

## EDITORIAL

### *Stand Covers*

I am told that nearly fifty years ago Jon Silkin had a discussion about *Stand's* covers with friends. Should the magazine have a repeating cover design that made it instantly recognizable? We are not sure that a firm decision was made. There have been stretches when the same designer or artist produced covers. One thinks of the teacher and designer Ron Swift's many covers for *Stand* beginning in the 1960s, and of the thirteen covers of Kirill Sokolov's work.<sup>1</sup> The last nine issues of *Stand* produced before Silkin's death featured covers by Ian Breakwell.<sup>2</sup> Volume 13, number 4 (original series) contains drawings by David Hockney as well as a cover drawn by him and an article about him. An (incomplete) list of artists who have had their work reproduced in *Stand* as covers or illustrations include Robert Medley, Euan Uglow, Barrie Cook, Patrick Hayman and Paula Rego, all of whom have work in the Tate and galleries worldwide. The cover of Volume 8, number 4 (new series) features a portrait of James Kirkup by Maurice de Sausmarez.<sup>3</sup> Volume 30, number 2 (original series) contains 'Two Prints', drawings by Panayiotis Kalorkoti who has been an artist in residence for the Leeds Playhouse.

Josef Herman (1911-2000) provided covers and drawings for two early London *Stand's* as well as a cover, drawings and an article for an issue in Spring 1987. In that issue, the editors write, 'We hope to include a fairly regular art feature in our pages from now on, and are very pleased to begin with the work of Josef Herman, an old friend of the magazine whose work we first used in 1955.' Poet, editor and critic John Lucas tells of his first meeting with Silkin who was selling *Stand* outside a gallery displaying Herman's work. One of Herman's pictures was on the cover (Herman did not charge for the work and we suspect that none of the artists was paid).<sup>4</sup> Herman was also a friend of Peter de Francia. The two met in Brussels and when Peter fled Belgium in 1940, he carried in his rucksack a small drawing made and given to him by Herman.

The cover of the current issue again features work by Peter de Francia. De Francia died in January this year and his *Boy and Butterfly*<sup>5</sup> appears on the front cover of this issue. As we learned from reading his obituaries, de Francia was a man of strong opinions. He must have found something in *Stand* which resonated with his own beliefs since he approached Silkin to offer the use of some of his work (Jon, never one to miss an opportunity, asked Peter to help sell *Stand* as the following quotation from one of de Francia's letters dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1979 shows: 'I have circulated your sub forms to the librarian at the Royal College and asked him to pass them around').

There is a long obituary in *The Guardian* by Michael McNay (23<sup>rd</sup> January 2012). In it McNay says that de Francia was 'an intellectual in the French sense, actively engaged with ideas and

politics, reviewing, writing books, broadcasting successfully on art and becoming a talks producer for BBC Television'. McNay also writes: 'He had shows all round the world...and he combined this with teaching including the RCA, where in 1980 the new rector, Dickie Guyatt invited de Francia to step down from his professorship. De Francia refused, Guyatt sent in the lawyers, and the painting school rose, young and old, passed a motion of no confidence in Guyatt and the administration, and won the day for de Francia.'<sup>6</sup> There is a long article in *The Guardian* about this episode at the Royal College of Art. It seems that Guyatt was determined to increase the emphasis on design at the expense of fine art.<sup>7</sup>

One of de Francia's most important works is *The Bombing of Saki* (1959) and it is currently on display in Tate Britain in isolation on one wall. Hung thus, one can see it from a distance, as one approaches from the previous room. The visual space of the end wall is reduced while keeping the focus on the painting. It was painted in response to the French killing of 79 civilians as an act of reprisal for Tunisian support of the Algerian rising against French rule. We have no evidence that Silkin saw the picture before *Stand* published in the 1960s three radical stories by Francis Fytton about French atrocities in Algeria. However, the combination of influences in *The Bombing of Saki* – Picasso's *Guernica* plus de Francia's own memories of German bombing of Belgium before he escaped on a bicycle – seems a model of the anti-militaristic art published in *Stand*, especially from its rebirth in Leeds from 1960 onwards. It seems part of a mixture of political anger and humanistic realism, a movement now apparently little appreciated though discussed brilliantly in

James Hyman's *The Battle for Realism 1945 - 1960*, (New Haven: Yale, 2001). James Hyman's gallery in 2005 held an exhibition 'Peter de Francia: after the bombing' which showed terrifying studies for the major work and more recent charcoals called *Disparates* (after Goya) from the late 1960s and 1970s. These might offer a vital standpoint from which to 'read' links between painting of dislocation and 'disparities' in Silkin's poems. In the exhibition catalogue de Francia wrote, 'The work that followed the *Saki* series is perhaps less different than might at first appear: human nature and violence remain constants, but I began to explore the language of metaphor and nightmare...' Looking at illustration in the history of *Stand* is beginning to offer a new perspective on Silkin's own work.<sup>8</sup> Who would have thought that so many of these artists were immigrants to the UK from Europe? Many *Stand* poets and painters had experienced war, had to learn new languages in order to survive and came from the working class. Who but Silkin noticed in the magazine's pages the radical and unifying realism of experience at work here?

In future issues we hope to explore further the links between *Stand* and the visual arts. In the next Double Issue, Numbers 199-200, we will be exploring Isaac Rosenberg's poetry and how Jon Silkin arranged an exhibition of his pictures and manuscripts.<sup>9</sup>

Elaine Glover and Jon Glover

## Notes

- 1 See Obituaries by John Whale in *Stand*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (new series) and Anthony Parton in *The Guardian*, 2 June 2004.
- 2 Ian Brakewell (1943-2005) Painter and photographer who also used digital imagery, film and performance. Worked under the auspices of the Department for Health and Social Security in Broadmoor and Rampton Hospitals. Co-edited two anthologies similar to the work of Mass Observation. A retrospective of Brakewell's work is at the De La Warr Pavillion, Bexhill, East Sussex.
- 3 An educationalist and artist, De Sausmarez was the first Head of Fine Art at the University of Leeds at the time when Kirkup was the first Gregory Fellow in Poetry. He was still there when Silkin was Gregory Fellow.
- 4 John Lucas, *Starting to Explain*, (Nottingham: Trent Books, 2003), pp. 11-12.
- 5 See Volume 20 No. 2 and Vol. 20 No. 3 for drawings and Vol. 21 No. 2 1980 for cover.
- 6 James Hyman discusses the strength of political opinion in art, fine art education and criticism in *The Struggle for Realism*.
- 7 Robert Macdonald, 'Designs on art?', *The Guardian*, 14 Nov. 1980, p.9.
- 8 *Peter de Francia: after the bombing*, (London: James Hyman Fine Art, 2005).
- 9 Rosenberg's self-portrait appeared on the cover of the 'War Poets' *Stand*, Volume 4, Number 3 (original series). Silkin arranged the exhibition with considerable help from Rosenberg's sister Annie Wynick.

## A NOTE ON STAND@60

14/09/2012-15/09/2012

Jon Silkin's archives, and those from the history of *Stand*, held in Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, give important evidence of the earliest London days of the magazine. How many people in 2012 would think of publishing a magazine to print poetry, fiction and criticism in response to being sacked for trying to start a union? Probably few, if any. Response and engagement - these days political leaders and activists talk about 'making a difference'. It is arguable that *Stand* made a difference in bringing probing, questioning literature into contact with people who might not otherwise have seen it. Sixty years on, does it still carry that added sense of mission, of analysing and resisting social violence and war, of revealing, lamenting and protesting about human cruelty? Whilst such questions are difficult (and it might be a very bold editor who could claim any of Jon Silkin's irresistible and engaging commitment), we would claim that in celebrating *Stand's* sixtieth birthday some of the original energy, which surely resists today's murky collusions and political double-think is still present. Writers who have appeared in *Stand* and helped to produce it including Rodney Pybus, John Whale, Hannah Copley, Amy Ramsay, Elizabeth Cook, Ian Duhig, Peter Sansom, Jeffrey Wainwright, Janette Jenkins, Elanor Dymott, David Gaffney, Elizabeth Baines, Amanda Dalton, Nicholas Jagger, Alison

Brackenbury, Paul Maddern, Julian Turner, Vahni Capildeo and Ian Fairley got together in the School of English at the University of Leeds to read their own poems and stories with a large and varied audience. They all talked about the ways in which *Stand* had often helped them to find a voice as well as being a forum for their future. Whilst the event contained frightening and difficult material as well as wonderfully wry and funny visions it celebrated warmly the value of dialogue, the need to listen and to hear, and the need to hand on. Looking back on his time in Leeds in the 1960s Jon Silkin was inspired to quote Wordsworth, 'bliss was it in that dawn to be alive'. It is, and was, important to appreciate the past but it is also vital to recall Silkin's great gift - to identify, encourage, trust and hand on creativity to young writers. Many in the audience at *Stand@60* said afterwards how glad they were to hear gifted new writers and performers, who included *Stand* Editorial Assistants, Amy Ramsay, Emma Trott and Hannah Copley, and others who are 'taking a stand' by joining a very special community of writers.

### Jon Glover

View photos of *STAND@60* on our Facebook page. Just search for 'Stand Magazine'