

THE HALIFAX CONFERENCE

A Play in Five Acts

by

Craig Leonard

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Cast of Characters

<u>Carl Andre:</u>	Artist
<u>Elaine Baxter:</u>	Artist
<u>Iain Baxter:</u>	Artist
<u>Joseph Beuys:</u>	Artist
<u>Ronald Bladen:</u>	Artist
<u>Daniel Buren:</u>	Artist
<u>Gene Davis:</u>	Artist
<u>Jan Dibbets:</u>	Artist
<u>Al Held:</u>	Artist
<u>Mario Merz:</u>	Artist
<u>Robert Morris:</u>	Artist
<u>Robert Murray:</u>	Artist
<u>Richard Serra:</u>	Artist
<u>Richard Smith:</u>	Artist
<u>Robert Smithson:</u>	Artist
<u>Michael Snow:</u>	Artist
<u>Lawrence Weiner:</u>	Artist
<u>Seth Siegelaub:</u>	Conference organizer
<u>Translator 1:</u>	Beuys' German translator
<u>Translator 2:</u>	Merz's Italian translator
<u>Translator 3:</u>	Buren's French translator
<u>Students:</u>	A large, unspecified number
<u>Reporter:</u>	From the main local paper

Scene

Simultaneously, a gallery, the boardroom of a college, and a video control booth.

Time

1970 and the present.

*Nota Bene

An ellipsis symbol "[...]" occurs occasionally in the dialogue of the script. This ellipsis represents one of two things at the director's discretion: (1) inaudible dialogue or (2) a cipher in the script that may be filled in consideration of what seems most reasonable.

ACT III

SETTING: Boardroom. Even more chairs added to accommodate the addition of extra panellists.

AT RISE: ANDRE, BEUYS, E BAXTER, I BAXTER, BLADEN, BUREN, DIBBETS, HELD, MERZ, MURRAY, SIEGELAUB, SMITH, SNOW, WEINER, and TRANSLATORS are in attendance. GENE DAVIS and ROBERT MORRIS have newly joined the group. For at least 5 minutes, there is hubbub, individual conversations, and movement in and out of the room. HELD, SIEGELAUB and SMITH are seated with backs to camera. MURRAY's voice suddenly rises above the din in the midst of argument with ANDRE.

MURRAY

...but it's why someone makes their work and the reversal is not true! By making the work one isn't supporting the war in Vietnam, nor is the government hiding behind the work!

ANDRE

But the deep, philosophical foundation of the war in Vietnam was initiated with the idea and the intents of this kind of metaphysical, spiritual freedom.

MURRAY

(sarcastically)

You're sounding like a New Hampshireite or something. It should have more definition.

ANDRE

I would say it's the moving factor of the United States.

MURRAY

That in itself is such a broad-sweeping generalization.

ANDRE

I don't think it's broad-sweeping when it involves more than five hundred thousand men.

(silence)

MURRAY

Well, they can't be dealt with when they're always pinned, when they're not picked out. When they have such slippery generalizations as hatched today.

(gesturing toward SMITH)

You thought Rick was going to be doing all this work, yet when you move to this ground, it always seems to end up as "they" or "them" or some amorphous group.

ANDRE

(raising voice gradually)

The Rockefeller family, the Mellon family, the Ford family. The families of...

MURRAY

(bothered)

Oh my god! Essentially, how many of these families are really involved in art and the war effort?

ANDRE

Have you heard of the Mellon Foundation? The Rockefeller Foundation? The Museum of Modern Art?

(silence)

MURRAY

(sarcastically)

Um, no.

(subdued laughter)

Too easy. Look, it's too easy. Such a clever simplification. Nothing but competing rhetoric.

HELD

(fed up with ANDRE,
thundering)

This same racket over and over! We've all heard this racket over and over again, but it doesn't say anything. What are you trying to say!?

ANDRE

I'm just saying, art is not something which is absolutely studio art, even in the studio, in a relative social democracy.

HELD

(at ANDRE)

How are you going about doing this? You, yourself. What are you doing?

ANDRE

I'm not going about... What I'm trying to do is desperately achieve some kind of concrete analysis of the situation, the concrete situation and try some concrete action that could spring from that. I don't know! I'm confused and looking for answers.

(silence)

(BEUYS speaks
lengthily in German
to TRANSLATOR 1)

TRANSLATOR 1

He's saying that as artists you should be prepared to deal with every single element in every product that you do and be aware of the fact that you can make mistakes. Mistakes will be made by everyone, and the objective of a conference such as this should be that such mistakes are discovered, discover them together. He's working from the strong impression of what is art and to ask students why can't art do something for society. For principle sake, he's saying the artist has something to produce for the society in general, because we can't generalize when we speak of society first...

(BEUYS again in
German to TRANSLATOR 1)

TRANSLATOR 1

Oh, and then for the sake of Marxism, to create the individual man, or men, to simply be in society, part of society. In art you're actually serving this freedom. You

shouldn't be bound to society, just a part of the greater society. Art should serve...

ANDRE

Vietnam?

TRANSLATOR 1

...the idea of freedom.
(looking to BEUYS for approval)

Am I right?

(BEUYS nods in agreement)

ANDRE

That's exactly the political correctness of society that gets you the line of the war in Vietnam.

(silence)

(BEUYS says something
aside to TRANSLATOR 1)

TRANSLATOR 1

(to ANDRE)

He's not following you.

ANDRE

The idea that art reflects primarily individual freedom, the freedom of the individual, um, is based on the idea of the individual as a religiously derived entity.

BEUYS

Yes, okay.

ANDRE

This I do not believe. I believe that man springs from man.

BEUYS

Yes, but we have nothing to do with believings and with belief. We have to research...

(adamantly)

to engage with the truth!

ANDRE

That is incorrect reasoning.

BEUYS

And that is the probability of a conference. To make...