

# An ongoing Diary

## By Pedro Meyer

### Day 9

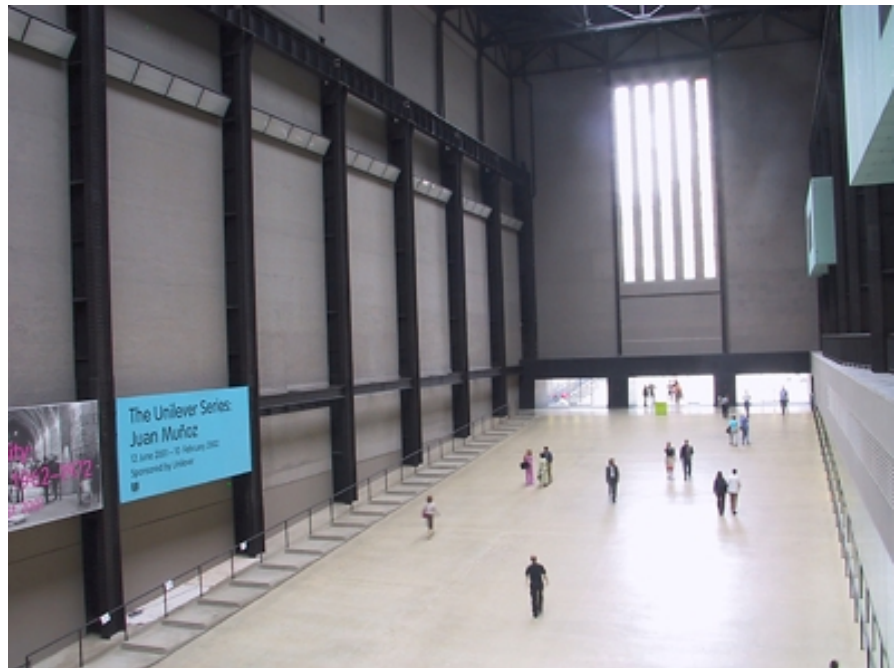


©Pedro Meyer 2001

I find out that the glass screens on the subway are there to prevent suicides. Too many people are jumping in front of trains. The thing is that these screens can only be installed at stations where the rails run in straight lines. So stations that have a curve, and probably those that are in poorer neighborhoods are still open for business.

Today I went to the Tate Modern here in London. A very interesting remodeling project of an old power station.

Many things to comment. The entrance to the main hallway is impressive indeed. You are reminded right away not to get too carried away with your own sense of humanity, after all we are nothing but small irrelevant beings within this huge structure of the early machine age. Hmm, nothing in the computer age has ever made me feel so insignificant as this structure. The internet gives me the sense of togetherness with thousands, while here I felt alienated even from my own self.



©Pedro Meyer 2001



©Pedro Meyer 2001

I had just entered the building from the side entrance as you come in from the gardens in front of the building, I was taking some pictures of children that are brought to the Tate on a school outing. A teacher came running at me waving her hands telling me angrily it was strictly forbidden to photograph children. WOW! I thought, have they lost all their senses? What does taking a photograph of children in a school outing in a public place have to do with any form of security? I was left wondering what the connection might be between the suicide screens and this false sense of security for the children and the entrance to this massive architectural obliteration of my meager sense of humanity.

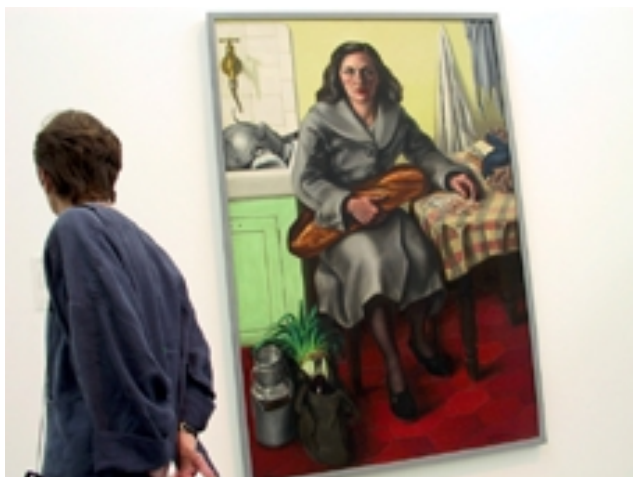
I am interested in Keith Arnatt's, Self Burial, which I find intriguing in that it does in the late sixties what would be now accomplished so easily with the computer and the internet, The wall label reads as follows:

### Keith Arnatt 1930 ( born and works in Britain)

This sequence of photographs was originally transmitted as an audio interruption to the daily schedule of a television station in Germany. They were shown one a day from 11 to the 18 October 1969, appearing for two seconds without introduction or commentary. As contemporary art became increasingly transient and subject to natural forces, Arnatt commented, "It seemed a logical corollary that the artist should also disappear".



I also find the work of Andre Fougeron interesting, the wall label tells me: In 1947, when the Communists were briefly part of a coalition government in France, Fougeron was commissioned to document the lives of the coal miners in the north. He lived with them for eighteen months, producing images that were both realistic and symbolic.



The portrait of the wife of the artist tells us about the elements that surround his daily life. The wall label made a point to tell the viewer that the artist was very poor.

There were of course other interesting pieces throughout the museum, however it was only in a very few rooms that there were no guards to stop one from taking photographs. Here my interests coincided with the absence of guards. At the Getty Museum in Santa Monica, you can take as many pictures as you want, provided you do not use flash or a tripod, which is comprehensible, but here at the Tate, I guess the architecture inspires quite a bit of repression. Oh well!



One of the best installation pieces  
One of the best installation pieces in the building I found of all places in the toilet. I could not resist taking a picture of it (I did not find a sign forbidding me from doing this). Without a doubt this must be one of the most sophisticated toilets I have visited.

This correlation between first and third world realities (toilets), brings me to yet another topic about the overall strategy of the museum. I found that the Tate Modern, has a very challenging and interesting idea of mixing art of various periods and diverse disciplines. But

what is deeply troubling is their total eurocentrist view with a bit of New York sprinkled in here and there. The viewer comes away with this crass feeling that contemporary art in general has been the sole prerogative of mainly white European minds.



I found such a collection by the Tate Modern, in spite of the great works at hand, very disappointing.  
Any London kiosk with the newspapers of the day, has more diversity than this recently renovated mausoleum for art. As a personal experience the Tate Modern was interesting but felt short of being inspiring for me.

As we left the Museum to return home, and walked through the streets on the way to the subway, I was left with the question mark of what art is really all about in such a context. I suspect it has much to do with "cultural power in the art world". This is in an age when the likes of colonial missions towards exotic lands in order to fill the coffers of institutions such as the British Museum, (which after all is essentially a monument to British Imperialism) are no longer sustainable.

