

# Galerie Mot & Van den Boogaard

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donderdag - vrijdag - zaterdag 12.00 tot 18.30 uur

jeudi - vendredi - samedi 12.00 à 18.30 heures

en op afspraak / et sur rendez-vous

Newsletter 17

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1000 Brussel 1

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Newsletter Galerie Mot & Van den Boogaard  
Verschijnt tweemaandelijks uitgezonderd juli-augustus.

Nr. 17, maa.-apr. 99. Afgiftekantoor: Brussel 1

V.U.: Jan Mot, Antoine Dansaertstraat 46, 1000 Brussel

Photo: Feature Film, Douglas Gordon, courtesy Kölnischer Kunstverein

# HEARTBEAT

construction of a fiction  
DORA GARCÍA

**Secretly and unnoticed till now**, a new trend has spread among young people: the vicious habit of listening exclusively to their own heartbeat. Most walkman and headphone users we see out there are actually listening just to their own, personal, private, **naked beat**, previously recorded in **underground soundlabs**. This practice results in an extremely **autistic perception** of the world, the surrounding space rhythmically echoing our own, **inner space**. The **intimate percussive** influences thoughts and behaviours, providing at the same time a cuddly feeling of being protected within yourself.

He placed his thumb on his chest. You could clearly see a **tremble** shaking his hand, starting in the thumb, ending in the forefinger, rhythmically repeated. -"All my boyfriends have always been scared of this"- he said.

A woman seriously **deranged** by a continuous buzz in her ears was cured by moving near a textile factory. The noise there was unbearable; yet the woman was happy, because any noise is more tolerable than the ones produced inside yourself.

Somebody who used to work in a mental hospital told me that headphones are very popular among schizophrenic patients, pumping constantly very loud music into their ears. Asked about the reason for it, one of the patients replied: "I need to keep the volume loud and close, not to hear the other, the other **inner voices...**"

Every heartbeater gradually develops a deep apathy. They live **inside**, and their perceptions mean barely more than a TV image with the volume turned down. The core of heartbeaters are teenagers, who start heartbeating out of curiosity or because of social reasons -their friends are doing it. Other users' groups are: concerned parents who want to know what's in their children's heads; trend victims; and misfits who would take up anything giving them **the ghost of identity**. All of them, however, end up in the same dangerous, destructive apathy.

Obviously, no one is closer to the beat of the heart than those who live in **silence**. Equally, the sound of the beat of the heart is the closest sound can get to **no-sound**, the lowest audible frequency, sound becoming almost something else, just **movement, vibration, tremble**. Sound you can only, literally, feel, its absence meaning **death**.

A long exposure to heartbeat practice leads to the abandonment of verbal language. Unable to hear their own voice or the voice of others, heartbeaters start placing a bigger trust in non-verbal language, a language they can see, and therefore control. Heartbeaters learn to represent the diversity of the outside world by means of their own bodies. They use bizarre body positions and non-verbal caricatures -grimaces-, appearing so **grotesque** to people alien to this language that most people start to consider them plain fools, when not dangerously **insane**, pariahs, or **infected and contagious addicts**.

**White noise**- Researchers found out that people working in the so-called "smart buildings" -completely isolated buildings, generating their own air and light- would go mad if spending time in that silence. The lack of exterior sound stimuli left them unprotected from the sound of their own body fluids. They would listen constantly to their saliva-swallowing, their heart-beating, their stomach--crunching, their ear-whistling. The sound of the **self** produces **madness**. That is why researchers installed "white noise" in those buildings. A regular, background buzz, just loud enough to scare away madness, just low enough to be tolerable.



## Agenda

**Eija-Liisa Ahtila:** Biennale di Venezia, Scandinavian Pavillion, vanaf/à partir du 13/6

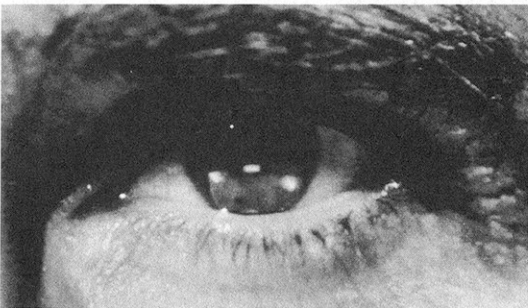
**Pierre Bismuth:** Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris, vanaf/à partir du 29/5 (solo/cat.); Soirées Prospect, Centre national de la photographie, Paris, 28/4; Fourth Wall, National Theater, London, 6/5-29/5

**Rineke Dijkstra:** Expander 1.0., Galerie Jousse-Seguin, Paris, 20/3-24/4; Soirées Prospect, Centre national de la photographie, Paris, 19/5; Herzlia Museum of Art, Herzlia (Israel), 27/5-30/6

**Honoré d'O:** La consolation, Le Magasin, Grenoble, 7/3-16/5; Autobiopisch bezoek - Seizoengebonden Gebaren, Kunsthal Lophem, 20/3-5/6

**Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster:** Cities on the move 5, Hayward Gallery, London, 27/5-30/6

**Douglas Gordon:** Centro cultural de Belem, Lisboa, 22/1-9/5 (solo/cat.); D.I.A. Center for the Arts Foundation, New York, 10/2-13/6 (solo); Feature Film. Cinematic installation, Atlantis Gallery, London, 1/4-3/5 (solo/cat.); Feature Film. Cinematic installation, Kölischer Kunstverein, Köln, 10/4-30/5 (solo/cat.); Feature Film. Wereldpremière bioscoopversie / Première mondiale version cinéma: Residenz Kino, Köln, 1/5, 20.30 u/h. Reserv.: Kölischer Kunstverein, tel: +49 221 21 70 21



Feature Film, Douglas Gordon, 1999, courtesy Kölischer Kunstverein  
*Feature Film is the result of a collaboration between Douglas Gordon and James Conlon, Principal Conductor at the Paris Opera. It places completely new film sequences over the original Vertigo score written by one of cinema's great composers, Bernard Herrmann. A brand new recording of the score was made last winter in Paris for the project by James Conlon with a full orchestra of 100 musicians. The work exists in two versions: as an installation and as a filmprojection (35mm, 90 min.).*

**Joachim Koester:** Blondes on Bikes, newsantandrea, Savona, 10/4-4/7; P.S.1/Museum, New York, vanaf/à partir du 18/4

**Uri Tzai:** Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich, 12/6-15/8 (solo/cat.)

**Cinéma, Cinéma.** Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, met/avec: E.-L. Ahtila, P. Bismuth, D. Gordon, P. Huyghe, J. Koester, S. Lockhart e.a., 13/2-24/5

**So far away, so close,** Encore... Bruxelles, Brussel/Bruxelles, 25/3-11/7, met/avec P. Huyghe, S. Lockhart, Ed Ruscha e.a.

**Biennale di Venezia, Dapertotutto,** vanaf/à partir du 13/6 (met/avec D. Gonzalez-Foerster, D. Gordon, P. Huyghe)

## Galerie

**Richard Billingham**

24/4 - 29/5

vernissage: zaterdag / samedi 24/4, 16-21 u/h

**Riyo van/de Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster**

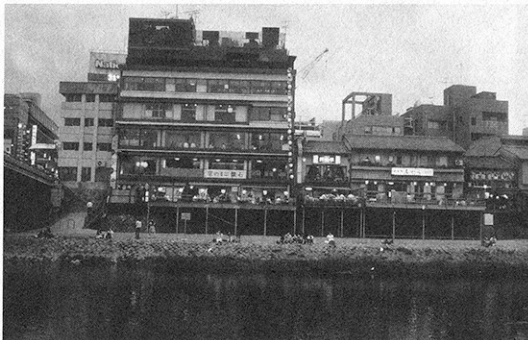
Cinéma des Galeries / Arenberg, Brussel / Bruxelles

zaterdag / samedi 29/5, 12.00 u/h

Intro: Jean-Christophe Royoux (F)

Met de steun van / Avec l'appui de:

Ambassade de France, Délégation culturelle et pédagogique



Riyo, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, 1999 (photo de tournage)

Riyo - 1999 - 10' - 35mm - kleur/couleur

Réalisation: Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster

Production: Anna Sanders Films

*«Un moment téléphonique entre deux adolescents dans le crépuscule urbain d'un paysage japonais, le long de la rivière Kamo à Kyoto, entre le pont de Shijo et celui de Sanjo. Lieu de rencontre et de flirt pour les adolescents, le paysage, tout ses lumières et ses arrières plans, se révèle en même temps que la conversation. A travers leur dialogue et leur présence invisible, c'est une toute autre ville qui s'installe, émotionnelle, transitoire, immature et ouverte.» (DGF)*

**Ian Wilson. Discussions of the Absolute**

Palais voor Schone Kunsten, Brussel

Palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles

zondag / dimanche 9/5, 18.00 u/h

(reservatie / réservation: tel: 02-514 10 10)

**You assume certain places exist.**

Group show with Dora Garcia, Joachim Koester, Uri Tzai

3/6 - 27/6

**Uri Tzai**

Art 30 Basel

16/6 - 21/6

**Purple Boutique & Café**

3/7 - 31/7

vernissage: zaterdag / samedi 3/7, 14-18.30 u/h

curated by Purple Magazine, Paris



# RICHARD BILLINGHAM

## Excerpts from an interview by James Lingwood

*When did you begin to make the photographs which are in the book 'Ray's a laugh'?*

About six or seven years ago. I needed a reference for some paintings I was doing then. I wanted to have a record of how things looked. I was thinking that I could more or less copy or use part of a photograph, to see how a hand is, or an arm and that it would help in the composition of the paintings.

*What kind of paintings, also of your family?*

I was trying to make paintings which were a bit like Sickert's.

*Like the one with the old man in the chair smoking?*

I don't like that one so much. I was trying to do some paintings of my dad lying in bed and things. I was using black and white because it was cheap and I could print them up myself, and I was painting quite monochromatically so it made sense. (...)

*So when did the photos move from being preparatory studies for painting to take on the status as works which could be exhibited?*

Well I never considered them as works because I had quite an elitist idea about painting and photography: that painting was fine art and photography wasn't. But I realised that I could find things out with these photographs, that I could look at my family from the outside. I found out that I could see them in a different light.

*That became a motivation as well - the camera helped you see them in a different light?*

Eventually, but I have to say I was just taking the pictures and not really showing them to anybody because I didn't think they were important.

*Didn't you have any models in mind - other artists or photographers, who had depicted their families?*

For most of the time I was making these photographs, I didn't see the work of other photographers, I just wasn't interested.

*How did you develop the idea that they could exist in their own right?*

When I was taking them, I began to think that some of them should be larger.

*So when did you first exhibit anything?*

It was in an exhibition about the family at the Barbican Art Gallery ('Who's Looking at the Family'): I showed one large triptych of black and white photographs.

*A triptych is an interesting choice, it has certain implications - religious paintings, or Francis Bacon.*

I thought that the three large photos went together and made sense - like three early film stills. The negatives for the photos were very messed up, scratched and dirty and it showed a lot in the finished prints. I printed them myself and brushed on the developer.

*Were some of the techniques which you use, like blurring or the film not being wound on properly, consciously used to accentuate this potential?*

A lot of that's to do with the cheap equipment I used, I wasn't really bothered about how they came out as long as I could see what the images were - whether they were for paintings or whether they were useful to study.

*It's very hard to be indifferent to these photographs - not just because of the things they show, but because it is the*

*son who has made and shown them.*

I just wanted them to be very moving. I wanted the viewer to be moved by them. To see things I couldn't see otherwise. I photographed my family and friends as well. The fact that my dad drinks a lot, I wanted to show the gravity of it, the body being destroyed. I don't want them to be sentimental but I want them to express tragedy. I was trying to reclaim them by the way I took the pictures, so that you don't look down on my dad for being an alcoholic and my mum smoking a lot and being fat...

*The book 'Ray's a laugh' starts with a sequence of pictures of relationships, five pages of different kinds of relationships - father and son, husband and wife, the cat and the dog. It's a bit like the beginning of a film, or a drama of some kind?*

When you open the book it's like a play. Originally I wanted the book to be like a small novel, without any pictures on the dust jacket. I think the book still works like a visual play, but unfortunately the book design is not how I wanted it to be. In a theater there is a stage and everything happens on that stage all the time. Apart from four photographs taken outside, all the photographs are inside the flat. Everything is contained within these small rooms. I didn't want there to be a linear narrative. A lot of the pictures are quite iconic so as you go through the book the life in the flat unfolds. But it doesn't tell a story in a normal documentary way.

*The end-paper at the front seems to me very much like the beginning of certain soap operas.*

I wanted to give it a sense of place, a geography if you like.

*And then you're immediately inside.*

Yes, it's like an emotional territory - that's the real landscape, a landscape of emotions. The first picture is also apt because you can't really see what year it was taken in. It could have been 1985 or 1995. The best compositions are the ones I don't really measure up, I just lift the camera and take it quick like that, I have a sense that a picture is there but I don't really know how it's going to come out. I have an idea of what it's going to look like. Sometimes I can take a picture and then forget about it because I think it won't be any good and I get it back from the chemist and it's a very good one - like the dog with the light bulb. If I try to set it up it doesn't really work. It's interesting when there are things in the photograph which I hadn't noticed. There's always an intention to take a picture. You wouldn't just take a picture for the sake of it, it's a waste of film.

*You're not just snapping away?*

No, it's not like that at all.

*But do you take many shots when you think there's a picture to be made?*

No, often just a few. Usually the first one I take is the best one.

*Despite being so open to accident, are you still painting in a way?*

I suppose I developed my sense of composition from paintings, I never looked at photographs seriously.

*What paintings were you looking at?*

I liked some of the British figurative artists - Sickert, John Bellamy, Auerbach, Kossoff and Bomberg.

*Your colour range to begin with was more like Sickert. When you came out of black and white you went into browns and yellows.*

The first photographs of my father were often quite brown. The colours in the photos have a lot to do with the

cheap out-of-date film that I used. The curtains aren't that red, that table's not that blue.

*But you like this kind of distortion or concentration?*

It would look too clean for me if the colours were recorded exactly as they are. It starts to become a bit more like a picture, like painting, not naturalistic.

*What about Bacon?*

I've always been a bit ambivalent about his painting.

*What are you ambivalent about?*

It's that redemption through form which Peter Fuller talked about. I always thought there was no redemption through form in Bacon's work. I thought it was very sensational.

*His paintings have the capacity to give you a physical shock, to attack your nervous system.*

I never wanted to shock people with my work, I wanted to surprise them perhaps but not to shock them. I wanted the book to be like a play that moves the viewer.

*The book seems to me to have a similar visceral impact to Larry Clark's 'Tulsa'. Almost all of those photographs are inside as well.*

That's probably the best book I've seen so far - apart from 'The Americans'.

*What do you think Clark's reason for taking his photographs in 'Tulsa' was?*

Photography is about recognition and you recognise what he recognises through his viewfinder. He shows you what he's seen. (...)

*Could you imagine photographing people who didn't know you well - where there was no empathy between the photographer and the subject?*

You can still have empathy for people you don't know well. I do photograph strangers sometimes but they're usually just part of a street scene or something and the subject of the pictures is not really them.

*You mentioned before that the photographs helped you see your family from the outside.*

Yes it's hard to explain that. But I could see my family in a photographic form, if you like. Different from seeing them from the inside - face to face.

*Were you able to see your relationships with your family in a different way through taking these photographs?*

Well, some of these photos are angry, some are sad, some are happy and so on. And looking at the pictures when I got them back from the chemist I could see how I felt towards them. I suppose I could see my social relationships with them in a photographic way as well as the usual way. The black and white photo of my dad... It's like he's fading away because of the drink or something and it makes you realise that everything is very fragile.

*But you've been living with that for years?*

Yes, but it's there on the page. It's an image, and your mind works on images. I didn't know that the picture would look like that, my intention was not to have it blurred but for some reason it came out of focus, I think it's better because it makes him look like he's withering away more graphically. (...)

*Did you always have a camera with you when you were there?*

I always had one in my bag, I didn't sit there with one round my neck, sometimes I didn't take any pictures and sometimes I took a lot and sometimes I just did some drawing.

*So they were used to the idea of them being models?*

It was quite rare that I used them as models because it was hard to get them or anybody to sit for half an hour.

That's why I started using the camera. They weren't used to me drawing them but they were used to me drawing in the same room. (...)

*When did the idea of the book emerge?*

It was after that Barbican exhibition, in about '95, I entered a prize, the Felix Man prize, I put some of these photos together in a little family album, about 20. And I suppose that was the first time I tried to make a book from the coloured pictures.

*Was the idea of the family album quite important?*

It wasn't really meant like that. The album was just a cheap form to present the idea of a book. I was still very poor then. (...)

*There's a lot of darkness in the book, details or faces slipping away into nothing.*

My dad's an alcoholic and his body is wasting away and his body's getting worse, the dark has something to do with that, with death and drinking too much.

*A kind of dissolution?*

I suppose so, yes.

*A lot of your early negatives are scratched and messed up.*

I never took care of my negatives early on because I never considered them important. Somebody spilt a pint over a lot of them once and I said 'Don't worry about it'. The photos were just reference material then. But it did give me an idea. When I was at University I put all the black and white photos that I had at the time on the wall and spattered paint on them. I was scratching them on purpose, and tearing them and treading on them.

*Like the Bacon photographs in the Sylvester book?*

Yes.

*What were you thinking of?*

I was trying to find ways of bringing the paintings and the photographs together. At that time I was thinking that if I did show photographs in galleries or museums I wanted them large and was thinking that I'd have to find some way of making them look like paintings otherwise I wouldn't be able to justify putting them up. I also thought of exhibiting paintings beside photographs, which was one of the reasons I started putting paint on them, sort of abusing the image, eroding, wearing it away a bit.

*What did that mean, to be abusing or distressing these photos of your family?*

Those photos were mainly of my father and a friend of his, Sid, who's also an alcoholic. Spattering paint on the photos and making them eroded and old seemed a metaphor for Ray and Sid drinking a lot. I thought this might also justify showing them in a gallery because they wouldn't seem so much like photos. But I thought it all looked quite obvious and I abandoned the idea a bit later.

*A lot of photographs in the book are out of focus or from damaged negatives.*

The reason I put a lot of these pictures in was because I wanted to show a certain attitude to photography, that you don't have to have expensive equipment, you should just look at the photograph like a picture, what it is, what you've depicted. I wanted to show that I wasn't really bothered about photographs and I was just bothered about the picture. (...)

*Copyright James Lingwood and Richard Billingham. First published in Tate Magazine, issue 15, Summer 1998, pp. 54-59.*

*Thanks to James Lingwood and Richard Billingham.*



# Richard Billingham

**24/4 - 29/5**

**vernissage 24/4**  
**16 - 21 u/h**

Met dank aan / Remerciements à: Restaurant Bonsoir Clara; Duvel - Brouwerij / Brasserie Moortgat  
Photo: Richard Billingham, Untitled, 1997