

From **Robert Hughes: *The Decline and Fall of the Avant Garde*** (Time Magazine, Dec 18, 1972)

*'Art is in bad shape. Advanced art that is. The diagnosis: condition feeble. The prognosis: poor. The avant-garde has finally run out of steam, whether in Munich or Los Angeles, Paris or New York; the turnover of styles and theories that gave the 1960s their racking ebullience (**Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Op, Pop** and so on) has been followed by a sluggish descent into entropy. There seems to be no escape from the spiral.*

*... "Advanced" art – whether conceptual art, process art, video, body art or any of their proliferating hybrids – avoids the object like the plague. The public has retreated, in turn, from it. This is a worldwide phenomenon, and what now exists is not simply a recession of interest (and talent) but a general weariness – a reluctance to believe in the avant-garde as principle. To be ahead of the game now seems pointless, for the game – under its present rules – is not worth playing.'*

Hughes cites the work of Viennese expressionist **Rudolf Schwarzkogler**, who cut off his own penis, **Hermann Nitsch**, **Arnulf Rainer**, **Charlotte Moorman's** underwater cello performances, **Janis Kounellis's** macaw on a perch, **Mel Bochner's** The Seven Properties of Between 1971-72, **Robert Barry's** locked door ('For the duration of the exhibition, the gallery will be closed') & other conceptual & body art as manifestations of the malaise.

*'At least the psychodramas of body art note a desperate involvement that is missing from the other, and colder, latitudes of conceptualism. If conceptual art represents pedagogy and stale metaphysics at the end of their tether, body art is the last rictus of Expressionism. But faced with the choice between amateur therapy and finicky, arid footnotes to **Duchamp**, the mind recoils. In fact, the term avant-garde has outlived its usefulness. The hard thing to face is not that the emperor has no clothes; it is that beneath the raiment, there is no emperor.'*