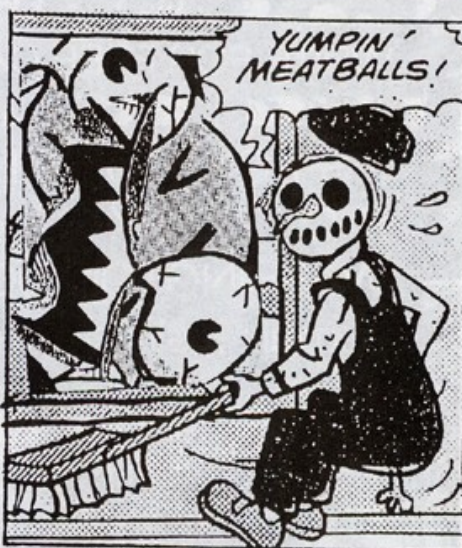
PAKITO: Buy our videotape! Everything's explained in the movie! Some American producer must be interested in releasing it.

CAROLINE: At the moment, 500 copies are available through Le Dernier Cri and 500 others have been released in Japan by Uplink, an independent producer that set up an exhibition in Tokyo in May.

PAKITO: It's a good thing this film keeps on living after its short existence on television.

What were your motivations to create Hopital Brut?

PAKITO: When we were still living in Paris, we used to collaborate on a magazine called *Ortie*, a bit like *Bananafish* but more graphics-oriented. It was the only magazine reviewing our books, inter-



Random pages from Pakito Bolino's sketchbook

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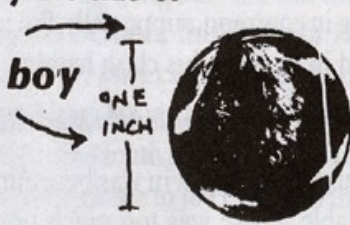
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viewing some graphic artists, taking an interest in Art Brut, etc. It didn't last very long. I didn't like the direction it was taking. It wasn't radical enough for my liking. Once we moved to Marseille, it occurred to us that we should create our own magazine, so we asked some artists, musicians and illustrators to write articles on subjects of their choice and mix it up with a whole bunch of pictures. Like a concentrated solution of one year's activity, but cheaper than a proper book. Also, I think the point of view of an artist is more interesting and accurate than that of a journalist. Of course, he'd have a weird, distorted vision. But that's what I feel is interesting about it.

CAROLINE: It's not that the vision is more distorted than that of a journalist; it's just boring to read an irrelevant article written by a guy who has no clue what he's talking about. Plainly dismaying.

PAKITO: By "distorted," I mean twisted. What you read in regular magazines is so superficial. On the contrary, look at the pictures of Sala Kaew Wu's garden taken by Colas Meulien when he traveled to Thailand. You perceive straight away it's the work of a visual artist who is concerned with what he's snapping.

How many copies of Hopital Brut are made?

CAROLINE: We print 1,000 copies. The first issue sold out after six months, mostly at comix festivals or exhibitions. Some copies were ordered by different shops or mail-order companies, mainly in Switzerland—Zurich and Bern. Un Regard Moderne sold the most copies of *Hopital Brut*.

How do you set up an exhibition?

PAKITO: There are always people getting in touch with us. We never set up any-

thing by ourselves. Since we're relentlessly producing books, we have no time to take care of it. It's such exacting work collecting everything and displaying it, so much time and energy...

CAROLINE: Curators sometimes wait a long time for an exhibition. A curator in Lucerne, Switzerland, has been asking us for three years to set up an exhibition there. At last, it's going to happen. It's been pretty helpful to make this film. We'll have many figurines, paintings, and stage sets to show at different exhibitions. It gives a new dimension to the works.

PAKITO: Most exhibitions are a pain in the ass. Actually, I can't stand installations, I can't stand exhibitions, I can't stand gigs, unless it's everything at the same time. That's what I'm interested in. I'd like to show different elements of the movie while projecting bits of films en-

larged on the walls. I hope we'll be able to find room for a silkscreening workshop as well, but it depends mainly on the budget of the curator. It's impossible to materialize this kind of exhibition in an alternative space, so we're trying to deal alternately with independent spaces and institutions. In one case or another, there are too many things to manage at the same time. It never fails to cause a shambles.

CAROLINE: Yes, it's too much effort for a minimal result. During the comix festival in Lucerne, it will be different. We're going to reconstruct a psychiatric hospital in an old jailhouse that has a long corridor leading into eight different cells. Each one will be connected to a specific work, with the artist locked inside,

dedicating books we'll just have printed.

...chewing cockroaches, licking dust and using rattails as brushes. Do you feel concerned by contemporary art?

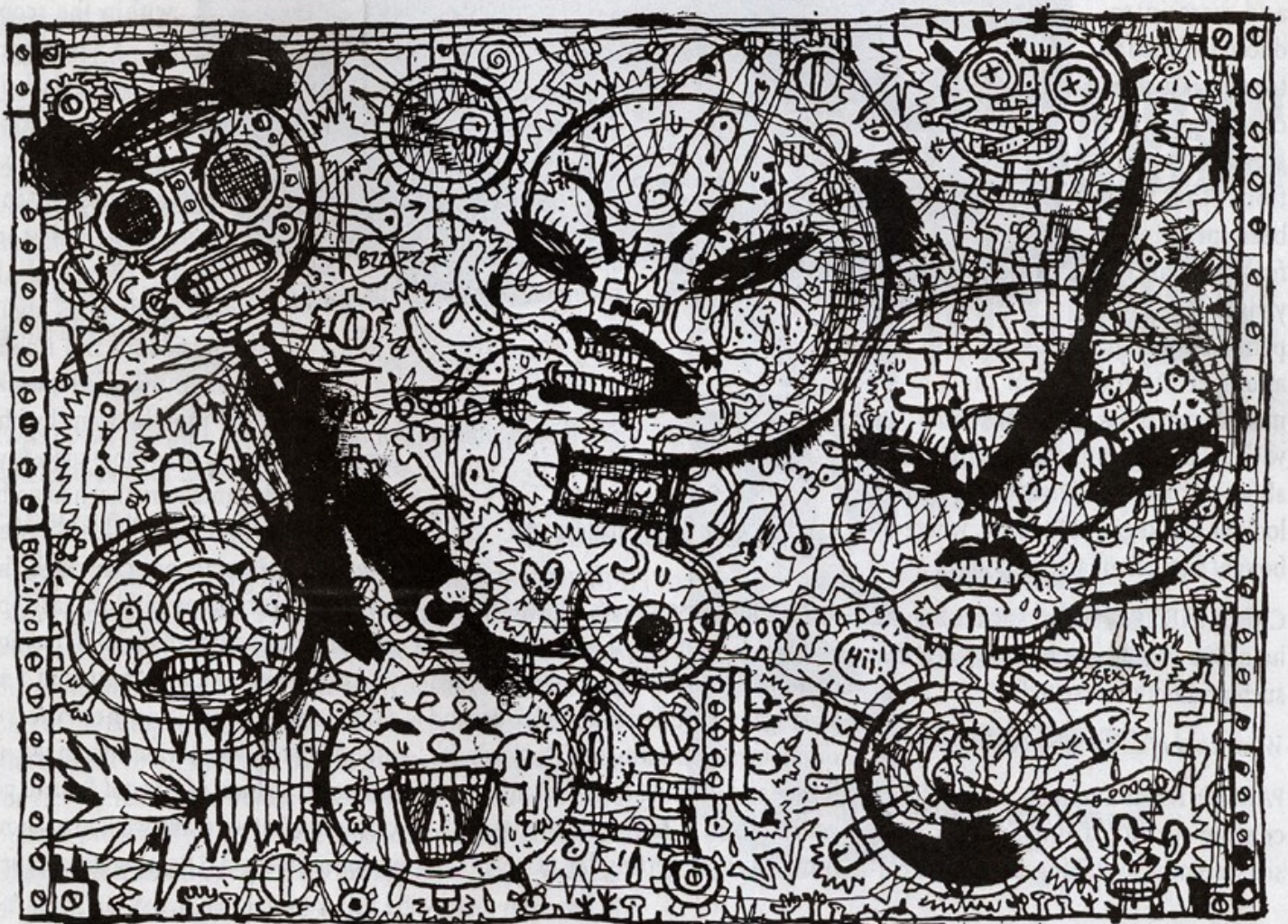
CAROLINE: No, we really don't give a shit about it at all. It's reciprocal, anyway. They're two different worlds. Undoubtedly, they want them to be different. Even so, we've been invited to la Laiterie in Strasbourg, which is basically a place curating contemporary art. The situation seems way different in the USA, especially on the West Coast, where far more galleries are exhibiting hybrid forms of art. French curators are too timorous; they're not taking any risks since the fall of Figuration Libre.

PAKITO: It's evident that there's more

response to that kind of production in foreign countries than in France. There's a much more receptive audience in Switzerland, for example, maybe because there are magazines like *Strapazine* that have supported these forms of expression for many years. It's harder to be understood in France because we're striking out beyond comix as much as beyond the institutional art.

CAROLINE: The comix bookshops are boycotting us. They refuse to sell our books. The salesmen act as if they're scared. They treat our stuff like scum.

PAKITO: Same attitude in the galleries. Only one Parisian gallery manager, an old guy who used to display the work of



Drawing by Pakito Bolino



Pierre Molinier,* ever visited us at our studio. It was quite strange to be confronted by an authentic art dealer. It was so obvious that we didn't belong to the same world. The guy said hello, glanced around and thrust forward: "This is unsellable." Of course it's unsellable, sucker, it's only a frame for silkscreening daubed with stains of ink... We're selling books, not original paintings!

He might have misused Molinier's collection of dildos.

PAKITO: We recently had an exhibition set at the National Library in Paris and were introduced to the curator, who is just discovering all the graphic productions that have been springing up for the past 10 years. He happened to see an article about *Le Dernier Cri* in the mainstream press and got in touch with us, asking why he wasn't informed about all that. We advised him to take a look at *Un Regard Moderne*, where he bought a bunch of artists' books.

CAROLINE: If we hadn't spoken to him, he never would have had any idea that such productions existed.

What kind of exhibition was it?

PAKITO: It was a retrospective of 20th-century prints, from engraving to silkscreening to etching, based on a col-

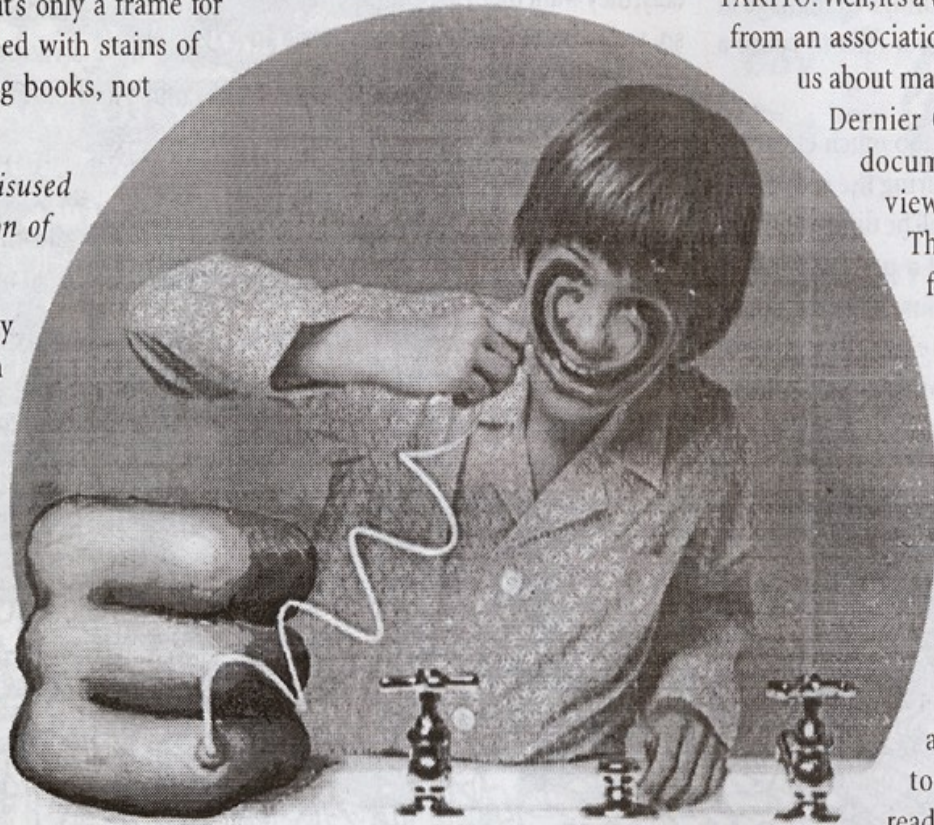
lection of rare works belonging to the National Library. At least such an official exhibition is giving credit to those alternative productions. Aside from that, we don't give a fuck about it. As soon as it doesn't affect our work and our choices, we have no reason to get bothered about it. We just don't want to make

proves that even if it makes your life tougher sometimes, you can still escape the system. I have no idea how long it can work that way, but that's how I want to live.

Let's talk about the movie... How did you guys percolate through a TV channel?

PAKITO: Well, it's a weird story. Two guys from an association got in touch with us about making a film about *Le Dernier Cri* editions, a real documentary with interviews and everything. They approached different TV channels to sell their project. Canal +, a privatized channel, was interested in airing it within the scope of a program called *L'Oeil du Cyclone*, which specializes in visual experimentation and unusual cartoons. They had already made films about

The Residents and finally asked us to make an animation. As the months went by, the project evolved toward a more subjective and artistic documentary that had nothing to do with the original idea. We tried to explain silkscreening through the prism of the artists we publish, each one interpreting one step of the silkscreening process. They enjoyed the result and asked us to make another one six months later. We decided to make an animated version of *Hopital Brut*, to get closer to what we really wanted to show, including more Art Brut and foreign art-



Andy Bolus's handiwork

any compromises; that's why we've chosen this way of life. If we want to stop making books for five years and then start again, we're free to do so. We depend on our own commitments. That's why it's funny and exciting in the same way to get exhibited at the same level as high-brow editions getting lot of grants. It

*A French fetishist artist who enjoyed photographing himself dressed as a woman, experimented with many ways of masturbating and committed suicide in the '80s. —Translator's Note

ists such as Stu Mead, Dr. Good, Beth Love, Matti Hagelberg, Andy Bolus, and Valium. This time we want the artists to be portrayed as mental patients locked up in a lunatic asylum.



It shouldn't be too difficult. Are you conditioning them a special way?

Absolutely! They experiment with the same conditions as living in a hospital. And I hope that after one week spent on the film set, the way back to normal life won't be easy.

Where did you show the first movie, apart from TV?

CAROLINE: We showed it in Annecy at one of the biggest animation film festivals in Europe. We'd been selected for the competition—

PAKITO: But the audience weren't exactly awestruck.

What happened?

PAKITO: The film was projected on a large screen in a large theater, packed with up to 500 audience members. I thought to myself, Wow, it's gonna be great! The film started and after less than five minutes, the volume got turned down because the music was too aggressive. One third of the audience left, one third got mad and yelled for refunds, and the last third expressed nothing. At the end, one half was standing up applauding and howling "Bravo!" while the other half was booing and whistling as loud as possible.

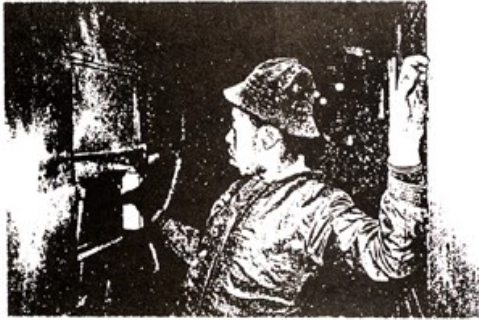
CAROLINE: I guess we were inclined to pay more attention to the angry half.

Sounds stimulating.

PAKITO: At the time we didn't find it stimulating at all. We had lumps in our throats.

CAROLINE: We couldn't believe it.

PAKITO: The same thing had already happened to me in Ottawa years earlier when I had my first movie shown. I was wondering why I didn't have the right to have it shown under the same conditions as everyone else, considering that I was part of the competition as well. Why was I selected in the first place—just to be shut up? During the same evening, other movies were shown before ours, like the pseudo-messy bullshit produced by MTV with wrestlers made of Plasticine. Okay, it's technically perfect, it's fun, whatever, but, courtesy of MTV, it's accompanied by awful heavy metal played at maximum volume, above the threshold of pain. Our movie was screened straight after, completely bungled, with a barely



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audible soundtrack...

And therefore that soundtrack has been excerpted on Bidi Bidi Bidi, the CD that comes with this issue of Bananafish. How did you compose it?

PAKITO: It was all improvised simultaneously to the screening of the film in a studio. Frank de Quengo, Marcel Perrin, myself and a few others were doing weird noises using anything we could find: an old Korg analog synth, a distorted bass with effects, a sampler, a voice changer, different sorts of toys and metal cans as percussion, a lot of contact mics. We had sampled sounds of machines as well—heater, printer, water-jet, air conditioner—that we added to the final editing.

CAROLINE: You forgot to mention this cheap drum machine that made stupendous sounds, real fast and aggressive, almost like hardcore techno. I believe that's what the audience couldn't stand. Surprisingly enough, it was mainly young people in their early twenties who complained.

PAKITO: That's not so surprising, if you consider that most of them were studying animation. It seems fair enough that they were shocked, since our film shows exactly the opposite of what they're learning at school. Wait for the next movie, folks, you ain't seen nothing yet! The blast will drop you dead! We intend to play live next time. We're actually planning to make a whole show with all the musicians wearing costumes, and sets and puppets displayed on stage. It's easier to tour that way than with a proper exhibition. We'll tell the organizers of the festival, "We're gonna show a one-hour movie and play live music like Meliès used to." I'm sure they'll reply, "Oh, great idea!" but this time they won't be able to stop us, unless they unplug the amps. But it won't matter. We'll take control of the stage!

Do you ever get in trouble with censors?

PAKITO: Of course, we get mangled! The first film we made for Canal + was broadcast on a Saturday at noon! French families were watching it! The problem is that program directors prefer to air something half-controlled at this hour of the day, just subversive enough to make the difference with other channels. They simply erased a couple of dicks appearing quickly in the background and turned the music down when it got too aggressive. Things like that. It's a perverted game they play with us, permitting us to make a film they know might upset the sensibility of a large audience. That's part of their strategy, I guess. For us, it's like a challenge to push the limits without censoring ourselves, to see how far TV can go.

But in contrast to the shooting of the previous film, during which a supervisor was always on our backs telling us what was wrong, the artists have been encouraged this time to feel less constrained. They'll cut the pornographic bits for sure, but it's no big deal because we'll make our own edit to show outside TV. I still don't understand why they're asking us to do a program broadcast at noon, when they're also programming *Night of Trash*, which includes a report on Costes and excerpts of his movies in which he's jerking off, getting fucked in the ass, swallowing piss, and shitting in front of the camera. Naturally, the music is completely fucked-up. They'll broadcast anything at night, no matter how crude it is. That would have been a perfect slot for us. We'd be free to show anything we wanted. Canal + told us, "Green light for a 40-minute running film! Go ahead!" but it seems like they're only expecting to fill in the slots, trying to fill their quota of shocking programs. Now we're labeled Trash-Destroy-Animation, and they call us when they want to add a pinch of spice to their programs. We hate to support the ideology behind this game that they're playing, but it was the only opportunity for those films to be realized.

You refer a lot to mental illness in your work. You told me you proposed working with patients in a clinic in Austria.

PAKITO: Yes, within a famous institution in Göggin. Seems a bit scary, but I'd like to do it. The psychiatrist confirmed for me by mail that he was all right with the idea, but the problem is that the Austrian authorities are about to close the building. They want to transfer the nuts to another hospital where they won't be allowed to get together to make art like they used to.

What are the patients doing there exactly?

CAROLINE: Mainly his place used to take in schizophrenics, especially if they exhibited a skill for drawing. They gathered different patients from different hospitals, all sharing the same obsession for drawing, to experiment with art therapy. So a bunch of artists—well, they're not exactly artists, they're simple lunatics—

PAKITO: They're artists! They might be mad, but they're still artists!

CAROLINE: Well, okay, some "artists" making tons of amazing works—

PAKITO: They *are* artists! It doesn't



From Kodak 24 by Marcel Uniers

mean that any lunatic is an artist. It's like anybody else: some people develop creative abilities, others don't. This asylum is generally perceived as an arthouse. The psychiatrist has been working there since the '50s, and his place has gained an international reputation within the scope of Art Brut. The works have acquired an economic value on the market; it's become an institution, a real beacon. The place collects money from the works that are sold and the sickos get rich and famous. Since the famous psychiatrist recently retired, we got in touch with his locum, who was intrigued by my proposal to organize a silkscreening

workshop there. But I believe that the Austrian state doesn't agree. We're still hoping to hear good news.

You haven't mentioned your record label.

PAKITO: Well, Discotroma used to be—before we couldn't manage it any longer—an audio support to Le Dernier Cri with a release planned every six months, mixing music with speeches from the artists (a conversation we had with Raymond Raynaud, for example). An audio-revue, in a way. We released two CDs, featuring bands with a core of illustrators: Gaki Deka, Peu Importe, Borgne, Lettuce Little. We quickly noticed that it wasn't profitable, considering the cost of pressing and the fact that we couldn't find any distributors. It's a stand-by project for now. With any luck, we'll be able to release the soundtrack of the next movie.

"The end justifies the means" is a seemingly truthful proverb. Andy Bolus was worried about the spongy brain consequences of your trichlomic solvent habits.

PAKITO: Andy's more familiar with that syndrome than I am. I wouldn't be surprised if his brain liquefied a long time ago.

That must be why he seems like a Rod Stewart-William Burroughs hybrid. Have you noticed the resemblance?

PAKITO: Same absence of brainshape. Just phosphorescent liquid, some bright green goo or something.

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