



INDICA UNDERGROUND

Michael English, held in high regard for his work with Nigel Waymouth, as Hapshash and the Coloured Coat, began as a conceptual artist working with Stephen Willats in an early incarnation of Land Art, described in David Mellor's *The 60s Art Scene In London* as "preceding Richard Long and Mark Boyle's maps and landscape interventions" (Phaidon).

The highly stylised series of posters for International Times offshoot Osiris Visions, (1967-68, silkscreen inks, 93 x 62 cms, handmade paper, printed San Francisco) were enhanced by UV light tubes in Hapshash's Indica exhibition, July 1967. The work was contemporary with the High Art of San Franciscan 'acid' poster artists Rick Griffin and Wes Wilson. English and Waymouth's delicate but impactful imagery adorned both student bedrooms and street corners but was already becoming collectable by the early seventies. Posters were screenprinted in unknown editions - sometimes only a handful were produced. An important development was that 'pure' art was being created for the street but its content was more 'pure image' than readable text, i.e. without compromising the concept to promote or sell a product.

"Everyone was there and the evening was beautifully warm which allowed them to come in their most exotic clothes. A steel band played in a corner. Then, quite unexpectedly, to everybody's surprise, Mason's Yard started to glow with a strange green light as it very, very slowly began to rise vertically into the air..." Michael English, remembering the Indica show, January 2007.

English's toothpaste lips and Pepsi swirls of the late 60s share content and treatment with Wesselman, Warhol, Tilson and others, but with the benefit of a hyper-realist approach which ensures that the viewer does a 'double-take' - is the the image photographic or hand-painted? Like Warhol, Michael English created a substantial body of work for magazines and advertising as his photo-realist stack-heeled shoe for Vogue (gouache on board, 1974, 39 X 32 cm) and his Pepsi bottle, (pencil on board, 1970, 60 x 43 cm) both illustrate. His deluxe rendering of super-flared male models and pouting Hollywood vamps, currently on show at the V&A, is given a 21c sheen in the ice-cream gouache (61 x 47 cm, 2004).

Nigel Waymouth moved to Los Angeles in 1995. *"Our aim as artists was to brighten up the streets of London. We produced innovative posters using silk-screened metallic inks and graded effects much influenced by fin de siecle artists. It had a strong link to the Pop Art movement of the time but was also a precursor of the tag graffiti we see today."*

Literature: **3-D Eye** (Paper Tiger, 1979), **The Anatomy Of Illusion** (Paper Tiger 1989), Public Collections: Museum Of Modern Art, New York, Arts Council Of Great Britain, British Council Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum

Photo: (L-R) Michael English, Nigel Waymouth and Guy Stevens - Scene club DJ and later producer of Mott The Hoople and The Clash) with Osiris Visions output.