

# Bomb Scare Traced to Performance Art

## Canisters Were Filled With Plaster

By J. L. Pimsleur  
Chronicle Staff Writer

A bomb scare that closed the Great Highway for part of the Memorial Day weekend was traced last night to a wild "performance art" show staged Sunday night beneath a South of Market freeway underpass.

The show — produced by Survival Research Laboratories of San Francisco — included an act in which huge garbage bags filled with realistic-looking black powder canisters were scattered among an audience of about 2,500 people who paid \$8 a ticket to watch the late-night performance in a parking lot near Third and Harrison streets.

Survival Research Laboratories is a performance art production company, founded by a group of engineers, welders and artists who stage machine destruction derbies and do special effects for movies, rock concerts and music videos.

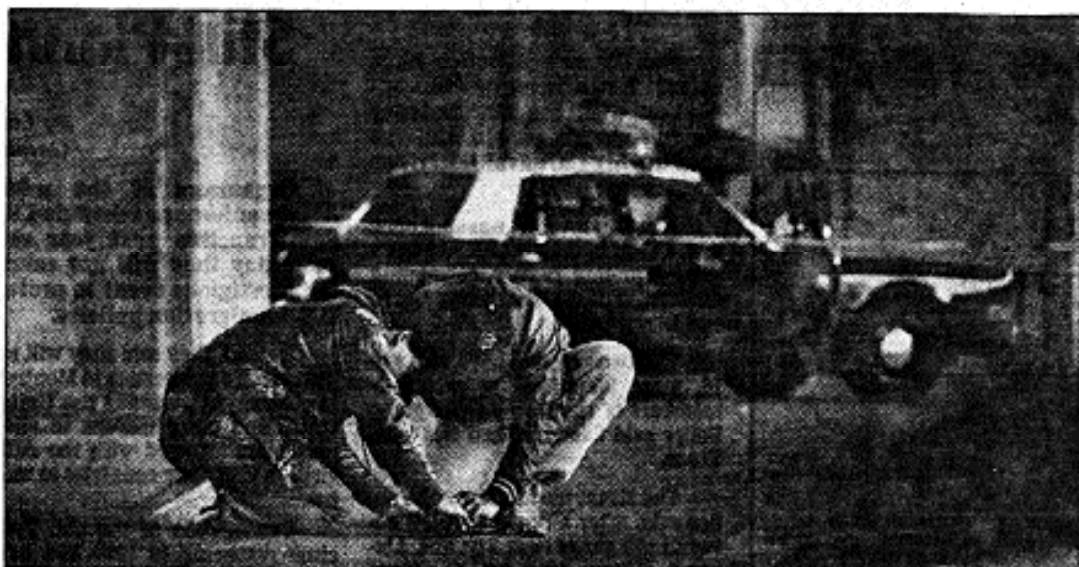
One critic called them "Frankenstein in a shop class."

Authorities initially were baffled by the source of three bomb-like objects found Monday along Ocean Beach in San Francisco and two more devices discovered in the old Battery Spencer area of the Marin Headlands.

The stretch of Ocean Beach and the Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Sloat Boulevard was closed for most of Monday evening while authorities searched on horseback and on foot for more bombs.

One more canister turned up yesterday on Ocean Beach and three others were found near where the show was staged.

"If somebody's playing a joke



BY MICHAEL MALONEY/THE CHRONICLE

Police bomb squad technicians inspected a fake bomb found under Interstate 80 at Third Street



BY MICHAEL MALONEY/THE CHRONICLE

Close up of a fake bomb, identical to the ones found Monday

on us, we don't know how far he'll go," warned U.S. Park Service Police Sergeant Jerry McCarthy.

McCarthy described the devices as the size of large square lantern batteries, about five inches high and three inches wide, olive green with yellow lettering stating: "High Explosive — 1/2 pound of TNT."

Smaller letters warned "Dangerous, high explosive — for front-line demolition only. Not to

be used for general blasting. Do not use underground or in enclosed spaces."

As it turned out, the canisters actually were filled with loose plaster of Paris. "But they looked like the real thing, like Army ordnance canisters," said McCarthy.

While U.S. Park Police puzzled over the source of the devices and the FBI began an investigation, Survival Research Laboratories security sources said last night that the nine canisters found in

San Francisco and Marin were part of a batch of about 100 scheduled to be used in a spectacular gimmick that went awry at the Sunday night show.

"The fake bombs were supposed to have been hoisted in 30-gallon trash bags by a big remote-controlled crane with an electromagnetic plate attached to the bottom of the lift," said one source. "But instead, the bags burst and scattered the canisters in the middle of the parking lot."

When the show was over, a bunch of people scrambled all over themselves to pick up the devices. I saw one guy stuff about a dozen of them under his shirt and then come back for more."

It was not the first time that Survival Research Laboratories, headed by performance artist Mark Pauline, had staged a show that had repercussions.

Last year, SRL produced a show in the parking lot outside New York's Shea Stadium in which the climax featured exploding bombs that threw photocopied \$20 bills that floated down on the crowd like confetti.

Weeks later, people were still trying to cash the bills all over New York.



BY STEVE KINGMAN/THE CHRONICLE

Two San Francisco police officers inspected one of the devices found on Ocean Beach

## Prankster Suspected

# Fake Bombs Planted on Beach

By Dean Congbalay  
Chronicle Staff Writer

Authorities believe a prankster may have planted five bomb-like objects this weekend along Ocean Beach in San Francisco and in the Marin headlands.

The discoveries prompted police to close a 2½-mile stretch of the Great Highway for much of yesterday evening before investigators decided that the devices were not actually bombs but canisters of plaster of Paris.

Three of the inert devices were found yesterday on Ocean Beach, off the Great Highway near Jarvis Street, police said. Two more were discovered yesterday in the headlands.

San Francisco police were trying to figure out last night whether the discoveries were connected to a Friday night explosion along Ocean Beach.

The stretch of Ocean Beach and the Great Highway, between Lincoln Way and Sloat Boulevard for much of yesterday evening, was closed until almost 9 p.m. yesterday as authorities searched on horseback and on foot for more bombs.

"If somebody's playing a joke on us, we don't know how far he'll go," U.S. Park Police Sergeant Jerry McCarthy said.

Nobody was injured during Friday night's bomb explosion.

Yesterday's discoveries of the devices on Ocean Beach were at 8 a.m., 3:55 p.m. and 6:35 p.m., police said. All were inert.

Despite the Memorial Day holiday, the beach area was not crowded. A strong wind apparently discouraged visitors.

The first two devices were found by a security officer for Seawall Construction, which is building a seawall and parking lot in the area, police said.

The first one found yesterday morning was at first believed to be made of dynamite, authorities said. The second device was found on the floor board of a construction crane, authorities said.

Sunset District resident Sal Guange said he was walking his mixed-breed terrier, Amaretto, along the beach when he saw the third bomb on the sand near the surf.

He at first thought the shiny, four-inch-long object was trash that had washed ashore. He kicked it over and saw the word "dynamite" on it, he said.

"And then all the alarms went off in my mind," he said, causing him to call the police.

Authorities have received no bomb threats and have no idea who could have placed the devices along the beaches, McCarthy said.

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Mark Pauline and SRL,

Two years ago in San Jose I was able to orchestrate a procedure with corpses as marionettes in a hospital morgue. I want no strings attached. I own a preserved human head and upper torso which was used for medical study (photo enclosed). Would like to mechanically animate it. Have an idea of what it could look like, though this can be changed. I haven't any experience in the mechanical or robotic fields, nor do I know how to technically accomplish this. Am hoping you will want to undertake such a project. Maybe you'd like to integrate it with something you're doing. My concern is not to make a political nor moral demand, but only to animate the dead. I am not concerned with the power to do so as like an orlock but am interested in the differences within the isolated comparison between the mechanically animated dead and the mechanically animated living. This is done in creating an oasis for the animated so called inanimate. My interests are adaptable within your plans. Would like to do this whenever possible. I would travel to aid in its completion and its destruction.

Randall  
832 Elkins Ave.  
Elkins Park, PA 19117





**SFAI** San Francisco Art Institute  
800 Chestnut Street  
San Francisco, CA 94133-2299  
(415) 771-7020

3 December, 1990

Mark Pauline  
1458 San Bruno Avenue  
San Francisco, California  
94110

Dear Mark:

For a couple of months I have thought about whether to write this letter and, ultimately, I decided that I should, if for no other reason than simply to go on the record.

My specific concern is with S.R.L. posters which always seem to become glued to our building in large quantities around the time of your events. Twice in recent months, and once over a year ago, we had to divert time and effort to get them off the building. The cost now runs about \$400 to \$500 per incident to remove the posters and to repair or repaint the building.

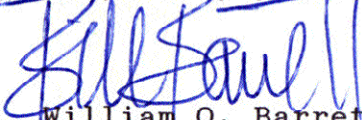
Being a school strapped for money, I can think of much more productive things to do with our \$1,200 to \$1,500. I should add that my concern is not with the content of your message, only with the fact that we pay for your free advertising. To put it another way, I would only like to "shoot the messenger" in this case.

I suspect your answer (as in Grace Cathedral) will be that you didn't authorize these acts and therefore accept no direct responsibility for them. Given some of your methodology, I am not sure I am prepared to automatically accept such a statement. Nevertheless, I will.

However, I would feel a lot better about that answer if I thought you cared to accept any responsibility for ensuring that your posters are installed so as to not damage property and to not necessitate the spending of significant amounts of money for their removal. But, again, my sense of your work ("in certain instances theft is a moral obligation") tells me that that is wishful thinking on my part.

Given all of this, you can imagine my frustration. I suppose the final comment I have on this situation is that each time this happens, an increasingly larger group of people becomes increasingly disinclined to pay any attention to what are otherwise quite important and meaningful messages coming out of S.R.L.

Very truly yours,



William O. Barrett  
President



ACCEL Technologies, Inc.

6825 Flanders Drive

San Diego, California 92121

619/554-1000 Fax 619/554-1019

March 13, 1990

Jonathan S. Levine  
SRL Electronics  
Survival Research Laboratories  
1458-C San Bruno Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94110

Dear Mr. Levine,

I am in receipt of your SRL press kit and tape. After reviewing the materials, I must say I am repulsed by the activities SRL engages in the name of art, and am particularly disgusted by your abuse of animals. My fellow management concurs with this feeling, and in no way do we wish ACCEL Technologies or any of our products to be associated with SRL or your activities.

It is sad to think that the electro-mechanical expertise that your group obviously enjoys is wasted on exercises with no obvious redeeming value. This knowledge could be utilized in solving the world's technological problems, such as energy conservation, third world communications, and environmental pollution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Raymond Schnorr".

Raymond J. Schnorr  
Vice President, Marketing

CLANTON, AL  
ADVERTISER  
S.W. 11,100

JUN 29 1990

Page 1 of 2

# Don't make me support National Liberal Radio

When's the last time you were doused with diesel fuel at an art show?

If you answered "never," that puts you safely into the majority of normal, rational people. It may, however, exclude you from the audience of a new kind of "art" in the Pacific Northwest. Some outfit in Seattle that calls itself

Survival Research Labs is producing and calling art something which a more sensible soul would call "dumb."

It seems that these modern artists are taking heavy equipment -- such as back hoes, bulldozers and so forth -- and modifying them so they can be operated by remote control. They then take these modified monsters and crash them into each other and into other objects. Apparently, they set up "art shows" for people to come watch this, and they try to run the equipment as close to the audience as possible. In the process of the pyrotechnics, the audience is sometimes sprayed with diesel.

It seems that these things are major arts events in the area.

According to a report on National Liberal Radio -- also known as Radio Free Sandinista or (for the more literal-minded) National Public Radio -- the so-called artists are producing a "carnival of misplaced devotions," whatever that means. The report said the shows are "calculated to prevail against order."



**David McElroy**

The shows "play on the fear and distance we feel toward the machinery and technology we use every day." All this from smashing up bulldozers, huh?

There are two problems with all this, and I don't know which one is worse: first is the fact that some people seriously believe this is art, and second is the fact that you and I helped pay for NPR to bring a serious, glowing report about these wackos.

-- You know about NPR stations, don't you? They're the ones who sound as though their announcers are either on quailudes or calling a golf tournament on TV. They keep talking about "listener-supported radio," without telling you that what they really mean is "tax-supported radio."

Don't misunderstand. I like some of the programming on public radio stations, but debating the merits of the programming is missing the point. The key issue is that you and I are paying for those stations, regardless of whether we want them or not. If there truly are enough people who want to pay for a station to play classical music or jazz music or even music from the lower Nile valley, someone in the free market will pro-

Continued on next page...

GOOD WORK,  
PAUL R.!

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vide it. If there aren't enough people who want to pay for it — by listening in great enough numbers to attract advertisers — then there's no justification for a station to exist.

Choice is the key. You and I have a choice about whether to listen to a country music station or a rock station or an oldies station. Same thing goes with TV stations and newspapers. If you don't like this newspaper, you simply don't read it and don't support it. If you don't like public radio, you still pay for it.

It's bad enough that we have to pay for public radio whether we want it or not, but it's even more disgusting to have to pay for people who are so opposed to what you believe in. For instance, back when the war in Nicaragua was at its height, NPR reports on the war were a regular feature, particularly on the evening news program, "All Things Considered." A typical report went something like this (with the sound of a poor Nicaraguan village in the background):

"It's another day in the coastal village of Akee. Today, 12 more people were killed in fierce fighting between the U.S.-backed imperialist pig rebels and the peace-loving agrarian reformer Sandinistas. The warmongers in the Reagan administration have brought such fear to this village that one can scarcely go anywhere without seeing atrocities committed by rebel forces. The government of Daniel Ortega has confirmed that this is true. And we know they don't lie."

Pathetic.

The people who produce these programs have political agendas that they pursue with ruthless aggressiveness. Opposing views are seldom, if ever, permitted. But if the news reports are bad, they essays are worse.

Just a couple of weeks ago, one of their regular liberals commented on the alleged racism of the U.S. government is declaring a day National Watermelon Day or some such. She said that the day coincided with something called "Juneteenth Day," which was supposed to be the day that some slaves in Texas found out that they had been freed. She said it was a big deal among blacks, but I'd never heard of it. To someone with a predetermined political agenda and a paranoid mind, I guess it may look like a conspiracy here to be racist. To the rest of us, it's straining at gnats.

I don't want to have to pay for people like these. But that's what happens when we allow government to use tax money for whatever it pleases. It's time to take control of our money back.

Until we do that, you and I will keep paying for someone to do serious reports about glorified demolition derbies that someone has decided to call art.

David McElroy is general manager of The Clanton Advertiser.

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TO: Mr. MARK PAULINE, Director of Survival Research Laboratories.  
FROM: A CONCERNED CHRIST FOLLOWER  
RE: YOUR SOUL, or AT LEAST YOUR SENSE OF ETHICS

Jesus teaches us to forgive and not cast stones, but your so-called pranks have hurt good people in this country. I feel I must speak to you in a letter to explain, because I cannot control my anger and outrage at your attitude. I first wanted to write:

You are an evildoer. God shall punish you for the evil you have committed. Your sins may be forgiven by lenient modern so-called christians, but your blasphemy is remembered by the Lord. Your deeds mark you as damned.

But that is Old-Testament harangue. I think you might respond better to reason.

I have friends in the art community, and the joke around town is that you spread the tear gas at our peaceful gathering at Halloween, and that you spray painted the "Kill the Christian" messages on the sidewalk, and that you are one of the people talking of burning our holy Book, the Bible. Well, maybe that's art, and maybe people who are so hurt inside that they must lash out at others will enjoy such sophomoric stunts. I have heard that you are a lot more creative than these pitiful, dull, pointless stabs, but you're a long way from proving it. But even these things did not prompt me to write; the following did:

I heard from a friend at the Fire Department that you are suspected of firing your supersonic rocket engine on October 17, just after 5 p.m. Ok, it could be cute, and boys like rockets. But the 911 lines for the Mission were tied up for more than half an hour with more than 150 calls from frightened people, including older people who *couldn't* help themselves out of their homes, and children who did not know *how to* reach their parents. So the 911 lines were tied up, and what *if* someone had had a heart attack and could not get through? Would that not make you at least an accessory to manslaughter? Does that weigh on your conscience at all? Who deserves to die for your amusement?

I am so angry right now, that I am glad you are not within reach.

In the past I've seen and heard you do and say some stupid, risky things. But when you cross the line to stupid and homicidal, Mark, I am filled with horror at what you've become.

I know I can't change you, and Christ's ideas and love might not change you, but I can hope that YOU decide to change before you do even worse things to human beings.

You're not going to find out who I am. I'll just watch, go on with my life, and contact you from time to time with what I hope are reasonable responses to your actions.

Please think about it.

FAX TO SRL: 10/90



# Animal-mutilation show dropped from cable TV

By CHRISTIA GIBBONS  
The Arizona Republic

A public-access TV show depicting animal mutilation no longer will be shown on Valley cable systems because, the program's producer said, a recent outcry against it is not worth jeopardizing her other programming.

"I really don't need to be dropped from cable over this one program," Kathy Riggs, production coordinator for Phoenix-based AA Modern Media, said on Feb. 18.

"I'm not mutilating animals," Riggs, who produces a series of alternative-music programs called *Bohemia Afterdark*, which is on public-access cable television in 14 cities, said the one episode was not of high quality and "certainly not one of our best shows."

The show came into question during a series of meetings of the Scottsdale Cable Commission, whose members are in the midst of assessing the responsibilities that United Cable of Scottsdale has to public-access television.

Several of the commissioners have asked that the city's legal department look into how this type of program can be regulated in light of the First Amendment rights of free speech.

In response to complaints from members of the Animal Protection Institute of America, Riggs pointed out that no live animal was mutilated during the show. Locally, the animal sequence has been shown on cable in Glendale and Scottsdale.

A scene in which it appears that a dog is being stabbed and ripped apart by a machine, is really "performance art" that uses a "sheep carcass that had no guts to it," Riggs said. "Something like you see on a meat hook, real generic."

She said that a group of "performance artists" in San Francisco calling themselves Survival Research Laboratories did the simulated mutilation.

"They are inventors, and they invent these machines, and they have about 20," Riggs said. "The machines are menacing-looking, but some don't do much."

"They make the machines pretty much to please themselves for art and video."

The animal mutilation is one 10-minute segment that is part of one 30-minute program in a series of eight episodes, she said.

Riggs said her group promotes concerts and then videotapes them and uses bits from those concerts in *Bohemia Afterdark*. The program also uses music-video clips from "prominent" record companies, as well as cartoon videos.

In addition to Scottsdale, Glendale and Phoenix, the series has been or is being shown on public-access television in Albany, N.Y.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Anchorage, Alaska; Capital Heights, Md.; Detroit; El Segundo, Calif.; Memphis; Milwaukee; San Diego; San Francisco; and Tucson.

The series first appeared in Phoenix two years ago.

## OPTON MAGAZINE JAN/FEB ISSUE

### REVIEWS

**BOHEMIA AFTERDARK** This cable access show, based in Phoenix, has widened its material a lot. The four shows they sent were well put together and fun to watch. There was a four-part serialized special on The Damned, as well as videos by Black Flag ("Drinking and Driving"), and the Minutemen ("Ain't Talking About Love"). There was a live performance by Fishbone (courtesy ATV) and quite a few live performances by lesser known bands as well. Their Dada-vision segments range from the banal to

*continued on pg 14*

### A U D I O - V I D E O

*continued from pg 9*

the brilliant, the latter being a homemade biker zombie movie that was just marvelous. B.A.D. is now being seen in 12 cities. (Modern Media, c/o Kathy Riggs, 2929 E. Thomas Rd., Suite 208, Phoenix, AZ 85016)

# STOP POLICE BRUTALITY

# Animal art from animal artists

I am 15 years old and an animal lover. The article on Aug. 15, "Art from the underground" made me sick!

How can any decent human being do such terrible things? Killing dogs and dragging them on a bed of nails, with a large fan blowing the fumes at the audience: Any person that pays to go see such trash they call "art" must be as mad as Mark Pauline, Eric Werner and Matt Heckert, the so-called artists.

I personally don't care to read such sick journalism and I'm sure I'm not alone. Next time use your time more wisely and print something more worthwhile.

— Kelly Randall  
San Jose

□

Oh my. What have we here? Yes,

it's "Art from the underground", by Barbara McIntosh; some truly rousing breakfast reading. I must admit to choking briefly on my cheese Danish while perusing this little gem.

Oh, to ponder the artistic significance of shredded pigeons and mechanized cat cadavers, while slugging down a little coffee and o.j. But far be it from me, a bourgeois Rodin fan, to pass judgment on sculpture from the subculture.

Anyway, they rated a grant from the government, so what the heck, right? Wrong. Sorry, even the visual approach failed to impress me. The putrified puppy on page 2C was wasted on me.

But, let me for a moment disregard the obvious objections that such "art" is perhaps aesthetically offensive, that its content is possi-

bly upsetting to children, animal lovers and the weak of stomach. Doubtless, the Mercury News has been deluged with letters to these effects.

Rather, I am dismayed that the Mercury News has tried to pass this article off as investigative journalism. Barbara McIntosh's sarcastic, cynically amused narrative is less than subtle, and provides a thin veil for such a sensational piece of trash. This sorry social commentary would be worthy of the National Enquirer.

Well, enough. I'm just curious: Did it never occur to the editor that beside being in questionable taste, this topic might be a vaguely unsuitable accompaniment to one's morning meal?

— Suzanne Hollis  
Saratoga

## FOUL ART

Can anyone in the Los Angeles art community tell me, or explain to anybody, why the 4th Street Bridge was sprayed with caustic gas in order to keep people from viewing Survival Research Laboratories' kinetic-cum-junk performance on Aug. 11?

The performance was staged within view from a public bridge. Anyone who chose to be on that bridge had the right to view anything seen from that vantage. For any "art" group to mark off public space like some dog or cat spraying its territory seems both ludicrous, short sighted, and perhaps, even if SRL doesn't seem concerned, illegal.

CRAIG SOUTH  
art director, Nervous Systems  
Redondo Beach

Joy Silverman of L.A.C.E. (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), which hosted the SRL performance art team, said SRL did in fact spray a foul-smelling chemical on the bridge to discourage people from standing where they might be hurt by projectiles. It also may have been designed to encourage viewers to cough up the \$8 general admission fee.

## LETTERS

### Art vs. Reality in S.F.

EDITOR — Re: "Robot Art Knocks 'em Dead in L.A.": Kenneth Baker expresses a wish to be enlightened as to the meaning behind "the sound of the crowd", i.e., why is the public so fascinated with violence, mechanical monsters, etc.?

My advice — come visit my neighborhood (Haight-Fillmore district, spesh Haight at Webster streets) some Friday/Saturday night. We'll give him some real lively performance art, guaranteed to leave a lasting impression.

Reality's right around the corner.

— KIMBERLY DAVIS  
San Francisco