

SHAVE

# Occupational Hazard

Naomi Siderfin

artist? At what point does escalating bureaucracy (forced on organisations particularly by state funding bodies) engulf any claim to continuing artistic practice? Is it really the same to mastermind projects for other artists as 'making your own work'?

Despite recent increases in audience levels at visual arts events and exhibitions, the Visual Arts department of the Arts Council of England continues to receive only two per cent of the total Treasury budget for the arts to distribute for exhibitions, publications and symposia.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it is a well-aided concern that of this allocation only a small fraction will be distributed directly to artists (via curators and administrators) for the production of their work, while the bulk will be used for the exhibition and promotion of art as part of an increasingly significant leisure industry. It is the case at most exhibition spaces—there are a few honourable exceptions—in a sector where supply exceeds demand, that artists, gratified to have been invited to exhibit, pay in time and materials for the work to be made.

Establishing the credibility of the artist-as-curator within the art world has, however, had the healthy effect of disturbing the balance of administrative power within the sector. The reactive public funding bodies have had to scurry around rewriting funding criteria to accommodate the artist-led constituency. A small proportion of public funds has been redistributed directly to the practitioner sector, largely on a project-to-project basis. Where artist-led organisations have scaled the lower rungs of public project funding, a level of independent operation has been achieved. However, the allocation of public money has remained on a short-term basis and, without regular funding



Left: Anna Best,  
Bring and Buy Sale, *Shave*, 1995