

# THEATRE WITH ATTITUDE

Patrick Marmion checks out a new wave of protest art crossing the Atlantic from

America and taking the ICA by storm



Penny Arcade, 'Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!'

Having already caused a stir in the Edinburgh Festival, Penny Arcade's provocative show *Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!* has the loudest title on the ICA's billing. Greeted with the scorn of one Women's Studies Group in America, Penny Arcade is the woman who lambasts "pro-lifers who are for the death penalty" and lesbians who think bisexual women "aren't trying hard enough". Surrounding herself with a squad of scantily clad go-go dancers of both sexes she presents a show which is nakedly confessional and flamboyantly exhortational, challenging the audience to go forth and face their sexual selves without fear or shame.

Arcade's show springs from sexual positivism poo-pooed by politically correct puritans and homophobics. She also has a long history of involvement in the New York underground scene going back to Andy Warhol, and her show is therefore part of what is an exciting revival of seventies political performance work. But like many of the others at the ICA this

month, she is primarily fuelled by the anger of watching hundreds of her friends die from AIDS while the state does little more than persecute them as a minority.

*Fierce* is not intended to be a pious or maudlin month of sermonising, and all the reviews from the American press demonstrate amply that despite their determination to deliver a tough message, all the performances are energetic, touching, warm and funny. As the ICA's Director of Live Arts Lois Keidan indicates, the performers are not seeking to persecute their audiences (as they have been themselves) but to inform and enliven them: "What distinguishes this kind of work in America is that it is incredibly witty, charming, engaging and accessible. They are angry, but not aggressive and you come away much more sympathetic and aware of the issues."

*Fierce - Sex, Art and Censorship, US Style* runs at the ICA September 16-October 24. See Fringe Theatre listings for details

## What's on

SEPT 15-SEPT 22 1993

IN LONDON