

# Strategies for Survival (1986)

09: A Twentieth Century Plague: "B" Artists, Oraf (Vancouver)

**Strategies for Survival (1986)** is an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness in 2023, funded by the BC History Digitization Program at the University of British Columbia.

**Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists** was organized by the Vancouver Artists' League, as a component part of *Vancouver: The Place, Vancouver: The People*, a City of Vancouver centennial project for 1986.

Find the rest of the project linked at [unitpitt.ca](http://unitpitt.ca)



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edited transcript

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## EXCERPT

[From the performance, A Twentieth Century Plague, “B” Artists, the sounds of footsteps, and sudden applause, then quiet.]



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00:00:00

**Oraf, Vancouver:**

[The sounds of footsteps, and sudden applause, then quiet.]

[Tone.]



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# INTRODUCTION (2023)

*Strategies for Survival (1986)*, is an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness, re-presenting the partial proceedings of *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, June 9, 10, and 11, 1986.



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00:00:21

**Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:**

Welcome to *Strategies for Survival (1986)*, an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness, re-presenting the partial proceedings of *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, June 9, 10, and 11, 1986.

[Tone.]



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## DOCUMENTS AND ACCESS

For expanded access, this document presents textural and lightly edited transcripts of the presentation.

On the right is the timestamped textural transcript, with all the *ums*, *ahs*, pauses, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the spoken word, meant to be read with the audio, linked [here](#).

This column on the left provides the lightly edited, easy-to-read transcript. This can be read with or without the audio, and subject headings from the original conference papers, or added for this project, are linked in the [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#) above; matching the timestamps at right.



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00:00:49

### Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

If you've already listened to the 2023 introduction (track 00, linked [here](#)), you may wish to skip ahead in this text [to [00:02:00](#)] and then skip ahead in the audio to match the timestamp.

[All the timestamps are linked in the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS](#) above.]

If you haven't listened to the introduction, or any of the other recordings, you'll want to know that this is a multi-part project, presenting archival audio recordings alongside textural and lightly edited transcripts, for expanded access.

On the left of each transcript document is a lightly edited, easy-to-read transcript that, in some cases, directly excerpts the original conference papers; this can be read with or without the audio.

(By the way, if you're listening to the audio recording, and wondering, "where are the transcripts?" you can find links to those documents in the audio description!)

This column on the right presents the textural



edited transcript



textural transcript

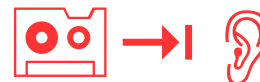


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transcript, with all the *ums*, *ahs*, pauses, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the spoken word, to match the archival audio as close as possible—it may be difficult to read this side of the page without the relevant audio recording, [linked [here](#)].

[Tone.]



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## DAY 2, PERFORMANCE

On the second day, and following the second speaker, Oraf, a Vancouver artist, presented a performance, *A Twentieth Century Plague: "B" Artists*. The cassette tapes found in the UNIT/PITT archives record the performance audio, but as he says, *you must be there to get the message*.

Oraf's biography and a description of his performance are inserted from the original conference papers, before the transcription of the audio recording.

2023 / 1986

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00:02:00

On the second day, and following the second speaker, Oraf, a Vancouver artist, presented a performance, *A Twentieth Century Plague: "B" Artists*. The cassette tapes found in the UNIT/PITT archives record the performance audio, but as he says, *you must be there to get the message*.

After the tone, I'll read Oraf's biography from the original conference papers, and a description of his performance will be read by Jinhan Ko, an artist and member of Instant Coffee, living in Seoul. The archival audio will follow these supplementary readings.

[Tone.]

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textural transcript

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## BIOGRAPHY (1986)

### ORAF Vancouver

Oraf was born in Quebec City in 1948. With a smattering of bad educational experiences from the public schools and universities this artist has been thrashing about in the city of Vancouver since 1970. Except for extended “expeditions” to Japan, Berlin, Italy and South America, Vancouver has remained his home base. Performance art is the preferred medium of expression incorporating many of the diverse forms of expression that he uses. You know the usual stuff! Silkscreening, graphics, photography, writing, films, videos and sculpture. His attempt with performance art is to put the experience back in art.

“You must be there to get the message.”

The vicarious thrill of media and its gross distortions and manipulations and power is the screening device that must be re-aligned.

This artist is so serious that he does not want all the qualifications for his “seriousness” listed. Like his performance art he only wants to be “experienced”, and not read about. In his

00:02:44

### **Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:**

Oraf was born in Quebec City in 1948. With a smattering of bad educational experiences from the public schools and universities this artist has been thrashing about in the city of Vancouver since 1970. Except for extended “expeditions” to Japan, Berlin, Italy and South America, Vancouver has remained his home base. Performance art is the preferred medium of expression incorporating many of the diverse forms of expression that he uses. You know the usual stuff! Silkscreening, graphics, photography, writing, films, videos and sculpture. His attempt with performance art is to put the experience back in art. “You must be there to get the message.” The vicarious thrill of media and its gross distortions and manipulations and power is the screening device that must be re-aligned.

This artist is so serious that he does not want all the qualifications for his “seriousness” listed. Like his performance art he only wants to be “experienced”, and not read about. In his own



own ubiquitous manner he is saying “RED IS DEAD”. He hopes that someday everyone will get it.



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ubiquitous manner he is saying “red is dead”. He hopes that someday everyone will get it.

[Tone.]



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# INSERT

A Twentieth Century Plague: "B" Artists—

“

A true version of the history of the twentieth century would document the rise to power of a whole new class of "statespersons" and they would be artists. World War One will be seen as the slaughter of the classes that have provided humanity with its leaders for the last couple of milleniums. The problem with the artists that have become "great politicians" is that they thus far have been "B" artists.

The cultural revolution, the nazifications of art, the mystique of Saint Evita, the gulags for artists, and the president as cowboy. The rise of great symbols: swastikas, hammer and sickle, salutes; Vee finger and straight armed, and the great icons of mass appeal like Fuehers,

00:04:13

**Jinhan Ko (Seoul):**

A Twentieth Century Plague: "B" Artists—

“

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The cultural revolution, the nazifications of art, the mystique of Saint Evita, the gulags for artists, and the president as cowboy. The rise of great symbols: swastikas, hammer and sickle, salutes; Vee finger and straight armed, and the great icons of mass appeal like Fuehers, Helmsman, and Camelot. These are the products of "B" artists.



Helmsman, and Camelot. These are the products of “B” artists.



What the world is wanting and needs is a “great” artist. The danger is not recognizing the bad, or ignoring the good.



”



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edited transcript



What the world is wanting and needs is a "great" artist. The danger is not recognizing the bad, or ignoring the good.



”



[Tone.]

textural transcript

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## [PERFORMANCE]

[Silence, then sound of footsteps and creaking floorboards; this continues for several minutes.]

[Giggles from the audience.]

**Unidentified speaker [probably Oraf]:**

Uh oh.

[Giggles from crowd]

**Oraf:**

[Off-mic, but loudly:

“Red is dead.

Red is dead.

Red is dead.”

]

**Oraf:**

Red is dead. I don't stand behind what I believe in, I stand in front of it.

[Scuffling sounds.]

00:05:33

[Silence, then sound of footsteps and creaking floorboards; this continues for several minutes.]

[Giggles from the audience.]

**Unidentified speaker [probably Oraf]:**

Uh oh.

[Giggles from crowd]

**Oraf:**

[Off-mic, but loudly:

“Red is dead.

Red is dead.

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]

**Oraf:**

Red is dead. I don't stand behind what I believe in, I stand in front of it.

[Scuffling sounds.]

edited transcript

textural transcript

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[Audience applauds.

Faint whistling.



Noise of crowd continues.]



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edited transcript



[Audience applauds.

Faint whistling.



Noise of crowd continues.]



textural transcript



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Oraf:**

That's it. By the way. No. Is it? Not obvious? No?

[From the audience: “—yes, yes—”]

**Marion Barling, conference coordinator:**

Jerzy Onuch, there's a telephone call waiting for you from Montreal.

Jerzy Onuch, are you here?

[From the audience: “Is that going to come down?”]

Just a sec.

Is Jerzy here? I think he's not here, for whoever is taking that phone call.

[Marion pauses.]

Okay. What was your question?

[From the audience: “People want to know if that's going to stay up for the next little bit...”]

I don't have an answer to that. I mean, I assumed

00:09:21

**Oraf:**

That's it. By the way. No. Is it? Not obvious? No?

[From the audience: “—yes, yes—”]

**Marion Barling, conference coordinator:**

Jerzy Onuch, there's a telephone call waiting for you from Montreal.

Jerzy Onuch, are you here?

[From the audience: “Is that going to come down?”]

Just a sec...

Is Jerzy here? I think he's not here...  
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[Marion pauses.]

Okay. What was your question?

[From the audience: “People want to know if that's going to stay up for the next little bit...”]

I don't have an answer to that. I mean, I assumed

edited transcript

textural transcript

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it would, but I'm not sure.

What's your intention, Oraf?



The question was, is your artwork going to stay up for the next speaker, behind the next speaker?



**Oraf:**

Oh, it should.



**Marion Barling:**



Except that he does need to project slides onto the screen. That solves the problem, eh? Sorry.



**Oraf:**

That's all right.



[Oraf pauses.]



Does everyone get this? Does everyone get it?



[From the audience: "—no, no!" and raucous laughter.]



**Oraf:**

Einstein had a theory, right, but he used different kinds of components, right. Red is dead. You remember what was behind this thing? I mean,



edited transcript



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What's your intention, Oraf?



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textural transcript

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**Oraf:**

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[Oraf pauses.]



Does everyone get this? Does everyone get it?



[From the audience: "—no, no!" and raucous laughter.]



**Oraf:**

Einstein had a theory, right, but he used different kinds of components, right. Red is dead. You remember what was behind this thing? I mean,



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it's all got to do with power and energy, is that not correct? We've been living in the fallout of this event for the last two thousand years, and they've been juggling the components in it since that time. I mean it's the same stuff. I mean, it should be perfectly obvious...

[Screams of laughter from the audience. A loud noise, as something seems to fall.]

**Marion Barling:**

So, I guess it wasn't all it there was Oraf, eh?

**Oraf:**

Oh well.

**Marion Barling:**

While Oraf's doing that, I will get on my usual announcements.

[More laughter, and applause.]

**Marion Barling:**

The performance is finished, Oraf.

**Oraf:**

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[More laughter, and applause.]

**Marion Barling:**

The performance is finished, Oraf.

**Oraf:**

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textural transcript

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Yes. You can see there's too many words, you want to look at more slides?

...an original talk?

### Marion Barling:

I'd like to mention another piece of artwork. Mandad has kindly loaned us the silicone figures that are on the right, so I'd like to give credit to Mandad, for that, and many of you may not know him. He is the person who has been providing us with coffee behind the counter.

I'd like to mention again all the thousands of volunteers that have been putting in very long hours during the conference, and before the conference, so maybe you'd like to give them a little bit of support, too.

Christine Vincent, if you're still looking for your billet because you have not found him yet, he will be at the billeting table right now. Christine Vincent?

Jean [?], wishes me to announce some information about the upcoming 1986 World Conference on the Arts that will be held at UBC. The conference cost is \$225 for the four-day

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Jean— Jean [?], wishes me to announce some information about the upcoming 1986 World Conference on the Arts that will be held at UBC. The conference cost is two-

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textural transcript

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conference. There will be a daily rate available, space permitting. Some volunteers will be needed and they will receive some special opportunities to attend the conference sessions. I think that means not paying to get in. For more information call 222-5232. There are also pamphlets on the conference in the information desk on the right. So pick up a brochure.

I'd also like to draw your attention to somebody who has brought in some buttons for sale. They are also on the right in the display area right there, so go over and have a look at them.

The copies of the speeches are not back yet. We organized that over lunch instead of the break time because it seemed like people were still signing up. We're doing a run now, but whether we will get them back this afternoon or tomorrow morning, I'm not quite sure. Look for them this afternoon late or tomorrow morning.

Are there any other questions people have?

Polite ones.

[Brief claps from the audience.]

hundred and twenty-five dollars for four-day conference. There will be a daily rate available, space permitting. Some volunteers will be needed and they will receive some special opportunities to attend the conference sessions. I think that means not paying to get in. For more information call 2-2-2-5-3- 5-2-3-2. There are also pamphlets on the conference in the information desk on the right. So pick up a brochure.

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[Tone.]



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↑ ↓ ... edited transcript

↑ ↓ ... textural transcript

## CLOSING REMARKS (2023)

Thanks for reading. This was just one part of a multi-part project documenting *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League in 1986—if you're following along, all of the transcripts and audio recordings are linked directly [here](#), or can be found at [unitpitt.ca](http://unitpitt.ca)

You may have [noticed that](#), like most archives projects, this one is in progress. If you have any recollections or information that you'd like to share about the 1986 conference, or new thoughts in 2023, send us a message at [info@unitpitt.ca](mailto:info@unitpitt.ca)



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00:14:45

### Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

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[Tone.]



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