

# BOMB

Rolip Glashley: Philip Glass and Robert Ashley

by Nick Hallett

It seemed as if New York's cultural institutions—creatures great and small—made the collective decision to synchronize. The first weekend of November saw four rarely performed multimedia works by composers Robert Ashley and Philip Glass receive precedent-setting third party interpretations, ranging in scale from epic to guerilla. ...Downtown, Incubator Arts convened a weekend of Ashley's music at St. Marks Church, programming at its center a live premiere of the recorded work *Automatic Writing* (1979) interpreted by the group Object Collection.

...Ashley's *Automatic Writing* (and like *Music with Roots*, justified as opera) was composed for a recorded medium. Over the course of 46 minutes, barely audible electronic sounds and words are formed but not articulated. The effect is hypnotizing, on the verge of what we hear as music. Nurse with Wound's Steven Stapleton claimed it the only record he could listen to on acid. Object Collection's live interpretation remained absolutely faithful to the studio production values of the original LP, connecting its synthetic ambience with the ensemble's somewhat darksided approach to electronic music theater. Soft French syllables from Mimi Johnson's original performance were translated into guttural German and brought into view through Fulya Peker's near dominatrix characterization. The only thing missing from the cyber-BDSM atmosphere of it all—complete with shiny black surfaces and CCTV—was the whip.