

## The End of Art Theory 2001

We were invited to submit proposals for the 2002 Liverpool Biennial. We proposed to commission a Group 4 private security vehicle and uniformed crew, as used by HM Courts and Prison Service to transport defendants. During the Biennial, visitors would have been encouraged to be locked in the cells inside the vehicle, which would then have gone on a 'free' tour of the cultural institutions and public artworks included in the Biennial.

The daily presence of the security vehicle at cultural venues might have highlighted the association between authority and power. While inside, the viewing subject would have become an object of enquiry to passers-by. Our project, *The End of Art Theory*, aimed to engage participants directly in a social and spatial experience intended to appeal to the senses as much as the intellect. Entering the enclosed space would have been an act of voluntary self-denial, similar to that made by the ascetic aspiring to a higher state of consciousness or by the prisoner of conscience as a statement of protest. Uncertainties might have arisen concerning the relationship between self-discipline and the rule of law. Equally, turbulent parallels exist between the notoriety of certain transgressive artists and the charisma bestowed on some criminals through media attention.

We would have also produced a series of portraits of the participants by photographing through the tinted windows of the security vehicle while they were being transported through the city in confined isolation.

*The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (1986) is the title of a book by Victor Burgin, who 'refuses to think "art" in isolation from the political, or to conceive the "political" in purely socio-economic terms, without a theory of the unconscious'.



Logotype for the Liverpool Biennial, 2002



Above and opposite:  
*The End of Art Theory* (2001)  
Exterior and interior of 'Group 4' private  
security vehicle

