

# Art in a derelict gin factory

NICK HACKWORTH | **EVENING STANDARD** | Thursday 30 January 2003 01:00 |



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The Evening Standard



Nosferatu in the film by artist and critic Stuart Home ( )

**A genuine, if eccentric, radical in a field crowded with pseuds, Gustav Metzger has, for 40 years now, operated on the fringes of the art world, making work that has often been both innovative in form and politically engaged in content.**

He is best known for his invention, in 1961, of "Autodestructive art" - art that carried within it the seeds of its own downfall as a mirror to the destructiveness of man and as a protest against the capitalist art market.

In public he performed "acid paintings" where, resplendent in a gas mask, he painted huge canvases with acid that dissolved before the audience's eyes. Since then, he has developed "Auto-creative art", went on an "art strike" between 1977 and 1980, when he called on all artists to stop working, and has continually used work to critique the operation of the capitalist system.

Arranged by a new "nomadic art collective", T12, and staged in a dark and derelict Victorian gin factory just off Brick Lane, this exhibition is very much an "authentic" fringe art show, which should please anyone bored with pristine, white, commercial galleries. In the large basement Metzger has stacked vast numbers of newspapers and on a wall inscribed six titles - Disasters, Biotechnology, Extinction, GM Foods, Information Overload and, oddly, Supermarkets. Visitors are meant to cut out articles from the newspapers and pin them up underneath the relevant category, thus critically engaging with the media.

This unsophisticated work is, sadly, not one of Metzger's best, but given the rarity with which he shows and the romantic surroundings, it is still worth visiting. Also, despite being billed as a solo show, it includes some amusing video work by the artist and critic Stuart Home.

These include an Eisenstein classic set to a punk-rock soundtrack, its subtitles replaced with those from another film; and *Has the Litigation Already Started?*, which intersperses excerpts from *Nosferatu* - whose makers were sued by Dracula author Bram Stoker's widow - with film copyright credits. Finally, a moving short film, *The Park*, by Wolfe Lenkiewicz, conjures fragmentary tales from footage shot in a park in east London. ■

- *Gustav Metzger is showing at Bedford House, E1, until 23 March, Wednesdays to Sundays only. Information: 07813 532012.*