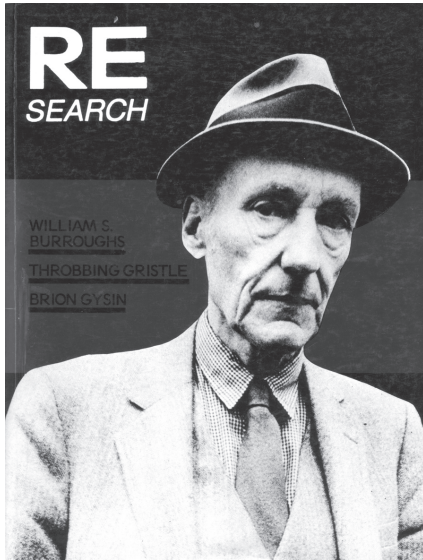


# VESTED INTEREST

Genesis Breyer P-Orridge in conversation  
with Mark Beasley



**MARK BEASLEY:** Genesis, I wanted to begin by discussing the 1982 publication *RE/Search* that featured William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, and Throbbing Gristle. As a document it proposes an almost cubist approach to the interview format, multiple 'cut-up' texts and images with and of the central figures that flow between social processes and control methodologies to each of your individual and collective takes on creativity and the future. How did you become to be involved with *RE/Search*?

**GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE:** Before Throbbing Gristle began on September 3rd 1975, myself and—to a degree—Cosey [Fanni Tutti, fellow member of TG] had been very active in the first wave of Mail Art and Correspondence Art. My favorite thing was to get postcards of Queen Elizabeth II, draw these crosses on them and then collage the different segments. When you put it all together, it was like a great big quilt of diamond shapes with Her Majesty smiling at the camera while all these people were sat performing very rude sexual acts at her feet.

From the Mail Art network, We—'We' being Jaye and me as one physical being, just to clarify\*—We, as Genesis in those days, heard from an artist called Anna Banana. One day she wrote to me and we asked her about this mythical figure we'd heard about called Monte Cazazza. She wrote back and said, 'Monte Cazazza is a sick, dangerous, sociopathic individual. Why, once, Monte came to an art opening dressed like a woman in his long coat, carrying a briefcase and waving a Magnum revolver. In the briefcase was a dead cat and he locked the doors, held everybody in the art opening at gunpoint, took the cat out, poured lighter fluid on it and set it on fire. Oh, and the stench filled the room. He just started to laugh and then he left again. You don't want to know this person!' Wrong. (laughs) *We did* want to know this person. Of course, once we heard how awful he was, we decided to correspond with Monte. We used to send each other the most grotesque and unpleasant things we could think of. One time, we sent him a big padded envelope and inside it were a pint of maggots and chicken legs and offal from the butcher, mixed up with pornography and so on. By the time it got to California to his P.O. Box, it stank! He was temporarily restrained by the security at the post office. They took him to a small room and interrogated him about 'what could be in this package' and 'who the hell was sending this vile stuff through the mail'. And 'did he understand that it was illegal' and so on. We became really good Mail Art friends and went over and stayed with him in Oakland; in those days it was a dangerous ghetto.

One of the people that Monte introduced us to was Vale from *Search and Destroy*, as it was called then. It was sort of a Punk fanzine, but it was printed more like a 1960s newspaper and folded over. Vale wanted to interview me about Industrial music and Burroughs and Gysin and all my obsessions in culture, which he did. He printed an interview in *Search and Destroy*—actually, in the last one published in newspaper format. But while we were there we were hanging out—Vale and Monte and myself—and we proposed to Vale that there was a real need for an alternative encyclopedia. 'Wouldn't it be great if, instead of doing interviews that just touched upon things that were interesting or inspired us ... to actually take that further and make definitive collections

\* From this point on, Genesis uses the pronoun 'we' to refer to the different aspects of himself, in a collective sense.

of information and documentation and theoretical text and so on of artists, writers, creative thinkers that we felt, to a large extent, were responsible for our attitude towards art and culture.' So, we proposed to Vale that he start a series of book format volumes that you would collect.

In the old days, they had those magazines *Man, Myth and Magic*; they'd be released monthly, and eventually you'd end up with an encyclopedia that was very thorough about specific alternative information. So, that was the template, that kind of idea, but produced as these books. To his great credit, Vale immediately understood what we were proposing, that there was this void. All these fans were becoming fascinated with our music, we'd refer to Burroughs or Gysin or whomever and they wouldn't know how to get more information. It was a bit like it was for us in the 1960s, when we were struggling to find documentation of the same people. And it seemed wrong that, twenty years later, it was still almost impossible. They were so underground at that time, that the average person just couldn't locate information. That's how the *RE/Search* books began and, inevitably, when Vale was brainstorming what the first one should be, that William Burroughs and Brion Gysin were particularly key figures in the evolution of Industrial Music and performance art as we saw it. Everything we did was related to the 'cut up'. The 'cut ups' weren't documented that well for the average person. Vale thought that was a great idea, and that we should also include Throbbing Gristle in the first one, to show that it's not dead information, that it's still a living force.

The first issue was very much a manifesto —'this is where it begins, it begins with these people ... Brion Gysin and William Burroughs.' Throbbing Gristle have taken these ideas, particularly the cut-up and applied them in a new way, in a novel way, into the popular cultural archetype of the rock band. To take something that is already there, a traditional icon—a rock 'n' roll band— and then overlay that with an academic, intellectual, avant-garde template, and see what happens ... What happens when you break down people's preconceptions of what a band can be, what music can be? One way to assert that is to cut it all up, so that the individual isn't guiding it anymore.

By making Throbbing Gristle into a cut-up machine, we rescinded or we surrendered the authorship of the result. You know how Burroughs and Gysin would say, 'Poets don't own words'? Once you perform a cut-up, it's the Third Mind

that's responsible for the end results. The Third Mind is this intangible being or entity that only exists in the moment of collaboration between two people or two artists. And that entity is the centre of everything that we've done, really, in different forms. It's been at the centre of every project.

MB: In terms of the approach of *RE/Search*, it demonstrates a cut-up relationship to Burroughs' life and counter-cultural America. In it you are to be seen through a series of photographs revisiting key places identified with the writer, the shooting range that Burroughs used, alongside images of you at Charles Manson's Spahn Ranch\*—an experiential and geographic West Coast cut-up. Would you say, in terms of Throbbing Gristle's language and lyrics, for example in songs such as 'Hamburger Lady'—a doctor's letter regarding an extreme burns victim—that you seek to draw upon first hand experience as a cut-up of sorts ...?

GBP-O: Absolutely. One of the other central themes of everything we've done, in terms of our process, whether it be music or visual or whatever, is an absolute conviction that life and experiences within that life are absolutely a part of the artist's work. There is no separation. It's ludicrous to try and create artificial boundaries and parameters in terms of media. That's over. In a sense, one of the things the beatniks did was move from Dada and Surrealism into 'living as a piece of art'— living in an artistic way. One of the things that drew us to Burroughs and Gysin initially was that their lives were fascinating! The same can be said for some of the Dadaists, Andy Warhol and so on. The work became secondary to the experiences. And the experiences generated more work. And that happened more and more in the 20th century, until it became impossible and pointless to define things anymore.

In fact, as Burroughs and Gysin proposed, life is a cut-up. You walk along the street, you're thinking about something and you visualise it. But, you're also aware that you're not going to step in front of the car that's coming and the dog needs to pee and you're hungry and the weather's changing and someone's calling you from across the street that you haven't seen for six years and so on. And all of this is instantaneous, every

\* Spahn Ranch is a 500-acre ranch situated at 1200 Santa Susana Pass Road, Chatsworth, California. Located in the Santa Susana Mountains, it is best known as one of the residences of Charles Manson and his group of followers commonly referred to as 'The Family', who lived there in the spring of 1968.

moment. Every moment that we exist is filled with a multitude of references and key intersections that resonate and change the direction of your thought and your way of perceiving. The book was designed as a cut-up so that you could read across and through it rather than in a linear way. We wanted to imply that even something this traditional, a book format, has to break down in order for the random chance, the voice of creation, to speak through without the interference, ego, or the preconceptions of the artist. The artist has to be freed from making aesthetic choices. The aesthetics aren't really the point, it's the content and it's the collision that matters. And those collisions can only happen when you step back and create a formula like the cut-up in order to observe more than guide.

MB: This is what Burroughs referred to—the breaking down and fracture of language in order to understand how it operates upon the individual. It's something that Nicholas Bullen—the founder and original singer of the band Napalm Death—talks about with the development of the 'Grindcore voice':\* the crushing of language to the point that familiar codes, such as the singer and the message become strange, distorted. At early Napalm gigs lyric sheets were passed around the audience. This approach resulted in a more complicated relation between performer and audience, through its attempt to re-orientate the focus of the audience towards the real meaning contained in the lyrics. As I recall, Throbbing Gristles's *Second Annual Report* was one of the first albums Nick owned and was a key influence on the development of Napalm Death.

GBP-O: There's a recording from the 1950s from the Beat Hotel that we came across, when Sleazy [Peter Christopherson, fellow member of TG] and I were working on *Nothing Here Now but the*

\* Napalm Death are a Grindcore/Death Metal band from Birmingham, England. They are credited with defining the grindcore genre through their blend of Hardcore Punk and Metal musical structures, aggressive playing, fast tempos, and deep guttural vocals. Grindcore, often shortened to Grind, is an evolution of Crust Punk, characterized by: heavily distorted, down-tuned guitars, with Crust Punk-influenced riffing; Hardcore Punk and thrash metal drumming, with many bands focusing on blast beats; songs rarely lasting more than two minutes and often seconds long; vocals which consist of growls and higher-pitched screams, similar to those found in Black Metal or Hardcore Punk.

*Recordings*.\*\* We think it was Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Brion Gysin and Ginsberg—no one's one hundred percent sure—anyway, they're all hanging out in the Beat Hotel. A business letter arrives for Burroughs and they're all chatting and he pulls this letter out and he crinkles the paper. He starts reading this business letter from some lawyer and then he says, 'Let's see what it really says'. Then you hear him cutting it up with some scissors and he reads it in a chopped up, non-linear way and the rhythm that you start to hear is '... na na na na na MONEY dala na na na MONEY na na dada la la MONEY la la lana na MONEY ...' and it reveals the subtext in a very witty and profound way.

So there's a certain act of faith involved, to take it to the extremes that we do. All we can say is that our personal, ongoing experience does seem to be an almost sentient energy or phenomena in the universe that becomes friendly towards those to start to play with it. That in the beginning of starting to play with these cut-ups it's novelty that attracts you, or curiosity ... but then things start to happen that go beyond the laws of physics and rationality. The number 23 will keep cropping up and you'll find you're always given a ticket with the number 23 and that the room you get in the hotel is number 23 and it's flight 23 and it's seat 23, and it becomes almost oppressive, this sudden awareness of these hidden structures and lattice works that are going on all the time.

But I think there's another language—something like you mention with regard to Nicholas Bullen—and it's an invisible language, which is where the edits are. The edits in contemporary culture are a very new and potent language. Burroughs used to explain it quite simply. Imagine that there's a protest against the World Bank in Seattle and there's a big line of stormtrooper cops on one side of the street and there's all the demonstrators on the other side of the street. If you put the camera behind the cops when this eruption happens, it looks very much like the police are the victims of an attacking force of demonstrators. You put the camera behind the demonstrators and it looks like they're being the victims of police brutality. The event's the same but just by placing the camera—or the point of view—somewhere differently, you get a completely different story. Therefore, stories

\*\* *Nothing Here Now But The Recordings* is an album of early readings by William Burroughs co-edited and cut-up by Genesis P-Orridge and released on the band's Industrial Records label in 1980.

are not reliable. Absolutely not! And television works on those principles. Modern, contemporary television and advertising are very aware of the power of the edit: what to leave in, what to take out, how to pace people's responses, and so it's important to keep this in mind. You're being manipulated, just as profoundly with edits as you might be with verbal propaganda.

How do you protect yourself from these things? If this is being done to us every day, which it is, how do you protect yourself? The only thing you can really do is become aware of it, then to not let yourself forget that this is happening, to not become lazy and habitual and start to drift into a sleepy inertia where it all seeps back in and suddenly you've fallen for all the games again, in terms of the economy and behaving yourself in the appropriate way for the powers that be. So, 'cutting up' is also a survival technique! You know, Burroughs says 'when in doubt, cut it up'. And the other thing he used to say to me, when I first met him in the early seventies, was 'If you want to understand what's really happening, look for the vested interest and it's there.' And that sounds so easy to say, but it's so commonplace to miss it, to drift by. So, why is the space program the way it is? Look for the vested interest! Why is there a war in Iraq? Look for the vested interest! And it suits all the different key parties for the same reason. It's still useful to keep tabs on how your consciousness is being moulded by the status quo.

MB: I'd like to hear you talk a little bit about pandrogeny. When I've heard you talk about it in the past you describe it as employing an anti-binary approach, against the coding of the either/or, the black/white, the good/bad, male/female. That's breaking it down again, the suggestion of a new order in which those boundaries do not exist.

GBP-O: With Throbbing Gristle, the primary way that we absorbed the cut-up theories into the work was mainly with Sleazy using found tapes and field recordings and adding in cassette tapes of all kinds of stuff—bits of television, news people talking, and strange noises. He bugged the offices of a mercenary group at one point and recorded that. Just like you said, lots and lots of fragments of the complexity of contemporary Western life, in particular. And it might sound very obvious now, but when TG were doing that in 1975, it was not commonplace, it was very new to be running random tapes of random sound sources through the music. We even got to the point where we had

television aeriols on the PA system we built, so that wherever we played, we could pick up local television programs and bits of it would come through with the music and we would have no idea what it would be. And sometimes there would be something important happening on the news, and we used to like the idea that someone would go home and think, 'How did they know there was going to be a bomb on Oxford Street today? How did they do that?' And of course, it was real time sampling. Before anyone had something called a sampler.

So from that point there was a hiatus, for various reasons, in my life. And then I met Lady Jaye in New York in 1993. As we got to know each other more, the pandrogeny project really began as a romantic extension of our being so obsessively in love with each other. We really, quite literally, wanted to be absorbed into each other's bodies and not even have two separate bodies. And just embrace and just become one being, which would of course be represented as a third being, or Third Mind. So that was one of the great motivators, one of the great energisers, to start exploring this sensation. But both of us—in previous performance situations, me with Coum and Jaye with Black Lips Theatre Coalition and the House of Domination and so on in the East Village underground movement—had already been playing very much with identity ... not so much gender, per se, but visual keys; visual stereotypes that often are thought of as gender-specific. The first time we met and I stayed at her house, she dressed me in her clothes and made me into this pretty, androgynous person, not female or male. It was an instant thing. We got married in reverse—I was the bride and she was the groom. I wore the dress and she wore black leather and painted on a moustache.

So we were already cutting up our mutual identities and, as we did that, we started to think about why it was so appealing to us ... what it was that was so powerful about this, that we were both drawn to take it further and further, to take it to extremes in our rejection of who we were supposed to be. And one of the things that we decided was that we were both at war with binary culture, the idea of male and female, black and white, Christian/Muslim, good/bad—all these different either/ors that you mentioned, which are embedded in most cultures. Again, as Burroughs would say, 'Look for the vested interest ...' To control people, to make people behave as stereotypes in order for things to be simple

and easy to control. Anarchy and confusion and ambiguity are not necessarily friendly towards control! So, we began to look at that aspect of it. Why be male or female? Why not cut up those ideas, those concepts, those archetypes? Cut those up too and see what it really means, see what's really there. Take it further—beyond music, beyond writing, beyond painting. What's left? The central focus of everything: the person, the being, the artist themselves. The human body is the central theme of art. Why not look at these bodies we've got afresh? And assume that they're not necessarily permanent? They are not inviolate; the body is not sacred. As Jaye would say, the human body is just a cheap suitcase that carries around consciousness. And consciousness is the person—not the matter, not the *stuff*.

MB: And did you feel that your consciousness, as such, was something that transferred between the two of you? You talk a lot about the idea of love, which intrigues me. When I first came across Throbbing Gristle and your work, it was the puncturing of stabilised and fixed codes that so fascinated me at an early age, and continues to do so. It has something to do with the attempt to re-wire those things that we're told are somehow irreconcilable. Can love be thought of as anarchic concept?

GBP-O: Well, it's interesting that people have become so blasé about relationships and they take so much for granted in terms of the randomness of the body you receive! It baffled us that people, on a whole, didn't seem particularly puzzled at the strangeness of being in a body and having a gender. You know, it's very bizarre and it's very arbitrary. We wanted to really explore a re-awakening of the human species that would, in a sense, give the human species a loving self-respect. We had moments where we really did blend our consciousnesses, became one, and it really was a strange and wonderful experience, but we were always looking at what was happening around us. And what we came to perceive or believe was that the survival of the behavioural genetic code in the early eras, like the Stone Age ... well, it's a miracle that there's any human beings left at all given the brutal environment we moved through in early times. In those days, the very early part of human history, humans survived because we had this very aggressive, instinctual fight-or-flight adrenaline aspect to our behaviour. Anything that was a threat had to be attacked

and anything that was different or outside our knowledge, as a clan, would be suspect and considered an enemy to be violently attacked.

As we became more sophisticated with tools, we brought ourselves to a place where the environment is no longer an innately dangerous place. We know we can have shelter and food. I know this is very simple, but basically we've taken for granted this technological environment ... we've created space stations and cell phones and computers and the Internet and all these other things but we've never bothered, as a species, to upgrade our *behaviour*. We've upgraded the tools but not ourselves. We're basically still prehistoric and the way we respond to things is still prehistoric. If you listen to the rhetoric that's surround the discussion of the Middle East at the moment, it's exactly the same as the rhetoric used in the Crusades, hundreds of years ago. *Exactly* the same. And the same buildings are still being fought over, hundreds of years later, and sometimes thousands of years later—the same clans are still fighting over the same bit of land in Africa or Europe. This is ludicrous! We should be ashamed of ourselves as a species, that we're still arguing and bickering and destroying each other over these ludicrous concepts of tribal sameness or spiritual sameness, and that anything outside that circle is still a threat. It's time for the human species to take responsibility for its evolution. We haven't evolved for thousands of years ... we simply got better at making tools. There's a big difference!

So, as we looked at that dichotomy between physical evolution and behavioural evolution, we wondered where is the programming that could change behaviour? How do we change behaviour, just like we were talking about earlier? And we came to the conclusion that DNA is the programming. So much so, that one could even argue, quite convincingly, that in fact DNA is the superior life form on the planet. Human beings are merely disposable containers. In which case, is the consciousness that we experience, each of us, is that some separate electrical genetic species? Is that us, or, when we think, is that just DNA? And the body is just this cheap suitcase? Where do we even reside, as beings? DNA seems to be much more successful at perpetuating itself! (laughs) DNA is all over the place.

So, we started to think: How can we trick our consciousness into re-evaluating the programming? Are there ways to get right inside, deeper and deeper and deeper, to what might be



the source, the core of consciousness, of being? Where is that? And, no matter how long it takes, our true, fervent conviction is that we have to, as a species, prioritise what is it that makes us beings? We have to change our behaviour. We have to have control over those cheap suitcases. They're not that efficient anymore and they're going to become less and less efficient as the climate changes and as all these other crises occur.

So it seemed to us that if you could create a species of pandrogynes, of hermaphrodites, it would become immediately much more apparent what the issues of behaviours were, because that binary conflict—being male or female and behaving in particular ways to fulfill stereotypes—would immediately be erased. And it would take away a huge negative legacy of misunderstanding and miscommunication. And so we decided to work with genetic engineers and surgeons and chemists and anthropologists to redesign the human species to live up to its potential, rather than betray it. Does that explain it?

MB: Yes, it does. It's a beguiling proposition, the attempt to de-centre the voice and break down those fixed hierarchies ...

GBP-O: Obviously, we can't get to that point yet. We don't have a lot of scientists working on this, so we decided to, at the very least, *represent* those ideas in our determination to explore and propose them by changing ourselves physically ... surrendering our personal bodies to each other and to pandrogeny at the same time. So it was both a loving surrender to each other, and a conceptual surrender, in order to make it clear how serious we are about what we say. We're not just saying it ... we'll do it if we get the chance.

If we could inject ourselves with a genetic agent that would create this next species, we'd do it! We're at a crossroads, an evolutionary crossroads, a very severe crossroads, and at times like these the wildest propositions are often the most useful. At the very least, people have to give up the idea of the human body being sacred. They have to give up the idea of looking the same as everyone else. People should be designing themselves genetically and surgically to maximise their potential of whatever it is that they want to do. Ultimately, then, we agree with Burroughs and Gysin and that we're here to go ... that this is a very primitive form we're in and we're finally becoming knowledgeable enough to take control over the next phase of being. And if we don't do

that, then, at best we'll enter a new Dark Age, and at the worst we'll have wasted our existence.

Obviously, the ultimate pandrogeny is my consciousness and Jaye's consciousness finally blending outside physical bodies, but remaining able to think of ourselves as individuated beings ... whether this means two that are blended into one or one that sees itself as one. Jaye's already exploring that on our behalf, and it may well be that psychedelic moment, that nirvana, where you're truly at one with everything and it's so blissful ...\*

MB: There's a quote from Nietzsche in *RE/search* that struck me. I was thinking of many of your projects as instructional—guides to ways of being, or attempts to pass on information. The quote goes, 'The surest way to corrupt the youth is to instruct them to hold in higher esteem those who think alike rather than those who think differently.' Such a thought seems central to your project over time, the right to choose those voices and figures you identify with.

GBP-O: It's about a *chosen* clan or collective, instead of an *imposed* one. Society imposes class and the family and peer groups and so on. It does that all the time, and it's kind of baffling how many people blindly go through those different modes of being without questioning them! Even with our Temple of Psychic Youth, it was all about 'you have the right to pick your family.'\*\*

It's that classic thing that you recognise people of a similar mind, or mindset. One reason we came up with what we called the Psychic Cross was to have a non-verbal icon, where if you saw someone with that on a jacket, or a tattoo, you would think, 'they're probably relatively close to my way of thinking ... they're part of my invisible tribe.' It doesn't have a linguistic definition—it's beyond words. Burroughs was really interested in hieroglyphics. One of the things he pointed out was that he believed that the hieroglyphic so-called 'languages' work on the nervous system rather than the intellect because they're

\* Lady Jaye died suddenly on Tuesday 9th October 2007 at home in Brooklyn, New York from a previously undiagnosed heart condition which is thought to have been connected with her long-term battle with stomach cancer.

\*\* Thee Temple ov Psychic Youth, (TOPY) was founded in the early 1980s by members of Psychic TV, Coil, Current 93, and a number of other individuals. The ever-evolving network is a loosely federated group of people operating as a unique blend of artistic collective, and practitioners of magic.

pictograms, which are received in our brains very differently to a linear, alphabetic language. And the subtleties and the nuances in this holographic information—of a hieroglyph—is more far-reaching and less specific than an alphabetised language. Whether alphabets go from right to left or left to right or up and down, they're basically teaching the brain to create habitual pathways that are—supposedly—logical ... but actually they erase imagination from language. They erase the individual's subtle interpretations of meaning—and therefore meaning becomes very dogmatic.

MB: Increasingly it appears that ideas and information have to become commodified in order to communicate to the status quo. People don't, or aren't allowed to, exist within the abstract. It encourages a consumerist dependency in which ideas are stripped of their imaginary resonances and served instead as easily consumed product. Is this something you've observed?

GBP-O: Well, one of the things we've observed, since the 1960s is that for all the very effective smear campaigns to dismiss the 1960s, it was probably one of the only times in human history that millions of young people attempted to change consciousness—and attempted to have an altruistic form of life. That's never really happened before or since. In the 1960s the powers that be—particularly the United States, and to a lesser degree in Europe—saw alternative lifestyles, alternative sexualities and youth rebellion very simplistically as The Enemy, and one to be attacked, vilified and destroyed in any way possible. But what's happened, in a very clever and insidious way, is that those same powers have learned to co-opt the rebellion as soon as it pokes its head up, and then commodify it rather than resist it. This created a lot of friction, but it also a very powerful energy. Now they welcome every rebellion and simply absorb it into an increasingly far-reaching, homogenous, consumer culture to the extent that when people are doing something genuinely unique or novel—almost before they've had the thought—it's already being commodified, and any sense of direction and resistance to the status quo is lost. They're seduced by money or temporary celebrity or whatever, so much so that rebellion is almost a thing of the past! It's almost as if that whole step of conceptual rebellion is skipped and Youth itself is commodified, obliterating actual meaning and content. This is a very dangerous thing.

MB: I recently watched footage from *Live at the Oundle School*, a 1980 concert Throbbing Gristle played at the invitation of one of the pupils. It struck me that the audience's riotous response was a reaction to such pre-conditioning ... liberated by a moment never experienced before. The school hall reconfigured! Is there anything that you can compare that to here and now?

GBP-O: We've decided that pandrogeny is our ultimate project—the only thing beyond that is pandrogeny where we both dematerialise. It's a refinement of everything else we've done. We do different projects with Transmissions and TG and Psychic TV and the Temple of Psychic Youth, piercing and tattooing—which we were very involved in globalizing—but beyond all of them is pandrogeny. It's the source, the centre of it all. The bottom line is that the only subject for art, really, is evolution. Everything else is decorative! (laughs) That might explain why so much contemporary art is so flimsy.

After our 1976 *Prostitution* show in London, they cancelled the whole performance art panel and just said, 'There isn't any. You're either theatre or sculpture, but there's no mixed media. You're film or video, you know...'. They basically insisted that this was not going to be allowed, this multiplicity. You were saying earlier how fragmented everything has gotten. There's an infinite fragmenting, like broken holograms: no matter how much you smash it up, you've still got the same picture in the bits. So then there are thousands of these bits. The original creative imaginative epiphany still exists, but what we're actually seeing is lots and lots of tiny bits of it after the initial authentic moment was smashed.

Again, those so-called powers that be who try to guide and exploit Art mercilessly, in a mercenary way ... they're precisely the ones who smashed it in the first place, twenty-odd years ago. They're sweeping up all the little bits and selling them back to themselves! It's not as large and frightening to them now, it's controllably small. There are lots of bits, and you can see them when you go around Chelsea on those nights of multiple gallery openings. It's rare that you look at something and don't know the reference—'That's a watered down version of Ray Johnson' or 'that's a watered down version of Warhol' or whatever ... There's a shameless exploitation of people's art historical ignorance. This whole new generation of pseudo-collectors and neo-gallerists who rely on the ignorance of their clients to sell

them stuff that's just a really cheap and insipid reflection of the original idea. I walk around and think *I can't believe they get away with this. Doesn't anyone remember so-and-so?* It's trickery and presentation and décor. It's given the illusion of meaning by the art media game of choosing certain champions and insisting that they're important! (laughs) I know I'm skeptical, but you know what?—I felt like this in the 1970s, too, and I just don't think it's changed!

MB: I don't think that this is always simply co-option. In, for example, magazines such as the one this interview will appear in, people are very precisely and deliberately looking backwards towards particular originators and the original sources that over time have appeared more virulent and succeeded in their will to present alternatives. Perhaps that's a *recuperation* of you and your history rather than a commodification?

GBP-O: A few years ago our friend Douglas Rushkoff said that we were on the cusp of a very big change in the way we're perceived as an artist ... that we're going to be surprised at the sudden resurgence of interest and a change in the critical value of what we've been doing all these years. We didn't *just* know William Burroughs, but worked and collaborated with the Beatniks, with Timothy Leary and Derek Jarman and all these seminal figures. And there aren't many people who've been very literally involved in all these hot spots. And yet we're still a big secret! The world's best unknown person. (laughs)

MB: This is, then a positive investment in remembering and recuperating what these things are about—objects or thoughts or approaches, rather than a one-dimensional reading of a life ...

GP: It's very true. Even my own daughters say to me, 'I wanna be rich and famous'. So you say to them, 'What for?' and they say, 'I don't care.' 'Well what are you going to *do* to be rich and famous?' 'I don't know. I just want to be rich and famous ...'

One of the negatives of being handed down through the art scene since Warhol, is that being well-known or commercially viable is always the priority; and so actually having something to tell people that could will adjust or improve their life, or at least their perception of their life ... that's rarely involved anymore. *Content is almost an annoyance!*

MB: A friend, Nathaniel Mellors, said recently, 'It's very different, as an artist, to stick a Fall album on the wall, than it is to be The Fall.' On the face of it, this seems like a good stab at a blunt critical summary ... the number of images of Ian Curtis I've seen on gallery walls lately (laughs) ... but it's also too simple. It seems to me that throughout your history you've sought to work *alongside and with* those people you admire, your 'obsessions in culture', rather than, say, *fossilise* them ...

GBP-O: There's an old alchemical tradition where the secret history of culture and information is passed on by the touching of hands. We've been very fortunate that we've had many people touch our hands, you know, and, in a sense, give us their approval, as someone working with something they'd worked over and struggled to make happen. They saw me as someone responsible enough to try and continue that work, regardless of the resistance and rejection of the status quo in the culture. It's not about ever having anything in an art gallery. It's much deeper, it's about truly trying to change everything for the better. And it's a very rarified breed that are prepared to sacrifice everything they have, every day, every minute, towards the redemption of the human species.

If you look back at what people consider the great art of this strange creature that we are, it's devotional, it's transcendental, with religious symbolism and content. The *basic drive* is devotional and transcendental: it's about the highest potential of the species, as opposed to the gross potential of the species. A lot of modern art is gross in and of itself because it's primarily set into the commercial network that's arisen, almost as a substitute stock market.

We really think that artists who are trying to change the world and change consciousness and change perception—the real ones, in a sense—are the authentic ones. It's not an easy path, obviously. There's going to be conflicts and rejection and ridicule and all these other things that happen, but we've never known any other way of approaching it. And that's why life and art *have* to be the same, because creation is the beginning of everything. What's the first book of the Bible?—and I don't mean Genesis! The first thing that happens is The Big Bang. A mind, by using the energy of creation itself, manifests a story, changes everything and creates a new environment for things to happen in: that's Art.