

THREE DAYS OF LIVE ART
22 Lombard Street, Belfast:
17-19 November, 1983

There is nothing however that is intrinsically remiss in envisaging an alternative through ritual and nowhere was this more clearly articulated than in the work by Nick Stewart who deliberately rejects modern positivism and proposes ritual.

Nick Stewart's performance was structured by repeated sequences and involved at one end of the room a slide projector, and at the other end the audience, and in between, Stewart himself with two torchlights giving a green and a red light, a spiral shape on the floor, a screen of sorts, and on the audience side of the screen a construction of concrete blocks. Sound determined the sequences and consisted of Eastern sounding chimes which were heard at intervals. The performance opened and closed with colour slides projected onto the screen, a mock Gothic rose window at the beginning and a spiral of light or fire at the end. Between were black and white slides which changed at 30-second intervals and which depicted in a rather abstract way urban dereliction. Invariably the slide image was passage to a light source suggesting an ultimate awakening and forming a rondo which was established by the rose window.

Stewart's slides could be read in these literal terms, for example the use of fallen-in pots, windows and doorways to suggest passage and ending with the doorway sealed with concrete blocks leading directly to the projection forwards into real space with actual concrete blocks in front of the screen which Stewart then crawled through, ending with the salutary lighting of a candle.

The chimes, which sounded for a few minutes then stopped for a few minutes, initiated the action of moving back and forth at varying speed across the back of the screen and in front of the light projection. The audience therefore saw his shadow projected on top of the images. When the chimes stopped, Stewart stopped, and at that point he returned to his centre which was the spiral on the floor and, by directing his torchlights onto its reflective surface, he deflected the shape to the screen, creating a red and a green spiral across the photographic image.



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A specific attitude to art can be detected in a group of young people who share a profound interest in light as energy, as instrument and as experience. Nick Stewart (1952 -) does both performance art and drawing. The first are short and action based. He provides patterns of light, rhythm of sounds and a number of target images, not as sensual equivalents for the narration, but as stimulus information both for the public and for himself. He defines the pattern of activity as a constituent of the mental act which goes to make up particular perceptions: e.g. of repetition, emergence, order, change.

The photograph accompanying this text shows the final target image from the performance given at the Crescent Resource Centre (1982). He crawled backwards through the screen, previously broken by a suspended rotating torch, fused the already cut pair of carnations with candle wax and placed these items on a diagonal leading towards the exit. This sequence of acts reveals a common property in each: the relationship to light; and it provides a statement about the distance between reality and art not dissimilar to that of Giacometti. It can also be interpreted in terms of our divided society and the will of centrifugal forces to bond these parts together.