

**Rory Ford.**

**'Art's in the right place'**

**Evening News Edinburgh**

**31 May 2001**

**B**UT the exhibition opens – quite literally – with a bang that aims to explore the dark heart of art. Artists John Russell and Fabienne Audéoud have a DVD installation of their recent performance piece, John Russell kills Fabienne Audéoud in the style of William Burroughs.

Tomorrow's invited opening night audience will have the chance to see a live performance of this controversial work which re-enacts cult author William Burroughs' acciden-

tal shooting of his wife Joan Vollmer in the Fifties. Burroughs and Vollmer had been drinking when Burroughs decided to do a "William Tell routine" and attempted to shoot a glass his wife was balancing on the top of her head. He missed.

Some have acclaimed the piece as one of the truly outstanding things about the exhibition while others have been predictably shocked. "Something you can never get from

the video is the sheer noise of the gun," says Audéoud in her heavily accented French. "The noise goes straight into your bones and makes you react physically."

Even so, the video is hard enough to watch, particularly when the title tells you exactly what to expect and fills you with a queasy sense of dread. Inventive staging means when Audéoud goes down fake blood splashes the couch and pristine gallery wall, then the camera's gaze pans around to document the mostly indifferent, bored reactions of the smart set who had turned up for the piece's premiere.

A return to sensationalism of Hirst and chums or a deeply-felt comment on artists parading their private pain for public consumption?

"Some people think we are trying to be shocking," puzzles Audéoud, "which I find very strange. I think life is more shocking. How can you try to be shocking? Either we manage to be shocking or we fail. I don't want to hurt anybody but sometimes life and art hurts," she says.

"Art should have the power to do something," she offers "something has to happen. For this performance

## **FUTURE'S SECURE:**

Top, Tim Stoner and his prize-winning Cabaret; left, Clare Woods' Monyhull; above, John Russell and Fabienne Audéoud's Shoot, (after Chris Burden's performance Shoot, 1971)

we considered several examples of artists' wives that have been killed by their husbands and it's not always clear that they were actually killed. History is full of women who partnered important or great artists who died tragically."

Like Stoner, Audéoud is keen to ask questions with her work but reticent to provide any easy answers. "What fascinated me was that I couldn't judge the story," she says. "All I know is that he aimed the gun when she said let's do the William Tell routine."

**S**HE explains: "He knew that his gun was aiming low but he shot anyway and killed her. We don't know if he was drunk or whether she wanted to commit suicide or if he used that moment to get rid of his wife because of something that happened between them."