

SLAVE GUITARS

SLAVE GUITARS on cassette

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1981-

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SIDE A : "Studio Recorded" at Art Projects. Melbourne . June 1981.
SIDE B : "Recorded Live" at "New Musical Performance",
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Sept 1981.
(Special thanks to Michael Young)
"Slave Guitars" article reprinted from "ART & TEXT" . Summer 1981.
SLAVE GUITARS ©
SLAVE GUITARS ON CASSETTE 1981 ©

For over 30 years, Peter Tyndall has solidified his place in Australian art. Known for his striking illustrative visuals and recurring conceptual theme, Tyndall is an artist dedicated to exploring the symbolism of his obsessive theory: what one observes when they look at 'art', *someone* looking at *something*. Minimalist in representation yet somehow conveying a macro idea, Tyndall's recurring symbol of a square with lines protruding from the top represents a piece of art – ANY piece of art – and how one came to observe that piece.

Rarely mentioned is his musical output, *Slave Guitars*. Released as a small-run cassette in 1981, *Slave Guitars* is an overlooked gem for jaded ears. Experimental in the purest sense (Tyndall created his own guitar-like instrument for this project) and sonically concurrent with New York contemporaries Glenn Branca, Steve Reich, Rhys Chatham and the dark British post-punk which emerged in the wake of *Throbbing Gristle*; it is an important piece of Australian avant-garde music which commands your attention, 32 years later. Given today's strip-mining approach towards resurrecting obscure musics, it is destined for a larger audience. *Slave Guitars* inspired the formation of *Slave Pianos*, an art collective who have created instruments and conducted live performances since 1998.

Slave Guitars on Cassette was recorded at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery and Art Projects, a long gone, seminal art space located at 566 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. You get the icy stabs of steel strings, the swirling subterranean cacophony of tape loops, the feeling of an industrial field recording and the ambiance of the performance: a cough, a shuffling of feet, the delivery truck driving past.

What exactly was a 'Slave Guitar'?

I was born in 1951 and grew up along with the rise of the guitar to pre-eminent youth instrument, and with it the ascendant Guitar Hero. Exemplified by Hendrix and Clapton. At school, I recall a friend and I advocating to each other on behalf of our local guitar heroes: for him it was Phil Manning (Chain), for me Lobby Lloyd (Purple Hearts, Wild Cherries). This blue biro drawing is from 1967:



In the 70s I enjoyed AC/DC. Particularly Angus, who took the Guitar Hero thing to a joyful meta-level. As well as being a great player of guitar, he was ALSO and simultaneously the personification of every would-be boy's air-guitar fantasy, and apparently his own too. Angus doesn't send himself up, or mock the Guitar Hero thing; rather, when he is on stage he is being doubly great.

By the late 70s when I 'formed' SLAVE GUITARS, formerly Slave Guitars of the Art Cult, the next level of Guitar Heroes were the Heavy (and other) Metal Men. Sonically and technically often of interest to me but it's not my preferred poison. When SLAVE GUITARS performed live the amplification was full on, but more in the mode of Steve Reich and Glenn Branca than any of the Metal variants. There was something of the Metal attitude in the choice of name: SLAVE invokes related power structure terms such as MASTER, and brings to mind further considerations of enslavement and liberation; GUITAR, still the number one Instrument of the Passion.

The diagrammatic explanation of the Slave Guitar shows how the instrument developed as a cross-over from the Art World to the Music World.

Who constructed the guitar-like instrument (left)?

I did.

...and how was it constructed?

The final result looks pretty flash (I reckon), as if by a professional, but it was very much a back yard effort. Timber from the local hardware store, cut and whittled and sanded and glued and nailed and sprayed until it looked right. For the strings, I went to an old piano supplies place in Clifton Hill and bought lengths of various thickness piano wire. From guitar supplies, lengths of fret to cut and set-in, and off the shelf machine-heads. I'd never made one of these before, and there have been no more since. However, before the Slave Guitar, I had made similar Art components for the Puppet Culture Framing System. These were 'frames' for my Art

Thinking more about all this... a few years earlier I was shown through the Daylesford workshop of a local recorder maker with an international reputation, Fred Morgan. A lovely bloke.

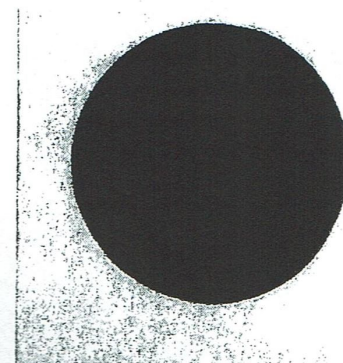
I remember being greatly impressed when shown a bundle of cut branches tied together, leaning in a corner. The right wood in its base form, imported from Iran(?), awaiting the application of human skill. I found that inspiring. Also, I knew about Percy Grainger and his home-made Free Music Machines, the Kangaroo Pouch and so on. Others, too.

Was it amplified?

For mute/non-audible performance display, I made an Amplifier and Speaker Box. The Slave Guitar had a small black painted canvas set into it, with a black gloss circle painted onto that, and four parallel white line painted over the whole. To Amplify this the front panel of the Speaker is a much larger black painted canvas.

By a happy coincidence, 2013 is the centenary of the Russian artist Kasimir

Malevich's Plane in Rotation, also known as the Black Circle.



For audible performance, I used a contact pick-up and whatever amplification I could find. As loud as I could get with whatever was available.

Do you know who owns the instrument?

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, owns most of the SLAVE GUITAR archive.

Did it have a name?

Like 'Lucille' or 'The Mean Machine'? No.

When was the concept applied to piano?

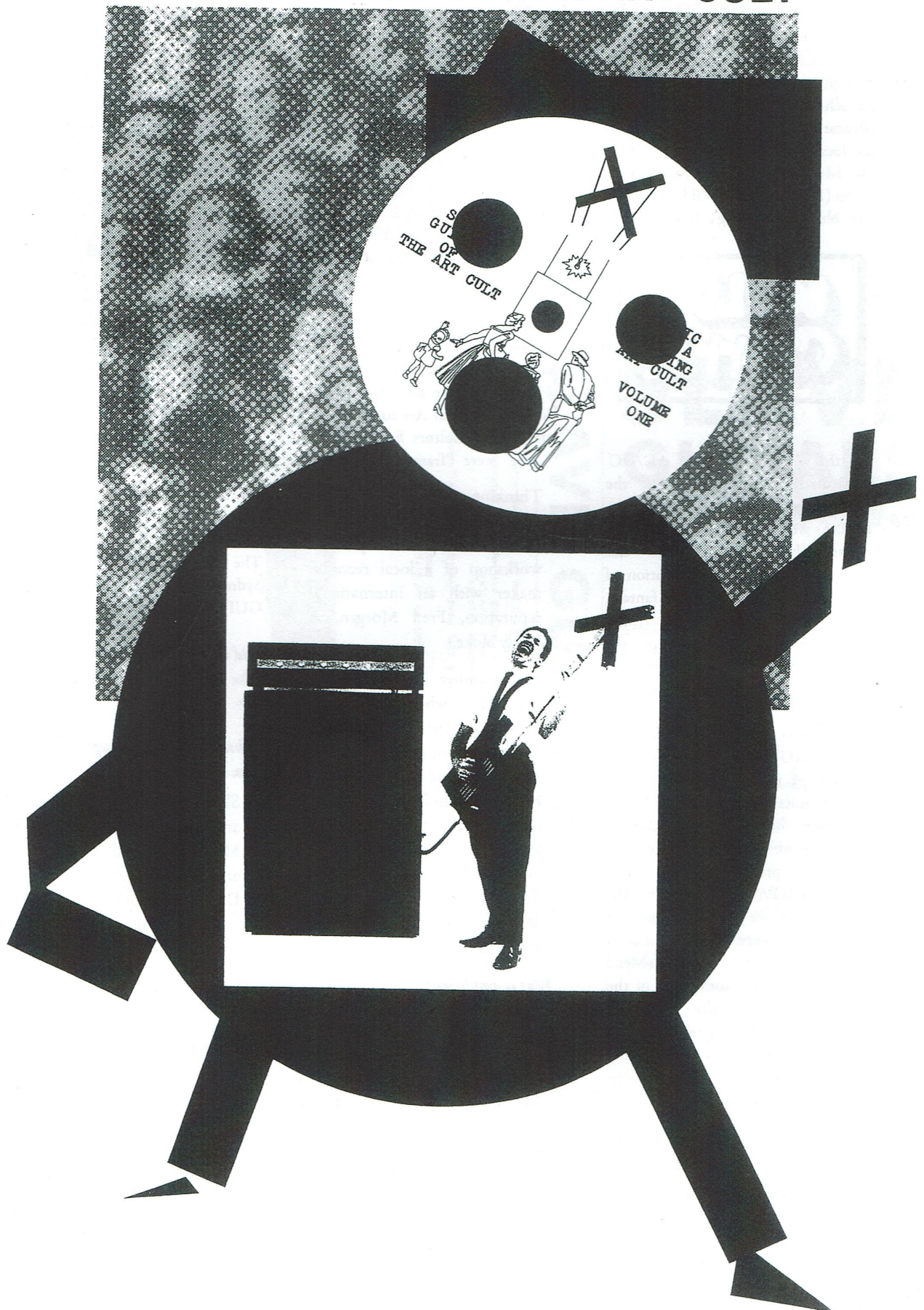
Slave Pianos first performed around 1998, formed by Melbourne-based artists Michael Stevenson and Danius Kesminas. This was entirely their own initiative, nothing to do with me, but certainly taking some inspiration from the Slave Guitars. I've met them since and support their ongoing projection. If you go to my blog

blogos-haha.blogspot.com.au

and click on SLAVE GUITARS in the Tags sidebar you'll see some cross-over between us.

The Slave Pianos website is at:

SLAVE GUITARS OF THE ART CULT



SLAVE GUITARS

formerly

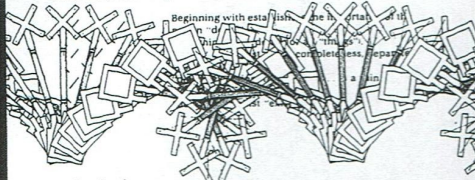
SLAVE GUITARS OF THE ART CULT.

Peter Tyndall

The first SLAVE GUITAR was visualized in mid 1979.

Its characteristic shape and guitar association were seen to be already contained within the particular framing method "PUPPET CULTURE FRAMING SYSTEM".

.....
The development : diagrammatically (1974 - 1979 -)



A particular detail can be particularly described, defined, named and valued : can be made recognizable and identifiable, can be limited, represented, imposed, defended and attacked

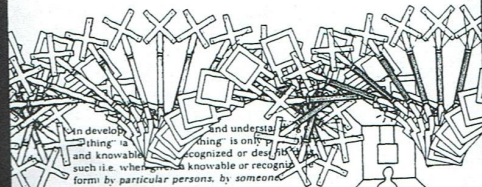
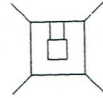


Therefore, so as not to portray or continue the appearance of portraying things (details) as separate (separated) entities, connecting lines (support lines) are added or shown.

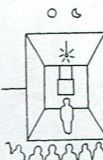
for example, "a painting" : A painting does not float, independent, half-way up a random wall, "it" is physically dependent on the strings which support it against the gravitational force which would bring "it" down.

2.

Equally, "it" is culturally dependent on "its" being put there (where?) and by whom? and why? and ... as well as on "its" remaining there.



In developing "it" is only "it" and knowable, recognized or described, such i.e. where, how, knowable or recognizable form by particular persons, by someone.



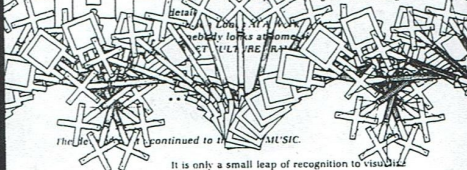
This perceiving of a thing (a detail) by someone (e.g. A Person Looks At A Work Of Art) is an indivisible experience. "The perceiving" cannot be considered outside of "the perceived". Nor can "the one(s) perceiving" be considered outside of the influence or colouring of either the physical light (physical lights) or the metaphorical lights (cultural knowledge and practices : religious beliefs, systems of logic, traditions of social etiquette, systems of governing, notions and hierarchies of worth etc etc) which illuminate "illuminate" "it."

3.



The minimum stating of a (any) particular thing/detail must recognize or seek out and take some account of :
- "self" (as self perceived) in relation to all things.
- "other than self" ("THE THING") as self perceived.
- the light "the light" and "its" filters (physical and metaphorical).
- the reasons for the perceived relationships between details within the contents, contexts and struggles of a any system.

Thus any particular "thing" is minimally considered (e.g. to "be") through the following :



through "it" continued to the MUSIC.

It is only a small leap of recognition to visualize diag 1. becoming diag 2.



diag 1.

becoming



diag 2.

4.

Describing diag. 1. (Puppet Culture Framing System) "a statement (a detail) being made or given, within a particular (physical/cultural) context, as a result of particular influences, and intended (designed) for particular consumption."

Describing diag. 2. (SLAVE GUITAR; formerly SLAVE GUITARS OF THE ART CULT.)

"a guitar as a "music making" system is analogous in certain ways to "another" system : tensions are deliberately and particularly established which, through certain manipulating produce a result able to be described as producing either harmony or discord."



detail: SLAVE GUITARS at the Clifton Hill Community Music Centre, September 1981