Saxophonist in whiteface blows at Helen and Edgar Oliver’s “Haunted Circus” evening. (Photo by Mitch Corber.)
straightforward but less creative approach to engineering an event. In the past, since Jack & Peter had for the most part, not been dealing with the kind of artists who used representative slides of their work - imagine a slide of Philly projectile vomiting onto her audience! - they often had to use 'creative grant proposal writing' in order to get a hundred bucks for supplies & advertising for a show, sometimes using slides taken at previous shows to represent something they wanted to do in the future. Now however, with funding belts tightening all around, they had to play straight by the book and ask that artists submit slides with their proposals. Oddly enough, NYSCA noticed the more streamlined grantwriting coming from No Rio and criticized them for becoming inflexible even though it was their own guidelines being followed in a carrot& stick fashion! So there evolved a more definite 'gallery' mentality, the downside of which, was that people were using No Rio to fluff up their image or accrue credibility by association, the upside was, that still, those coming & using the space were still the unknown, least often heard voices in the community.

Overall though, there was a period of diminished activity, exacerbated by worsening building structural problems and increasing harassment by the city HPD office. A sort of void had developed, burn out comes quick at No Rio due to the intensity of initial 'burning' of its idealistic participants. As always though, there are those waiting in the wings to emerge and fill this void with energy and drama. The next issue will document No Rios' late 80s incarnation as a pre-eminent spoken word venue.

Moloch soars over the city. Those ruled by Moloch do not know it, but they love the stern taste of his whip, though they do not know it. It is enough to be well fed in this town.

Dionysus wakes up under a garbage can on Avenue A., he stands up in a pool of cheap grape wine puke and whistles a little tune to himself, stretching and scratching his codpiece. The day is crisp like a notebook page. He heads over to the park for a bath. An old man with a dirty white, floppy hat is standing in the grass chanting Spanglish poetry at the pigeons, when he notices Dionysus he gives a wink and calls him over. "Hello my freind, I have something for you" he says with a devilish grin, and hands Dionysus a card. It is number 0 of the Tarot, the Fool, the card of beginings and endings and wayward journeys. On the back, written in purple magic marker, is a message:

Pyramid club - when you wake up, darling - I'll be waiting for you. We need to talk.

XOXOXO KALI XOXO

Usually,

Oxen P. Dingle

TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WIRING AND STRONTIUM-90 APPLICATIONS GENEROSLY PROVIDED BY

Cookie Monster® the logo illustrates one of the underlying feelings of the nine-day movement: pure deliberate
The Extremist symbol. Pfahler writes that the logo illustrates "one of the underlying feelings of the nine-day movement: pure deliberate

Dave's quote: "Thank you, Coco!"
Naked Eye Cinema eventually evolved into Naked Eye TV on New York's public access television. Says Peter: "We first started to make our own films, which we had been doing before we came to ABC in the early 80s, experimental, super 8 etc, but there was no venue for this type of film, so we created one". It was a travelling cinema which used ABC as a base, sometimes screenings took place there but more often they took place in abandoned public lots and buildings and parks, as well as at Embargo Books and the old Gas Station at Avenue A and 2nd, or at the Zone which was across the street and the film would be projected onto the billboard next to the Gas Station.

Naked Eye Cinema also became involved with Marta Valle Junior High, initiating an apprentice program where each student would work with a photographer and learn basic camera techniques. Fred Kahl, who later became Coney Island’s 'Human Blockhead', took them on field trips to museums and taught 35mm still photography.

"So, how are things down there, anyway, what's it called again? That name you came up with makes absolutely no sense to me." "ABC No Rio, just remember the first letters are like one of our other little experiments - Anarchist Black Cross, you remember them, right?" "Okay, ya, ABC, I'll try to remember." "So, uh, what year is it, 1783?" - "1983! - Kali!"

money, and litter the place with watchdogs like Ronald Reagan, the NEA and MOMA and that the whole system will run by itself like a perpetual motion machine.

The foolish bastard, he doesn't reckon on our agents." "Yes, but to really restore the balance of power between us and Moloch, we would need at least a thousand more of these little 'zones', like the one down on Rivington St." "Oh, there's more alright, they assume many forms, you can't always recognize them for what they are, many are under such deep cover that they don't themselves know what they are, but they're there, they all serve our purposes, just as any beer and peanut butter and jelly sandwich does."
I think...
I first ventured into No Rio in January 1983. Brad Taylor and I happened to hear that an artist-run storefront existed on Rivington Street and the group running the place wound up in court. We entered to find Richard Armijo, Bobby G., Rebecca Howland and Alan Moore (and a few other people) sitting in a decrepit, dank, poorly lit, but warm (thanks to the makeshift wood burning Franklin stove that Alan Moore had constructed out of an old oil drum) storefront space. They were discussing/arguing about something but stopped conversation soon after we entered. Bobby G. asked me why we had come to the meeting. I said that I understood the place to be open to exhibition, performance or whatever ideas. Brad, his brother and a few friends had discussed the idea of 7 Days of Creation, a 7 day, 24 hour a day happening that would be loosely based on myths and legends of creation and would incorporate any and all forms of artistic or political expression including dance, performance, video, all visual arts (painting etc.), installation, forums, panels, manifestos, children's workshops etc. There was to be virtually no curatorial effort other than to make an open call to all creative people and to suggest the theme of myths and legends of creation. The response was tremendous and the 7 days (April 11th and 7, 1983) became a happening event with constantly morphing exhibitions of artwork, films and performance at every and all hours of the day. About 400 artists took part in some way or another. Liana H. and I were living together at the time in a small studio apartment of E. 6th street and at this time there was a surprise out of our apartment in the middle of the night after having rented for 5 months. We dragged our king sized futon to No Rio and threw it into the middle of the space. It became the crash site, fuck pad catch all for the duration.

After the 7 days we remained active at the space, initiating drawing classes, political forums and collaborations with the nearby elementary (Hanna Silver) and secondary schools. We worked in the classrooms with the art teachers and offered apprenticeships to students interested in learning more about any art medium. The medium that generated the most interest was film and video and 8 students attended regular classes in No Rio. We screened films regularly at the space, Potamkin from Eisenstein, Los Olvidos from Bunuel etc., all free from the Donnell Library. We worked with the students organizing a very successful talent show. Gordon Kurtti and I worked with a small group designing the stage set for the show. They decided they wanted to paint the New York skyline as we often got foamcore and seamless paper from Materials for the Arts and worked together to make a fantastic set. The talent show was a huge success and we still run into some of the kids. They always tell me what a great time they had - of course they're all married with kids of their own. Anyway, after the first year or so, we received all kinds of commendations from the principal, school board and the city government. Most importantly, we saw that real interaction with the kids was the most effective way to stimulate and encourage creativity. It was much less likely that many of the same kids would have come into No Rio, or that we would ever have met them otherwise.

"Yes, it's odd, to say the least. On the one hand, I'm sure they all consider themselves to be fighting a kind of war in which they are on the side of the oppressed, the underdogs of the world, and if the physical battleground is in that neighborhood, on Rivington street, then they certainly live in a neighborhood of underdogs, victims of racism, sexism, capitalism, you name it, and yet, the neighborhood itself probably would not agree on the same terms of the fight as these artists would, except to say that they really wish that the 'haves' would cease denying the 'have nots' from their fair share of societal clout and economic booty on the grounds of race, sex or class and would grant equal access to 'The Good Life' as defined by the industrialists, landlords and advertising agencies, they are not exactly clamoring for the downfall of things as they are but for admittance to the spectacle of things as they are.

"Take for instance the young wife with four kids, very catholic, very devout, with a husband who works 60 hours a week as a construction laborer, dreaming of owning his own construction company some day, and sometimes, well, little things, really just get to him, like the frustration of trying to get by in his job where, because of his limited english and the color of his skin, he is treated as an inferior by his co-workers and paid less by his bosses, sometimes, when he gets home, if his dinner isn't on the table, if the kids aren't quiet, if his wife isn't looking pretty enough today or disagrees with something he says- in short, if he can't have total control over this one part of his life, his home, when he has no control over any other part of his life, if he cannot be the man in this one place- he loses his temper a bit and all of the anger rises to the surface and maybe he strikes out at the kids or his wife, you know, to keep them in their place, well, when it comes down to it, do you think that a performance at ABC No Rio where in one breath
After the 7 Days show, Jack & Peter were invited to take over the directorship of No Rio. Soon after this, another artist who had begun to frequent No Rio at this time, Kembra Pfahler, put on the 'Extremist Show'. "No one took me seriously in other circles, I felt like this 9th grader who none of the 12th graders would talk to, I was this very young woman artist that no one would listen to, except when I went to No Rio, there were people there who were coming from the same place I was, of wanting to test limits. The stuff we did was about transforming yourself, daring yourself in public to see your own bravery emerge. A lot of stuff I learned about performing and being on stage and challenging other people as much as challenging myself, I learned back then at these early shows, and I still use all of that. And that's where I met El Coco Que Hable- The Talking Coconut, he was this remarkable, charming neighborhood poet who was just incredible, he was like this old but very strong tropical surfer who could captivate anyone with his words and the strength of his personality. He was coming around a lot and doing on the spot readings. Also I remember Richard Hoffman, he's dead now but during the Extremist Show I remember he tar'd and feathered the entire gallery space. I remember that things got heavy sometimes, especially with the neighbors upstairs. My friend Valery was raped by a group of 12 year olds upstairs. You had to watch yourself around the neighborhood and in the building."

Samos, an artist who performs often with Kembra, remembered a show that Psychodrama put on. "They were these guys from Virginia who nobody would book, everyone was too disgusted or afraid to, so they came to No Rio. One guy was reading a poem while giving himself an enema and the others started throwing buckets of horseshit at everyone in the gallery, they brought the shit in a truck from some farm in Virginia, and when the shit started flying the room cleared out, everyone ran screaming down Rivington Street with these naked guys chasing them and throwing shit, a lot of people got hit with it, the neighbors just thought that anyone who went to No Rio was insane."

Kali interrupts herself, "buy me a drink Dion, won't you?" - "Yes, it's true, during the tenure of the visual artists, the bridging of the cultural gap between the artists and the community was probably a more easily attainable goal which would, in time, had the founding No Rio directors stayed involved, have been resolved somehow in a more tangible fashion although I think that to the degree that ABC had become and was becoming even more so of a place "For people to do things that ought not to be done", as Anne Messner has put it, would have been truncated considerably.

"And oh, such decadence, Dion! I blush just thinking about the goings on over there, somehow I almost sense the disguised machinations of Caligula at work here, but, naaw, he wouldn't do that, would he? I'm sure these mortals are quite capable of creating their own lusty playground without any help from us, we just need to do a little, shall we say, facilitation, a nudge here, a gentle push there." "It's all part of the plan, Kali, part of the evolution of an idea. We must restore the balance of power, WE MUST DESTROY MOLOCH! But first, we have to help these mortals to recognize the Moloch that is in each of them so that they can either transform or excorcise it.
The Extremist symbol. Pfahler writes that the logo illustrates "one of the underlying feelings of the nine-day movement: pure deliberate
Phillipe but we also played with and babysat their kids, we also fought with them over selling drugs out of their apartment, anyways Phillipe was this Vietnam vet/heroin addict who we all believed was certainly capable of shooting us and we wrestled him down and grabbed the gun only to find it was made of plastic, but at first, while we were wrestling with him the place just cleared out - everyone was ducking for cover.

While Brad Taylor & I talk in the backyard of No Rio, I feed my dog Hilda P. Doolittle a plate of rice & beans from Cibaos' on the corner, for some reason she pukes it up almost immediately with urgent retching sounds which spark another memory from Brad. "Oh yea, and one night during a reading out here, the yard was lit up by a bonfire, I think Eve Tintelbaum was reading a poem, and Jack and Peter's pit bull who lived in the backyard, ate someone's order of rice & beans from Cibaos' and then walked over, lay down in front of Eve and barfed up a load of white rice."

Jack remembers Aline Mare from Erotic Psyche pissing into a vase and then reading a ritualized poem over it, with Bradley Eros down on all fours pushing a fish across the stage and Aline following carrying the vase and chanting, there was film projected over every surface of the room. Bradley also made an enormous dome out of fabrics and cushions which was called the Sensory Tent, when one would enter the tent they would be caressed anonymously by arms covered in velvet which protruded into the tent from the outside. Another facet of the 7 Days involved several artists attending a 6th grade class at Hanna Silver elementary school to illustrate creation myths with Peter dressed up in a chicken suit. Peter: "I fasted that week, and one night out in the yard Jack & I did this silent performance with me emerging from a large pool of water which really was just this part of the yard that had flooded after a big rain, we filled it with gasoline and lit it up, I came up out of this pool and lay down at the edge, Jack came out of the darkness and revived me, we shared a mango and then disappeared back into the forest."

Things were changing. Jack Waters and Peter Cramer, Brad Taylor, and Carl George sat in a No Rio collective meeting one night and proposed a show based on creation myths called 7 Days of Creation. The show would be 7 days of 24 hr. non-stop performance with little or no curatorial effort, anyone who showed up to perform or participate would become part of the show. The 7 days would characterize the future direction of ABC No Rio, both artistically and politically, in the sense that it gained a more focused queer aesthetic and a more experimental approach to shows, which became increasingly performance & video oriented. The new crowd coming to No Rio both to do shows and to see them were more off of the artistic beaten track, especially in terms of the normal background for artists at the time. Most made their bones performing in nightclubs and had skipped art school altogether. For most, the visual, fine arts were too confining a field to limit themselves to. Many were not clear with themselves what it was they wanted to express with their 'creating' because it was an evolving transformation which encompassed the whole of their lives rather than one, creative aspect of it. Take for example Hapi Phace, "The most virile drag queen in the world - rough cut" as Edgar Oliver has described him, who used himself as a sculpture to decorate himself with odd costume and often performed comedic sets at the Pyramid Club with another performance artist named Philly. They did an act using an enlarged Frieda Khao painting with holes cut out of it for their faces. These ideas belong to another world than that of the radical fine arts student. This emerging type of performance had as its antecedent the pre-war Berlin cabaret scene.
The Exterminist Symbol. Preface: What the Logo...

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"I remember that we also got lunch money and car fare on the days we went to No Rio", Edgar fondly remembers.

Helen and Edgar eventually formed 'The Haunted Circus', which first performed at No Rio and the Pyramid Club. "In those days you always went nightclubbing at places like the Nudd club and the Pyramid, where performance art was going on. If you were tired, you went to bed early & got up later to go to the after hours party. No Rio was where stuff went on that couldn't get booked anywhere else, the stuff was weirder. It was a place that seemed to vindicate the things we were feeling and performing. My sister Helen and I did the Haunted Circus with Brian Damage, who has since passed away. He was a very gifted artist who decorated the interiors of a lot of nightclubs back then with spray paint and foam core, he also did one of the rooms at the Chelsea Arms. For the Haunted Circus he made an enormous spandex cave that was a labyrinth of shifting spandex stalagmites with Helens' paintings forming parts of the walls along with manikins and sculptures, and a mime playing saxophone inside of it. It was inside of this cave that I performed my play, 'Prince Lear's Playground', based on my childhood. I've kept this persona throughout my work since then. I didn't really understand a lot of what I was doing on stage, it was an evolving thing, a growing process."

Says Philly, whose work has been described as neo-shamanic-A-go-go, of the 7 Days: "There was this sense of 'what is there left to celebrate, what is there left to create, everything has already been co-opted and commercialized', so people were reaching for something else. Basically, everyone was drunk, high, deranged & ambisexual, those 7 days were more like one long day of creativity and madness. I couldn't tell where one day ended and the next began. There was this ritual of Jack dragging in the maggoty garbage from the streets and dumping it all over the gallery floor and all this stuff was incorporated into the performances, there was little separation between what people were doing and when they would begin to 'perform' because the idea of performing was secondary to the real life going on all over the place - people met under the piles of garbage and had mad philosophical discussions about art and paganism while Samoa would be on top of a ladder screaming and others sleeping somewhere or lying in a writhing erotic pile- I can't really remember a lot of stuff, I can't give you a linear progression of the 7 Days because there is none. What did I do? Like I said, I can't remember a lot, but I had this alter set up in the back of the gallery by the wood burning stove, the toilet was back there too, primitive, it was really primitive, the partition to the bathroom would keep falling down, the alter was called 'Alter the Alters', it was made from street garbage and junk I brought from San Francisico piled on top of a table and ringed with candles from the botanical, people would take stuff from it and leave stuff, which is how they altered the alter. Later the whole thing was exploded by fireworks in the backyard. That was the summer I lived in the gallery."
"The Departure of Cultural Affairs Has Spoken. Take your petitioning the State for Financial Assistance. The continuing moral debt accruing to you by your previous protest. Now your request, you are hereby ordered to report to the few seconds that appears to be the turnstile. There is no turnstile. It has disappeared. There is no longer a barrier to be seen. Just the dark red light and gently, silently, hen's. We want to keep us, to understand these things. We knew much of your vedere. Why yes, we do believe very much so. Of course, we appreciate our fellow competitors. Don't we? We appreciate the expertise and the want to do something more. We're just here to do something else. That's my brother's picture. After all, it's still the public's business, the public's business. "Because me?" does he. He's the head of the government. The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains, The woman who stands beside it explains."