

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

That Eye-Popping 'Turin Machine'

From the machine's artist-creator and model, Caroline Rye of Edinburgh

I am writing to you concerning the article titled 'A Shroud peep-show for Bristol' [*Newsletter* no. 45, June/July 1997]. This concerned a piece of my work called The Turin Machine and contained a number of inaccuracies.

The Turin Machine is a performance/photography installation. It is designed to tour to galleries and performance spaces. It is not, nor has it ever been, a special live demonstration of how the Shroud may have been created and it has never been promoted as such. The Turin Machine is not an historical reconstruction or a scientific experiment but a piece of art. For this reason it is immaterial whether the image seen in the camera or the techniques surrounding the fixing of that image as a photograph conform to those displayed by the real Turin Shroud.

It is possible that Ian Wilson's misunderstanding about the aims of this work have arisen due to its title. The Turin Machine deliberately makes reference to the Shroud of Turin in order to provoke reflection upon the status of representations within our culture. The image and the object of the Shroud can tell us much about the way we use images to provide proof and confirm our beliefs. By presenting a visitor to The Turin Machine with two alternative versions, first of a live body and secondly its photographic image, I am asking questions about the live body and its representations.

I am sorry that the unnamed 'Czech-born former neighbour in Bristol' was disappointed by the show but I am happy to say she is in a minority. After a number of showings The Turin Machine has accumulated much praise. I make a substantial effort to ascertain responses to the work via a comments book and artists' feedback sessions. In my dealings with the public I have never experienced any confusion as to the purpose of The Turin Machine as being anything other than an experimental work of art. I also possess a growing number of comments which demonstrate a depth and range of responses to the work that any artist would be proud of. If any of your readers would like to see this piece for themselves it will be staged at the Performulate festival organised by the Cambridge Darkroom later this year.

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