

THE ACT

AGAINST THE SPECTACLE Private & Inter-Personal Experiment, Social & Political Activity

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PERFORMANCE PROJECT

THE ACT

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EDITORIAL & INTRODUCTION

Art/Life Recovery

The purpose of this issue of *The ACT* is to recover and push further the pre-eminence of life over the mire of celebrity, Spectacle, and image-machine. Direct action and the envelopment of experience rather than people as image and object.

The turn to the doing of Spectacle in the face of the ongoing need for progressive, deeply creative, risky work is bizarre. The disaster of Andy Warhol, celebration of voyeurism and consumption. Many want to play his coy game: using either his precedent or a pile of theory to make and attend to images of advertising, Broadway dance-theater, stand-up comedy, etc., as art. Supposedly the participants are not consumed nor do they propel the cycle forward. This game has become glamorous, sexy; many wait in line for their turn.

So in the face of this, a series of refusals and refocusings is offered to the objectification of people and things. Flawed, but successful on the whole, here are individual's strategies to living in and beyond art and life intermixed. Whether art survives the tangle is of the utmost importance.

Schools of Thought

Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania have undertaken to setup a performance art department. What should be taught? What is solid in life-art mix? What do we know? What is at stake?

The two main models that seem to be circulating are Richard Schechner's school of sociological/anthropological theater, or a vaguer, post-modern approach. The latter is so vague that it barely exists except as a few art history professors and performance artists; there is no curriculum and no agreed on history. The other is a formal academic project. In the case of Franklin and Marshall College, I am happy to believe that the vaguer direction with but a tint of the social sciences has been taken. **What is wrong with Richard Schechner's "broad spectrum"?**

In an "attack", the editors of the *Performing Arts Journal* argue that Schechner has lost his bearings on the rockbed of theatrical texts.¹ Schechner makes a passionate defense of *The Drama Review* and the NYU Performance Studies Department by arguing for a "broad spectrum approach" where "performance" is the overall category in which many, if not all, modes of activity are subsumed². It would be a mistake to assume that this opposition contains all that comes to mind when one thinks of performance. I think they are fighting on the same side of the fence and that there are other ways to go. The desire to offer a conceptual "broad spectrum" is no more open than the worry to "secure a place for the dramatic text".

In the case of Schechner and PAJ, they both prefer texts, whether it is Schechner's theorizing and anthropo/socio-logic reading of cultures and behavior, or PAJ's focus on the plays and the authority of the text as they operate in the Western tradition. That is to say, both are removed from the phenomena of the act, of doing.

The NYU department is primarily based on theorizing. Schechner's own writing is filled with matrices, fields, maps and diagrams and he discusses his own work in immensely formal terms. The "broad spectrum approach" expresses the desire to get closer to the many ways of being human without being cultural imperialists about it, but its approach is such that it desiccates and flattens us. What we are offered here is the power to wrap ones mind

1. "Critical Positions", editorial in *The Performing Arts Journal*, #32 Fall 1988.

2. Richard Schechner, "PAJ Distorts the Broad Spectrum", *The Drama Review*, Summer 1989, #124

around an experience and hold it in place—which is exactly why it is limited. It is the same approach that objectifies being and things, makes us regard “the earth as a gasoline station” as Heidegger says. There is nothing more broad in it, it is merely a reconfiguration of the powers that be. A modernist activity. The Performance Studies Department at NYU serves more as one of the directions one might go, but to conceive of “performance” as a cross-cultural, analytic tool is a ludicrous and questionable enterprise. It is hegemonic, its claim to fact is specious, and it crushes our essential subjectivity. It is hegemonic as a Western intellectual tool, transported across and into cultures that have not our ideas of objectivity and sacredness, for it is primarily for our benefit that the transport is made, to slake our thirst. Any aspirations to fact, or cross-cultural knowledge, are specious given the ontic peculiarity of the “soft sciences” (that is we haven’t yet found our way to a happy ground of science & literature co-joined). And, deeper, in its toolness, as a tool, it objectifies and simplifies in ways we know to be oppressive; in the way that science crushes subjectivity. As I see it, it is this latter desire, to hold our “behavior” in a kind of clarity and solidity, that is altogether typical, completely historical, in marching time with Descartes and the so-called Enlightenment, and must be addressed. The *Drama Review* and NYU Performance Studies model does not, it tends to substitute one set of techniques, the technical, the methodological, for another.

In The ACT, I avoid the clear, seductive as it is, in favor of the vague since there is room to move there. It seems impossible to co-exist with foggier things if one insists on hard concepts like precision and clarity, or if one confuses rigor with method.

It seems to me that “truth” in these matters must be subjective and submitted to the limits of our subjectness—our humanity—as opposed to a kind of inter-subjective scientific clarity. That is why I think it is important to go in other directions, away from this cloud of safe and mock science, the aesthetics of the global and the clear, into “art” or for us now “life”.

—Jeffrey Greenberg

Errata: The following errors were induced into Simone Forti’s *News Animations* in The ACT v1,#3: p.15 “But most of all I started to accumulate kinesthetic impressions and pressures”..., should read, “But most of all I started to accumulate kinesthetic impressions of pressures...”. And in the transcript, p.13: “...”, what the papers describe as waves, human waves crashing, or Iranians and Iraqis”..., should read, “...”, what the papers describe as waves, human waves crashing, of Iranians and Iraqis”... And, p.14, the quote beginning with “Hi mom,” ends prematurely at “Oh how’d you do that!” and should end at “Put some olives in it”.

Bob Flieschner

Bob Flieschner made films and recently had begun performing. He came to a private performance situation I had setup in people’s homes. These performances consisted of his attempts to play the concertina but he could barely read the music or get his fingers into the right position. He tried to play movie scores from his childhood in the 30’s and 40’s and then stop and tell wandering tales about treks into Queens to fix the strap on the concertina or to the dentist.

At first I had difficulty with these presentations. I hoped there was some theoretical strategy behind it, but Bob was not a man of theories. I finally realized that if I were to enjoy his work I would have to learn more about Bob, befriend him. Only then did I hear him play.

(cover photo)

Letters

With regard to the "Levitation" article in The Body Issue (The ACT v1.#3) a dog writes

I saw the dog musicians with my own eyes, and from that day I considered everything possible, no prejudices fettered my powers of apprehension, I investigated the most senseless rumors, following them as far as they could take me, and the most senseless seemed to me in this senseless world more probable than the sensible, and moreover particularly fertile for investigation. So it was too with the soaring dogs. I discovered a great many things about them; true, I have succeeded to this day in seeing none of them, but of their existence I have been firmly convinced for a long time, and they occupy an important place in my picture of the world.

If one asks what the soaring dogs are really doing one will invariably receive the reply that they contribute a great deal to knowledge. It is not, of course, their technique that chiefly gives me to think. It is wonderful that these dogs should be able to float in the air: in my amazed admiration for that I am at one with my fellow-dogs. But far more strange to my mind is the senselessness, the dumb senselessness of these existences. They have no relation whatever to the general life of the community, they hover in the air, and that is all, and life goes on its usual way; some one now and then refers to art and artists, but there it ends. But why on earth do these dogs float in the air? What sense is there in their occupation? Why can one get no word of explanation regarding them? Why do they hover up there being particularly well provided for, as I hear, and at the cost of the dog community too. I am told they contribute a great deal to knowledge — K.

With regard to this issue William Peterson and Carolee Schneemann said:

WP: Last year I was talking to David Antin about how alternative spaces were becoming so slick and he expressed the feeling that really what's at stake is the life of the work because a certain kind of rawness and rough edge is necessary and you also need audiences who are willing to accept that element in the work. And if those audiences aren't there and those spaces aren't there, then what happens to the work?

CS: I don't look for spaces anymore. Part of wanting to make works has to do with finding remarkable spaces, degraded spaces. The other problem right now is being exceeded by your own mythology. So that in London where I did "Cat Scan" as part of the Edge '88 Festival the space was a given. I had no choice about it, and it was the wrong shape and height for this piece. But I put it together, adapting it to this abandoned, empty, top of a warehouse which was too low and incredibly filthy. Then a problem arose as we had two hundred people that were turned away. The space was so jammed that people couldn't see what the piece entailed. And they were there because—I had forgotten that there would be this audience wanting to see my work, a tremendous audience. Then there was a technical foul-up in the middle of the piece and I had to stop and resituate myself and they found that unforgivable. The audience, the critics, everybody. They just couldn't accept it. They wanted it to be a perfected event—it had to "perform." And because it wasn't totally improvised—it had a linear aspect to it—the audience expectation sealed the direction and meaning of this version of "Cat Scan." I did the blindfold solo in a very messy, profuse festival, Lelieu, and it worked like a dream. Everything was just fine. I had a half hour just to tell them what had to happen, to put it together, and at one point I didn't know my space at all. It's a wild dance that's done to "invisible music." I'm blindfolded, my motions absorbed into a continuous slide relay of "Infinity Kisses" and Egyptian cat images.

WP: So for artists having trouble with a space would your advice to them be "find your own space?"

CS: Find your own and evolve your own audience.

GRAN

Gran Fury is a collective of AIDS activists opposing government and social institutions that make those living with AIDS invisible. Through visual projects, we seek to inform a broad audience and provoke direct action to end the AIDS crisis. Gran Fury was formed in January, 1988, shortly after "Let The Record Show..." in 1987, a collaborative window installation at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. Naming ourselves Gran Fury after the Plymouth automobile customarily used as an undercover police car nationwide, the collective has produced numerous public projects including posters, stickers, shirts, fliers, printed ads, billboards and bus signs.

Gran Fury recognizes that "direct action" and "cultural activism" are expressions of different communities' differing needs, and this process can range from poster projects to street demonstrations to free needle exchange to peer education. We consistently attempt to situate our work in the "public realm" in an effort to include a diverse, non-homogeneous audience. Through appropriating dominant media's techniques, we hope to make the social and political subtexts of the AIDS epidemic visible and to incite the viewer to take the next step.

FURY

IN CUBA, EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD OVER THE AGE OF 15 IS TESTED. THOSE WHO ARE HIV POSITIVE ARE ASKED TO GO VOLUNTARILY TO A QUARANTINE FACILITY. THOSE WHO REFUSE HAVE A NYLON BAG THROWN OVER THEIR HEAD AND ARE BROUGHT IN BY FORCE. REPORTS OF ESCAPE ATTEMPTS GENERATE HUGE POLICE MOBILIZATIONS.

QUARANTINE MEASURES HAVE BEEN PROPOSED IN PLACES SUCH AS BAVARIA, SCOTLAND, EAST GERMANY AND RUSSIA. IN THE U.S., HIV POSITIVE PERSONS HAVE BEEN QUARANTINED IN MISSISSIPPI, FLORIDA AND SOUTH CAROLINA.

**THE ANNUAL COST OF
TREATING TEN PEOPLE WITH
AIDS IN THE U.S.—ABOUT
\$450,000—IS MORE THAN THE
ENTIRE BUDGET OF ONE
LARGE ZAIRIAN HOSPITAL. IN
THE “THIRD WORLD”,
AGGRESSIVE TREATMENT OF
AIDS WILL COST MORE THAN
THE CURRENT EXPENDITURES
OF ALL OTHER DISEASES
COMBINED. MEANWHILE,
AMERICAN AIDS RESEARCHER
ROBERT GALLO PROPOSED
USING AFRICANS TO TEST THE
SAFETY OF POTENTIAL AIDS
VACCINES FOR USE IN THE U.S.**

***THE ECONOMICS OF AIDS ARE
BOUND BY RACISM AND
COLONIALISM.***

BRAZIL, SECOND IN AIDS CASELOAD IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, WITH THE LARGEST FOREIGN DEBT IN THE "THIRD WORLD", BARELY AFFORDS HEALTH CARE FOR ITS POPULATION OF 138 MILLION. FIVE DOCTORS AND ONE SECRETARY ARE THE ENTIRE HEALTH MINISTRY STAFF ASSIGNED TO FIGHT AIDS. IN RESPONSE TO PRESSURE FROM THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, BRAZIL REVISED TEXT OF TV CAMPAIGN, CHANGING EMPHASIS FROM USE OF CONDOMS TO "SELF CONTROL" OF SEXUAL IMPULSES.

A DUTCH PERSON WITH AIDS ON ROUTE TO AN INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO WAS DETAINED BY U.S. IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION OFFICIALS AFTER AZT WAS DISCOVERED IN HIS LUGGAGE. HE WAS HANDCUFFED AND PLACED IN A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON. FIVE DAYS LATER AFTER INTENSIVE INTERNATIONAL LOBBYING EFFORTS HE WAS RELEASED.

SIMILAR IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS EXIST IN JAPAN, RUSSIA, BAVARIA, EAST GERMANY, CHINA AND OTHER COUNTRIES.

TAIL WAGGING DOG

Allan Kaprow

Tail Wagging Dog

I and a friend, the musician Jean-Charles Francois, did small events for each other one year to provide some diversion from our administrative duties at the university. We performed them together, usually just the two of us, sometimes with one or two others. This one involved our going out to the hills behind Del Mar (California). The idea was that one of us would follow the other without saying a word, only making sure to step constantly on the shadow of the other, no matter where he went. In practice, since the leader would go over stones, around cacti, and up and down ravines, the length and relative position of the shadow changed. Sometimes it was in front of the leader if he was walking away from the sun. In that case it was a bit tricky; the follower had to walk backwards to keep the shadow in view and to make a quick change as the leader swung around to a different direction. The leader, in theory, had no obligation to his follower.

At certain moments, for example when walking up a ravine, the shadow would be shortened by the angle of the ground. Then we would find ourselves nearly on top of one another, our shoes touching. When the follower lost contact with the shadow (as it frequently happened), he would loudly strike together two stones he held in his hands. This single sound marked the moment when we exchanged positions: the follower became the leader. But of course, since contact was lost so often, and our directions kept changing, it all got pretty unclear as to who was what. Nevertheless, it was very formally executed.

I would like to imagine a time when *Tail Wagging Dog* could be experienced and discussed outside the arts and their myriad histories and expectations. It would be a relief to discard the pious legitimizing that automatically accompanies anything called art; and to bypass the silly obligation to live up to art's claim on supreme values. (Art saves the world, or at least the artist.) The arts are not bad; it's the overinflated way we think about them that has made them unreal. For activities like *Tail Wagging Dog*, the arts are mostly irrelevant and cause needless confusion.

What is, in fact, relevant is the direct, physical involvement of those who choose to do an event like the one above. Meaning is experienced in the body, and the mind is set into play by the body's sensations. This is exceedingly difficult for Westerners who have separated their bodies from their minds. But granting the difficulty, it is crucial. The value is what is for Westerners leaned in action. It doesn't benefit from association with Rembrandt or Performance art (which is a conventional form of theater).

But in the foreseeable future, complete detachment from art culture is unlikely. (For example, this writing appears in an arts journal, not in an agricultural journal, which, although as specialized as art, has far fewer "spiritual" pretensions.) And besides, as some readers know, *Tail Wagging Dog* emerged from the secularizing experiments of advanced art of the 50's and 60's. It can't lose its parentage so quickly. The best that can be hoped is that a gradual weariness with the art connection will naturally occur as it appears, correctly, less and less important.

So for now, the art connection has to be dealt with, at least to point up the most obvious confusions. There are certain conditions we take for granted in the arts which are carried over without question to participatory activity, usually by those who've never taken part but have heard something about it. Comparisons with anti-art, Dada, total art via Richard Wagner, are called up in an effort to absorb it into traditional modernist canons. While these are not entirely beside the point historically, it has become something very different today. So while I have written about some of these problems before, I hope I may name these assumptions more particularly here, if it will help to dispel some of the misunderstanding that surrounds this kind of activity. There are ten.

assumption **1.** Participatory activity is like all art: it is presentational. *It is not.* There is no product put out into the world, like a play, video tape, piece of music, etc.

assumption **2.** Participatory activity has an audience to be taken into account, who stand or sit apart from it, just as a painting, or a play, etc. has an audience. *It does not.* There are only part-takers in a roughly planned program. They may of course attend each other, as card players might, or team mates in basketball; but watching and listening in the midst of doing is very distinct from the specialized observations of a physically passive audience (only the mind is awake for a traditional audience, at best; and it has no responsibility for the actual work. It can only judge).

assumption **3.** Participatory activity occurs in galleries, stages, concert halls, literary gatherings, churches, public showcases and plazas, etc. *It does not.* Instead, it is active anywhere else: in stomachs, on freeways, in compost heaps, through Fax machines, or at the work place. There may be many places together, or in some sequence; some planned, some by chance; or alternatively, spaces that move as in an airplane; and spaces that exist in the mind.

assumption **4.** Participatory activity, like all art, has a single time envelope (the three week gallery exhibit, the two hour concert or play, the forty five minute video tape...usually at night, after dinner). *It does not.* Neither does it have a definite beginning or end. Rather, time, being mainly real, hence variable and discontinuous, is the time needed to grow tomatoes, the time when phone calls are made, a minute here, a year there...Time is sometimes lost, and part of the activity may be to look for it. It is always concrete.

assumption **5.** Participatory activity has a distinctive identity; you can point to it like a painting, a poem, a church, a play. *It does not.* Most of the time, only the participants would know it was going on; and even then it would seem to be another aspect of ordinary life. If I see a woman combing her hair in a car mirror, how do I know if she is or isn't participating in some event?

assumption **6.** Participatory activity can be judged like all art, i.e. like theater or Performance. *It cannot.* It is to be valued neither for its esthetic excellence nor for its good intentions to improve the world. But participants do not give up judgements; their questions are simply directed to the other matters of life: getting rid of snails in the vegetable garden without using poison, finding a decent mate, examining the lint in an old suit pocket...

assumption **7.** Participatory activity, like plays, concerts, Performances, has tapes and other documentation left behind to inform others of what happened. *It usually doesn't.* Events are either too low-key for meaningful documents, or they are dispersed in times and places that can't be followed. And there are problems of "performing" for the camera or tape, hence to an audience. Instead, unplanned gossip is a way of telling stories about an activity, if you wanted to do so. But you might not...

assumption **8.** Participatory activity, like all art, has a point to make, a high purpose, even if covert. *It doesn't.* It can be interpreted in inconclusive ways.

assumption **9.** Participatory activity, like real art, can become a career leading to fame and fortune. *It probably cannot.* If it doesn't appear to be art; if it happens far from honored locations, and at odd and unmarked times; if it leaves almost nothing to posterity,—why should the world pay attention, much less money?

assumption **10.** Participatory activity, although unfamiliar now, will one day be recognized as a respectable art genre. *It won't because it's not art.* And if it becomes art, it will be just one more shaggy dog story.

MY PERFORMANCES WITH HIM

Jeffrey Greenberg

On the way out the door he would remark to himself, though you could overhear him, "That particular step. That lamppost. That clot of dirt." I would follow after him closely to hear the levity of what caught his soul. "That azalea, the way the wind rustles the drapes, our footsteps quieted by the rug."

He imagined he was working with a team, silent, along a path, in a line, standing together, through the trees, staring at a distant light source.

He interested me in general, there was no particular activity that drew me.

He wasn't ego-less, far from it. He observed himself! He lived in his third person actively: speaking of himself as "Him." He would say to his friends, "Do you know what *he* did today?" This served two purposes: by saying "him" or even "it", at times, he would surround himself in mystery and celebrity, become famous in his own language; and, secondly, it was the only way he could be close to himself: *it was the only way he was himself*. But deep down he must have doubted this; saw it as mere, thin strategy; a gimmick of his soul; an intellectual stupidity.

When he saw me to the door and moments before I was to see my own ghost in the hallway, he whispered, "The disproportion between the greatness of my task and the *smallness* of my contemporaries has found expression in the fact that one has neither heard nor even seen me."

He told me about his experiments, "A point sticks out, becomes a landmark, erodes, passes on. A life as landscape making: hoping that around this turn, a more dramatic view will take place."

"I make my life art. At first this led to a state of amazement, an eye opening; everything glowed; in the corner of my eye flickers of movement, static objects transmuted, wiggled, twitched; I constantly spun about, trying to see it in action; to catch it and safely watch the change."

"I felt in control, endowed with a special and great power. I could bend things to my will. From afar I could clutch things, rotate them, inspect, heat one part, cool another, vaporize a portion, separate the gases, transmute the whole into wood to plastic to lead then have it disappear."

"I obsessed with finding a great drama in my tastes, sensations, thoughts, in all my ways. Now, I don't bother. I want much more. At the time, my power was enough. But it cured itself. The more I dramatized my life; the quicker the sensational aspects faded; bored, my mind wandered. I would continue sweating, trying to focus but on what? What it was? On the faint

remembrance of a flicker? Now, I am entirely different and open to much subtler things. For example, I only want to sink faster. The trouble is I am only up to my knees in mud, there's not enough of it around to cover my body.

Later he explained, "I tell you, you cannot help but sink into the mud since it is all around us. Still, when the foot hits the soil, almost immediately there are vines of blue and green silk that curl up around the ankle. *It is so incredible!* Each step brings me deeper. I gave up breathing long ago. My gills have adapted to removing the impure air and water and to taking in only the dirt from the mud. And it feels good!"

Walking with him, he wanders. Stops, backs up, goes forward. Down one block then back up again, then down again. Then he says, "You know, I always move forward, I never take even a single step back. More precisely, I advance to the side."

The work was easier for me, floating along as I do, but his feet began to tire so we rested and ate in some underground garage where everyone wore suits and was silent together.

Deep inside, at what would be his core if he had one, he said, "I have no core, you see. I have no center. At my deepest, I am a tangent. The closest I come is to the edge. But what good is this? When I chop an onion I cry, not because of the chemistry but because of the crime of penetrating the layers. And I weep because the layers turn out to be finite. Still I must eat."

"Inside I am a pot of mud. I advance and hit the wall, then the pot of mud in me sloshes forward and I am shoved further forward a second time."

"I am good for a while. I advance strongly at first then I sink. I don't sink fast enough, though. That is my problem. I sink too slowly."

I told him I wanted to sit face-to-face, silent, looking at each other, drinking shots of vodka. He said, "Your thoughts are so grim and angry. Can't you see we must pull colored scarves over our heads? Such timidity! I am not your teacher! Get on with it!"

He said, "You should know about my researches. I have investigated certain subtleties. I say 'invesigate' but I am not speaking of techniques or methods. I wouldn't degrade myself so."

"Much of my time has been spend looking at the details. I have focused my eyes millimeters from fabrics, cloths and weaves of various kinds. Saffron, cotton, red rayon, plastic chintz, paisley, rich brocade, needlepoint embroidery, lace white and black, silks, hems, burlaps, flannels, wools. My pointed nose would push into them and I could taste mustiness, freshness, perfumed scents or the mix absorbed."

He showed me how to travel sideways, lengthwise, against and skew to the weave. Sometimes I would rip through, rending the cloth.

Because of him, I hovered over a white Styrofoam ball on snow and caressed it with white ripstop nylon and white lace. I brought cloth to the desert—electric yellows and crimson cottons and nylon flowery chintz and I wore a women's gold rayon shirt the while. I traced my black shrouded feet crunching through the windy cold snow. The microphone picking up air shifts, my breath, camera rubbing against chest. I crumpled up cloth and held it to my belly. In my apartment, I practiced hand gesture studies in a mirror listening to Indian ragas and Van Gogh dramatized on television, slightly drunk and with made-up dances on the spot all framed for video upside down. I painted myself black and danced to Monk. I spun round in the middle of a circular building, strode straight through corridors, jimmed along sidewalks, ran aimlessly through Monument Valley kicking a blue ball.

Together we hung cloth in trees in mild winds. Lace in prickly mesquite. Cotton on dry cracked riverbed clay and drew a feather boa over the roots of a desert bush, licking its bark.

"This will have no ordinary risk: a cool risk... I ask nothing of you. You can slip out easily. Why should you be affected? I offer you nothing. It is up to you to do the work... It is our occasion to do what we need to do... perhaps I will need your help... perhaps I can help... perhaps I will stand aside for you."

"Listen," over the phone he says, "They're burning in my kitchen."

"What is burning?"

"Remember the leaves I collected last autumn and dumped in the corner of my room? They're on my stove now, and I've turned the burner on low and there is a terrific fire." And he hung up.

"Do this carefully," he told me, and he gave me a series of instructions. I felt uncertain: what was I supposed to get from this? Still, they were clean, precise... I was so attracted to the orderliness.

We traced and documented our steps, sometimes with levity but more often with a formulaic and lard-like heaviness. We sought the moment as if stalking our lives would let us grasp hold of it, and *we succeeded*, gasping for breath, our fingers on our own throats.

He sat me at the table. "Just sit." He covered it with black velvet. "I do this for you." Then he placed in front of me: stone, pebble, pea • brick, chair, table. • horse, cow, plastic chairs. • bricks, small houses, huge pebbles, giant peas. • shoes, socks, small plastic cows & a rabbit. • spotlight, humus, hourglass, puppet. • flame, cloth, fur, steel. • retread, sand, asphalt, pencils, tomatoes. • skin, fleas, roaches, hairs, potatoes. • urine, feces, accident, remorse, hairdo-on-fire. • birds, air in bottle, red earth, clay, muddy water. • key chain, locks, battle sores, coughing, (moving hand in front of head, palm in front of chin, to forehead, looking forward.) • rain water in jar, alcohol in low flat container with black screw-top, cheese on wood. • box of nuts & bolts, leather, hammer, flame.

He said, "OK...Listen to my instructions: Roll on your back and scream. Roll to the left not right...do it again. Now, you're nervous. Now, you're trying to look relaxed but you're shoulders are tight. Now, you're smiling...stop smiling. Grip you're shoulders hard. Now, smile...Now, bare your teeth...Face away, to your left...Ok, but you've clenched your shoulders again...so stamp your right foot... And, grimace again..."

He lead me to the forest, put me on my knees, and pushed my head almost to the soil. My nose grazed the wet leaves. I was cold, bent, and water was soaking into my pants. "Are you comfortable?" "It's OK, go on." So he guided me, pushing my head, my shoulders, so that my eyes floated over the ground. I floated over the brown and wet, then a patch of sheer, dark blue cloth so thin that I could see it doubling over, rippling, curtaining with black-green moss below. Then a fabric of the same quality but a paler, sky-blue. Then a series of arabesque book etchings and filigree, then up and over a rotted stump, then back to pine needled earth. When he finally pushed my lips to the soil, I rested there feeling and tasting the cool.

Still, other times he was more open, less controlling: "Come with me." He gave me string and knife. We went out to the park and wandered, and now

and then, when we felt it was right, we cut a length of string, tied it into a circle, a loop, and dropped it. Again and again, here and there just as we felt. And eventually we wandered back and found a loop we'd left at the start which he balled up and put it into his jacket saying, "We'll need this later."

He said, "Look for something to clean and clean it as fast as possible. I thought I'd clean the gutter. "You're using you left hand to scrape the dirt out of the gutter...you're grimacing...it doesn't look any cleaner...how can you clean a gutter?"

We went outside together, touching walls, fire hydrants, loading docks, asphalt, sidewalk, beer cans, newspaper, store windows, garbage cans, elevator shafts, parked cars, street lamps, manhole covers, curbs, door handles...silently.

"Talk wildly, expressively, incoherently and simultaneously."

I want to conclusively comment on our activities but they feel vaporous and fictitious to me though they are, without exception, real. Often when we're done and even though there is a drama in their plan and in their telling, the actual sensation is flat. And that is precisely their power! They are entirely lacking a romantic conclusion or grand statement. Their importance derives from the way they color our lives—that we found a way to do these acts. I struggle to remember them, for they dissolve inseparably into my past: some were self-conscious decisions on our part, others we simply did and forgot while doing them. We cannot even refer to them between ourselves; I only construct them for my own benefit. Our "activities", begin and end *in* our friendship.

We drive to a cliff by the ocean at twilight. We eat oranges and bananas, some decorated with dots along their length, others with stripes around their circumference. It is warm and windy and there are evergreens. We go to one and, facing the setting sun, pour tequila over our fists, dripping down our arms and flowing onto our pants and the dry brush.

Over a meal he says, "Go and look into the mirror and blow as if fanning embers into a flame."

ACTION WORKS

Clemente Padin

The dictatorship in my country, Uruguay, from 1973 to 1985 tortured and imprisoned me for my artistic activities from August, 1977 to November, 1979. I want to express my public deep appreciation to the Californian artist Geoff Cook and all the artists that helped to free me with their mobilization around the world.



In the performance, different techniques of torture were represented.

For Art And For Peace

Took place at the inauguration of the Mail Art exhibition, "America Latina, Hoy, 1984" in the DAAD Gallery of West Berlin. Eighty Six Latino-American artists participated. (The exhibition was donated later to the Museo de la Solidaridad de Managua, Nicaragua).

The main purpose of the performance was to denounce the violent and unbearable policy of our government, and the ever increasing dependence on overdeveloped countries, producing hunger, misery, repression and social injustice. A text denouncing this situation was read during the performance. I was assisted in the realization by Najda Van Ghelgue and Volker Haumann. The music was performed by Rada and the group "OPA", assembled from Montevideo by Antonio Ladra, and Andrea Handels was in charge of the video.

Long standing is a technique most used for torturing political prisoners.

Fasting For Liberation In Latin America

Was realized behind the Contemporary Art Seminary, in the Cultural Center "B. Rivadavia" (Rosario, Argentina) with the following points: recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human's Rights, liberation of all the political prisoners, return of exiles, an accounting of all the disappeared people, repeal of the repressive legislation, destruction of the repressive apparatus, and for the reaffirmation of humans rights to live a full and dignified life, all in a background of freedom and social justice.

Being hoisted is another technique.

The artists who joined me in the event were: Graciela Gutierrez Marx, Susana Lombardo, Mamablanca, Claudia De Leon, Martini Ehmeyer, Nicteroi Arganaraz, Veronica Orta, Carlos Pamparana, Mariel Rothberg and Jorge Orta.

18 SKIES

Geoffrey Hendricks

Day, Night.
Night.
Day.
one, Infinity.
In 1965 I thought
"paint sky on everything."
In 1989 is the consideration
To paint every sky?
The act of painting the sky
Every day, once, three times.
Eight times a day
As it shifts
And changes.
Or not to paint it
But just to look
Has become a preoccupation.
A curious, quiet ongoing activity.
—New York. May 1989

How do Geoffrey's clouds fit in with his other work? How does his obsession with clouds fit in with his other obsessions? His other obsessions that he articulates as rites. He sits naked on a concrete wharf at the edge of the Baltic Sea. He pounds rocks into colored powders. He smears the powders over his body. He ties himself up into a bundle of twigs and branches of flowering shrubs. He carries stones to the top of a mountain. All of this seems so much more visceral, so much more magical in intention than the work with clouds. But perhaps it's simply that making pictures of clouds is the only way he can fulfill a relationship with them. The only way he can fulfill a relationship with them. The sky, the clouds, the drawings and watercolors and paintings of sky and clouds, include an idea of physically unbridgeable distance. Geoff deals bodily with aspects of nature with which it's possible to deal bodily. He deals visually with an aspect of nature that can only be dealt with visually.

Geoffrey once made a piece from one hundred stones—"more than one hundred stones collected for George Maciunas" and incorporated it into a work called "A Sheep's Skeleton and Rocks." He also once wrote a letter to George Brecht: "Dear George, The sky is reflected in the water."

—Henry Martin

ACTIV
Climat

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The first
and largest
November
the clouds
had the

introduction of a 2011 of

For Act

Look at
Lakes, the
Lakes, the
Lake to the

The water
and other
features
are visible
from the
ground by
the water



when the clouds were it was the same as the clouds that were the
ground in the sky and clouds after the clouds all the way

Further

The water
and other
features
are visible
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The water
and other
features
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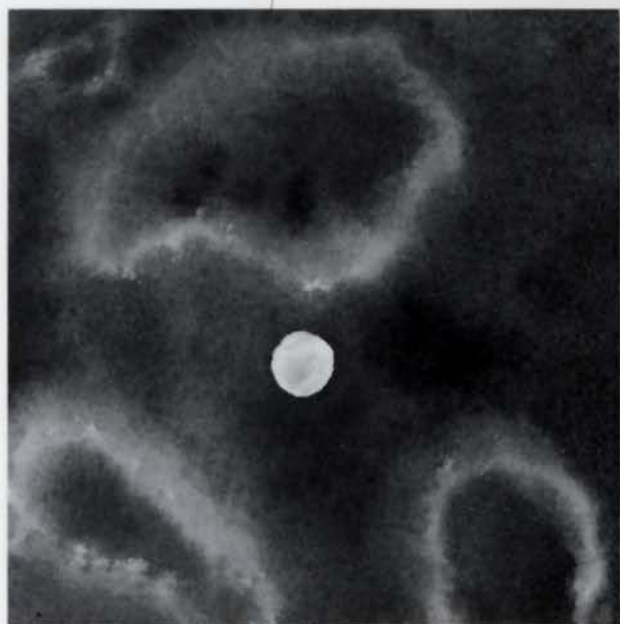
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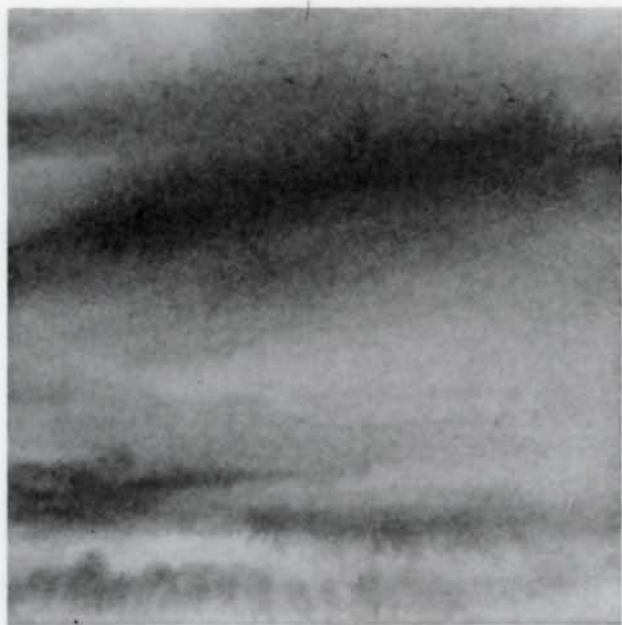
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Let art continue to be entertaining, escapist, stunning, naturalistic and glamorous- but let it also be loaded with information worked into the vapid plots of movies, for instance. Each one would be a more or less complete exposition of one subject or another. Thus you would have Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh busily making yogurt: Humphrey Bogart struggling to introduce a basic civil rights law course into Public schools: infants being given to the old in homes for the aged by Ginger Rogers: donut shaped dwellings with sunlight pouring into central patios for all, designed by Gary Cooper. Soft clear plastic bubble cars with hooks that attach to monorails built by Charlton Heston that pass over the free paradise of abandoned objects in the center of the city near where the community movie sets would also be: and where Maria Montez and Johnny Weismuller would labour to dissolve all national boundaries and release the prisoners of Uranus. But the stairway to socialism is blocked up by the Yvonne de Carlo Tabernacle Choir waiving bloody palm branches and waiting to sing the "Hymn To The Sun" by Irving Berlin. This is the rented moment of exotic landlordism of Crab Lagoon!

Jack Smith

JACK SMITH AND STORY TELLING ART

Charles Allcroft

For *Death of a Penguin* we dragged Jack's mirrored table from his kitchen to Millennium. At 5pm the script for Marisa the actress was being xeroxed. At 7pm the set was being built. Jack abandoned his normal languor for electric energy, rapidly making the projection screen, yelling we didn't know what drapery was, and placing the incense. At 8pm, with hundreds of people waiting, he decided to clean the slides. Somehow the show got started and after a short while I realized Marisa, Michael and Jack had gone beyond the script, and were improvising. As Jack said, "Some people like to rehearse. But if you think about the show, you can improvise." At one point I found the gel Jack wanted, but didn't bring it out. He later criticized me for this act, saying "It would have added to the show, and what difference would another ladder on stage have made."

About an hour and a half into the show the projectionist said, "I'm going home. I've been here a half-hour longer than I've been paid for, and who knows how long this will last. You can run the slides if you want." So I ran the projector, having no idea what slides to show. Later I passed the projector on to another of Jack's friends. About two hours into the show, Jack was backstage enjoying a joint. Someone said, "But, Jack, there are people out there waiting for you. You have to go back out." Jack said slowly, "Well, alright.", and returned to the stage. The show eventually ended in a stunning ovation.

The shows were equally chaotic. At a night at Limbo Lounge when he was to receive an award, his film was projected backward. He seemed to take this in stride, calmly deciding in the darkness which one of his dog-eared records to play. He chose a Hawaiian war chant.

The performances that never occurred were also interesting. For another show at Millennium there was to be a giant brassiere hanging from the ceiling which functioned as a giant swing, and an

18th century ship's prow coming from backstage. "The most fantastic effects", Jack explained, "require the most ordinary means." Howard was going to place the money for each performance on stage, probably in piles of silver dollars. I asked Jack if he was sorry people would be disappointed that the show was cancelled after seeing the ad. He said, "Even a crumb of perfection can keep people going for weeks."

But most of all I just remember being with him. In his crowded kitchen, with glowing Christmas tree lights along the window sill, he would make exotic drinks with his blender. Dates, peanut butter, honey, lemon, it was the most fragrant food I have ever eaten. When I asked him what the drink was called, he said, "Sarong Squeezings ... of the Gas Station of Outer Space?", his voice rising to a question. Later I realized that just as he made up the drink on minute, he made up the name the next. In the bathroom plastic vines cascaded from the ceiling half hiding a stuffed silver fish. If there were lights in that bathroom, I never found them. Like much of his house, the tub and lagoon in the front room appeared in his films. One exception was the tangled mass of extension cords. "I've been fighting this octopus for years," he said.

In the middle morning room was a mustard fresco of a veiled lady with a mono-breast, and writings on the wall like "Paint with furniture." I spent hours on my hands and knees staining the floor with a mixture of beet juice and cordovan shoe polish. We used our fingertips to rub the color in because Jack said the warmth would make the color go in deeper. Then the floor would be Baghdadian. Other times we would endlessly remake lamps, using his collection of smashed-up parts. After hours of somehow fitting these parts together, he would take them apart and start all over again. Once he spoke of opening a lamp repair shop.

On our walks he would point out unusual red-brown colors in irises, and watch a swarm of bees, which had escaped from a hive, adding his own delirious description of the mating dance of the queen bee. On another occasion we walked to the Police Building, and he talked about clouds. "Clouds must always be adventurous".

Once we did a shoot outside the hospital where years later he would die. He bent himself into contorted positions asking, "Is this glamorous?" After an hour of this intense work, we realized I had misloaded his camera, and none of these shots had been recorded. Rather than becoming angry, he went back and bought new film, and then lurched into the street to check the sunlight. Then we did it all over again.



On the first night I met him with his friend Michele, he said, "Do you know how to use a camera?" I said, "No". He said, "Good. Let's go up to the roof" and then taught me how to take pictures. "First you tweak this knob in the direction of Mecca. Then talk to the subject. Whatever you say, you must keep talking to the subject."

His phone calls were equally luxurious. He would call at 1am and talk to 3am. Just as I was bout to fall asleep, he would fire out a closing line like, "What do you expect from a country like America that is an aluminium spray paint democracy?"

Jack often praised the glories of movie palaces, European craftsmanship, and Baroque Art. And he spoke of opening the AAA, American Afflatus Association. "Do you know what afflatus is?", he would ask. "It means divine inspiration." He like people to be honest. "You should be more salty", he said.

But there was also a darker side. He railed at the evils of Meatcrus-tism, the Art Schools, and Cultural Vampires. After a half-hour speech on a street corner, he concluded by saying, "That's what vampires are like, and so are you, Charles", spun on his heels, and walked away. Deeply hurt, I was torn between protesting the injustice of his remark, and applauding the theatricality of his insult.

Jack once said, "If you make perfect art you will be admired, but if you make imperfect art you will be loved."

And he was.

THE THIRD BANK OF THE RIVER

Eugenio Barba

Excerpts from final address to QOSCO 87, 7th Group Theater Meeting, Urubamba, Peru, October, 1987. Translated by Richard Fowler

History is often compared to a river, to an impetuous current which sweeps everything along with it. There are those who believe it is possible to escape this current and they build houses on the two banks of the river. They believe that they will not be bothered by the current. But the river overflows and carries away animals, children, strong people, houses of cement.

An old man was living with his family near a river. One day he took his boat, went out on the water, rowed out to the middle where the current was strongest and stayed there. He did not return to land. Every day, his son brought him food and asked him to return to the house on the bank. The father stubbornly continued his rowing against the current. And in this way he continued day after day, year after year, until the night he died. At dawn the next morning, his son climbed into a boat and went out to the middle of the river to row against the current.

Group theater was created at the beginning of this century, in England, by women who were fighting for the right to vote, by the suffragettes. These women, in order to give more impact to their meetings, to condense the evidence of an unjust situation, turned to those who, because of their profession, had valuable public experience: actresses. In this way, theater groups composed of women were created. Their purpose was neither artistic nor aesthetic but rather was to give another meaning to this relationship we call theater.

The How: Technique

The word re-presentation, which is used to define performance, contains the idea of double presentation, of a doubling of the actor's presence as an historical being and as a professional. This presence is transformed by the spectator into sensorial experience and mental vision, into subjective sensation and articulated reflection. This "double presentation" always occurs in an historical context which determines its social effect and artistic value. This context is unique and at the same time relative. It cannot be transferred to other places without the representation changing its meaning, the most intimate nucleus of relationship with its spectators.

In order to be more effective in this context, in order to make his historical-biographical identity emerge, the actor uses forms, manners, behavior, procedures, guile, distortions, appearances...what we call technique. This is characteristic of every "performer" and exists in all theatrical traditions. Making an analysis which goes beyond cultures (west, east, north, south), beyond genre (classical ballet, modern dance, opera, operetta, musical, text theater, body theater, classical theater, contemporary theater, commercial theater, traditional theater, experimental theater, etc.), crossing through all this, we arrive at the



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first day, at the origins, when presence begins to crystallize into technique, into how to become effective with respect to the spectator. We find two points of departure, two paths.

On the first path, the actor uses his spontaneity, the behavior which comes naturally to him, which he has absorbed since his birth in the culture and the social milieu in which he has grown up. Anthropologists define as inculturation his process of passive sensory-motor absorption of the daily behavior of a given culture. The organic adaptation of a child the conduct and life norms of this culture, the conditioning to "naturalness", permits a gradual and organic transformation which is also growth.

Stanislavsky made the most important methodological contribution to this path of spontaneity, or "inculturation technique." It consists of a mental process which "enlivens" the actor's incultured naturalness. By means of the "magic if", of a mental codification, the actor alters his daily behavior, changes his habitual way of being and materializes the character he is to portray. This is also the objective of Brecht's alienation technique or social gesture. It always refers to an actor who, during the work process, models his natural and daily behavior into extra-daily scenic behavior with built-in social evidence or subtexts.

Acting technique which uses variations of inculturation is transcultural. The "peasant" theater of Oxolotlan, made by isolated indigenous people on a mountain in Mexico, uses a technique which is based on inculturation. It is the same technique found in the Living Theater of Khardaha on the outskirts of Calcutta, where the actors are farmers, workers or students. There are ways of being an actor in Europe and America, in Asia and in Australia, which are manifest through inculturation technique.

At the same time, it is possible to observe in all cultures another path for the "performer": the utilization of specific body techniques which are different from those used in daily life. Modern and classical ballet

dancers, mimes, and actors from traditional Oriental theaters have denied their "naturalness": and imposed upon themselves another means of scenic behavior. They have undergone a process of enforced "acculturation", imposed from the outside, with ways of standing, walking, stopping, looking, sitting, which are different from the daily ones.

The technique of "acculturation" artificializes (or "stylizes," as is often said) the actor's behavior. But, at the same time, it creates another quality of energy. We have all experienced seeing a classical Hindu or Japanese actor, a modern dancer or a mime. Such a performer is fascinating to the degree that s/he has been successful in modifying his or her "naturalness", transforming it into lightness, as in classical ballet, or into the vigor of a tree, as in modern dance. The acculturation technique is the distortion of appearance in order to re-create it sensorially in a fresher, more real and more surprising way.

I use the term "performer" and not actor because on the path of acculturation it is impossible to distinguish the actor from the dancer. This is why, in the Orient, a dancer is also a singer and actor. The "accultured" performer manifests a quality and an energetic radiation which is presence ready to transform itself into dance or theater according to intention or tradition.

The path of inculturation does not lead to dance but rather to a richness of variations and shades of daily behavior and to an essential quality of vocal action, of the spoken. The path of acculturation makes it possible to arrive at the pre-expressive level: presence ready to re-present.

But we must not forget that acculturation is a colonization, the imposition, even if voluntary, of another kind of presence. Once it has been absorbed, it becomes a "second naturalness." We cannot free ourselves of it. Anyone who has worked as a mime or as a classical dancer moves and stops by means of determined dynamic discharges which condition the posture, the use and position of the spinal column, balance. Each detail is codified. Codification means formalization, precise form which must be respected. A pre-established pattern must be repeated. The dancer or the mime remains captive of these patterns. It is interesting to see them struggle to free themselves from a learned technique and attempt to unlearn what took so many years to master.

The path of acculturation leads to codification, a formalized presence recognizable in a genre: ballet, mime, Kathakali, Noh. This formalized presence is necessary for anyone who wishes to express himself artistically through traditional genres. But for a performer in a contemporary performance who wishes to eliminate the boundaries between dance, theater, song, opera, circus...the most dangerous trap is to develop a formalized presence in a genre. It is essential to arrive at a presence which, respecting the transcultural principles which are found in all acculturation techniques, permits the construction of a personal technique, of a *presence with personal codification*.

This is the task of training: to leave psychology and the preoccupation with giving life to a character to one side, in order to concentrate on the construction of a presence with personal codification, an acculturation towards pre-expressive behavior.

The apprentice can follow the path of inculturation or the path of acculturation. The objective of both paths is totality, the meeting and integration of the complementary pole which at the beginning was not

included: anyone who starts with a "magic if" or with whatever other mental process must *materialize this process into presence* which is sensorially perceptible to the spectator. And anyone who has acquired an accultured behavior must *integrate his mental-emotional universe*. One path is not better than the other. It would be myopic to think that theater of accultured technique is superior. No. The two paths have the same ravines into which the performer can fall: the ravines of empty forms, of technical stereotypes, of dynamic mannerisms. And the ravine of anemic forms on the corporal, sensorial, visible level in spite of social, poetic, psychological intentions.

The process becomes mutilated if it mobilizes only internal, invisible, mental energy which does not succeed in merging with the material, the visible, the physical, that which the spectator perceives. This is what is often missing for us in the inculturation actor form the traditional theater whose point of departure, or mental behavior, has no roots in corporality, does not render the invisible manifest. On the other hand, if the actor who codifies, even if he codifies according to a personal vision, does not succeed in connecting with the dynamism of his emotive logic and with the asymmetrical coherence of his mental behavior, also turns into an amputated being, a gymnastic toy, a circus act, a two dimensional virtuoso.

The Why: The Meaning

Looking back in time, I face the paths which I have travelled on, the condensed nuclei of events, books, meetings, voices, accidental sentences, incidents. By means of these I try to explain to myself why I do theater, why I continue to do it. The *how* of doing theater is important. But if I am lucky enough to achieve technical competence, and objective knowledge which guide me in the construction of the different levels of a performance and its relationships with the spectators, the question comes up again, even more imperatively: why do I do it? Because of exhibitionism? For money? In order to gain social prestige? In order to be someone whom men and women can admire, desire? In order to escape my condition, my skin, my thoughts? In order to help those who never asked to be helped? To change society?

I know that the theater can radically change something in society: itself, its way of behaving, of presenting itself, or re-presenting itself. I know this because the many paths back to my origins demonstrate it. Looking back, towards the first day, I meet Grotowski, my elder brother. I could also call him my father, my grandfather, my totem. It doesn't matter. The essential thing is to recognize the filial connection and be proud of it. At his side, I learned certain fundamental principles about how to make theater. More exactly: at his side, I intuited the personal meaning of the profession, why one makes theater.

In the early Sixties in Poland, the authorities imposed production norms, a pre-established number of performances and openings for each season. It was the quantity which was important, *how many* spectators, *how many* performances. Human beings, particular and unique, did not exist. They were cattle, sheep. This frenzy of production and quantity, this illusion of numbers and statistics was called cultural politics, democratic culture, popular theater. Grotowski did not want to make eight, six, three, new productions a year. He wanted to prepare just one, but well. To give the maximum. To present it to a limited number of spectators in order to maximize the

communication. To establish with these few spectators spatial and emotional relationships which constituted an encounter, a dialogue with themselves, a meditation on the times. In order to fulfil his personal necessity, he had to fight against the times, he had to travel back down the paths towards the origins and re-discover, in his ancestor Stanislavski, the theater as a laboratory, as a privileged place for the creation of new relationships. Grotowski's "poor theater" was not a technique, a "how" to make theater. It was *why* he was doing it. In this period, in 1961, 1962, 1963, sometimes only three or four people



Tony D'Urso

came to his performances. During the three years that I stayed with him, I witnessed that his resistance was only for a handful of spectators. It was this stubbornness of Grotowski's, his rowing against the current, which revealed to the theater of our age another way of being social, or taking a stand, of being loyal to the values of one's own identity.

One of the most moving and ambiguous myths in Western civilization tells the story of a man who is searching for his origins. On the path towards his identity he kills his father, sires sons/brothers on his mother, brings the plague down upon an entire population. He goes into exile. But someone follows him, an adolescent: Antigone. Years later, when she goes back to her city, Thebans confront Thebans, brothers enjoy torturing brothers, children carry arms, have learned to slaughter. Violence and horror: Thebes is the heart of darkness.

Confronted with the civil war in which her brothers have killed each other, Antigone takes a stand. She does not defend her uncle Creon and the law of the state which he represents. Neither does she take to the hills to join her brother's army in the war against the state. She knows the role she has chosen. And she acts in a way that allows her to be loyal to her role. She leaves the city by night and goes to the countryside, takes a handful of dust and scatters it over her brother's corpse, to which Creon has refused burial. A symbolic ritual, empty

and ineffective against horror. Which she nevertheless does because of personal necessity, and pays with her own life.

Antigone's handful of dust, Grotowski's handful of spectators. What ridiculous actions with which to resist the times and row against the currents. But we cannot erase these actions from our memory. They are in the origins, and impel us to continue day after day in spite of isolation, lack of consideration, modest results, danger. This is the theater: an empty and ineffective ritual which we fill with our "why," our personal necessity. Which in some countries on our planet is celebrated with general indifference. And in others can cost the lives of those who do it.

I think that the actors of Odin Teatret and I belong to the same species as the old man who left his family, set off from the bank, and out in the middle of the river, rowed against the current. It would appear that the inhabitants of the banks who laughed at us were right. Twenty-three years have gone by, there are many wrinkles on our faces, we are turning grey, we feel the exhaustion of the years and of the profession. But now we are no longer alone. Behind our boat, there are others. There are others beside us, faces, we are turning grey, we feel the exhaustion of the years and of the profession. But now we are no longer alone. Behind our boat, there are others. There are others beside us, others in front of us. We are a little flotilla in the center of the river. We are the third bank. The day when the river gets rough, it's going to sweep us away. But also, along with us, the big buildings with their plush seats and bright lights which are there, on the two banks.

To learn to resist, this is what I have seen here at QOSCO 87, nine years after Ayacucho. I look at you and I feel a deep pride: you have known how to make yourselves individuals who know *how* to be performers and *why*.

I belong to a theatrical family whose grandmothers are Antigone and Edy Craig. This same family has other members...adolescents who speak different languages, who act in different ways, who go in opposite directions, who have never met me, who barely catch a glimpse of me through the stories or the examples of other theater groups. it is a family which knows its origins, which knows how to recognize its ancestors, its elder brothers, which does not forget its origins. Which refuses to collaborate with the society of amnesia. Which wants to represent the memory of the times, aware that the memory which can be shown is a symbolic action for a handful of spectators.

This is why, when in Brazil listening to a version of Guimaraes Roas's story, *The Third Bank of the River*, I intuited the why of so many years of work. And why, in Belgrade, in 1976, I called Odin Teatret and the other groups by another name, the kind of name we give to a person dear to us: Third Theater.

SKEPTICAL OF THE SPECTACLE¹

Suzanne Lacy

Is Spectacle a grand display of empty sentiment? A show exclusive of participation and intimacy? Or is it a form that changes according to the intent and values of the artist who uses it? It is my premise that a spectacle artwork — something presented as worthy of notice — need not be hollow or deceptive. That grand scale can be a means to an end, expressing political values and personal ethics, and that media technology, which goes hand and hand with the mechanisms of spectacle, can be artfully subverted.

There is a difference between art that describes and reproduces the culture of "Spectacle"², and art that adopts the spectacle as a form. In the catalog introduction to *The Art of Spectacle*³, Jacki Apple makes the following assumptions: "We are witnesses, voyeurs, passive consumers, accomplices... (looking at) an extravaganza, the operatic gesture, the scale of the cinema, the exaggeration of the ordinary, the magnified drama, the intolerable made ordinary, the sensational, an exaltation, a romance, experience as event, a simulation. We are fascinated."

We are fascinated. We struggle to explain a complicated, overwhelming, manipulative environment dictated largely by commercial and corporate interests. But while theories of spectacle are useful in making sense of contemporary culture, their direct application to art may obscure a more

The Crystal Quilt

On Mother's Day, May 1987, *The Crystal Quilt* was performed by 430 women, all over the age of 65. It was the culmination of the 2½ year *Whisper Minnesota Project* by performance artist Suzanne Lacy—an extensive organizing network with over 500 volunteers who developed a media campaign, series of community events, and educational programs on the theme of aging. The *Crystal Quilt* performance involved 20 artists from across the country who contributed their expertise in stage design, sound, documentation, and direction. The two hour performance took place in the center of the IDS Crystal Court, designed by Phillip Johnson, and was live broadcast by the PBS television affiliate in Minneapolis. Dressed completely in black, the performers entered the "stage"—an 82 foot square rug designed by Miriam Schapiro, that served as the base of the quilt pattern. Seated at card tables, they unfolded tablecloths of red and yellow that completed the quilt effect when seen from above. The older women talked to each other while the audience listened to pre-recorded soundtrack of similar conversations. The following quotations are drawn from this soundtrack by composer Susan Stone and a videotape by Linda Brooks.

Older women should make their voices heard in terms of the arms race, because they are the ones who have brought these families into the world and are so deeply concerned about their children and grandchildren. I'm not saying that younger women are not; they are concerned as well. But I think we should shout out our feelings about this everywhere.

thoughtful analysis of some fundamental issues in current art practice — audience, use of mass media, and the scale of public events.

— Audience or Spectator? —

Inherent in most of the writing about art and spectacle, passivity is the presumptive condition of audience. The distinction between the definition of audience (those assembled to hear and see a concert, play, etc.) and spectator (one who looks on; one who sees or beholds an event without taking an active part) is one of passivity. If we confuse works of art with the cultural phenomenon labeled "Spectacle" (thereby replacing the audience with the spectator), we will assume that the creator does not produce meaning, and the observer cannot respond meaningfully. In the comprehensive sweep of such art theorizing, audience as a collection of individuals, perhaps organized within various communities, is subsumed by the anonymous mass audience, and a relationship of manipulation and deception seems all that is possible.

To the contrary, closer examination of some art works reveals that in actuality, involvement by audience, assistants, volunteers and collaborators is complex and varied; differences depend upon how relationships are structured within the process of creating the work. For example, Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*, an impressively elaborate and large scale installation of ceramic plates and needlework whose theme, the reclamation of women's history, won her a broad and populous audience. Certainly the scale of the work and its relationship to contemporary mass media make it a candidate for art as spectacle (as distinct from art describing "The Spectacle"). Are we to assume her audience, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, were passive voyeurs? Does the sheer size of the work make it impossible to have an intimate experience with it? Such evidence as reported audience reactions, letters to the artist, and active involvement



As you approach your exits, when you get to be 70 or 75, I think your response to stimuli is intensified. I feel as though I am living a richer life, because I am experiencing so much more. That sunset, you know, let's have it last a little longer!

I feel like I need to live about two years more, to bring in my crops before the frost, I call it. My unfinished work...I have three books to finish. But that is a patriarchal statement; women don't 'finish' things. —Meridel Le Seuer

of thousands who organized exhibitions of this artwork, seems to indicate that this spectacle inspired anything but passivity. In point of fact, there are several examples of contemporary artists (e.g. Christo, Judy Baca, Lynn Hershman, Mierle Ukeles, myself, among others) who assume attributes of spectacle while encouraging participation. Many of these works intend and seek out participation, and the dialogue thus created is part of their aesthetic language.

Many attributes we might associate with spectacle—dramatic, appealing to the senses, large scale, public—are in fact historically based in community processes.

Between 1885 and 1940, scores of large scale performances called pageants, spectacles, or community theater were produced by small towns, universities, labor unions, social and political clubs.⁴ With hundreds in the cast and thousands in the audience, these performances took place, often outdoors (an annual event on May Day in Central Park featured hundreds of school girls in white), over extended times of up to several days. Extravagant in scale and profoundly participatory, even the “butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker”, according to one account, were recruited to play figures in history, idealized representations of such concepts as “truth” or “justice”, or even themselves. While a great many of these works were simplistic — such as the rather jovial re-enactment of the Salem witch trials — many were sophisticated and radical political strategies. For example, John Reed transplanted a silkworkers strike from Paterson, New Jersey into Madison Square Garden (1913)⁵ in a successful attempt to evade a Manhattan-based news blackout. The Women’s Peace Pageant (1913) featured a Greek-inspired extravaganza with chariots, horses, and hundreds of women and children in togas on the streets of



You get older in other people's eyes; you don't see yourself as old. You look out the window and not the mirror anymore.

I think it's true that we have a vocabulary that describes our beautiful young women, but we don't have as good a vocabulary to describe what is beautiful about older citizens.

Washington, D.C. protesting U.S. entry into World War I.⁶ Community theater artists seemed to believe (perhaps naively by current standards) that spectacle was but a form that could be used in the service of their values, in no way contradictory to ideals of participation.

— Media and Spectacle —

There has been a large and varied artistic response to media ubiquitousness, ranging from simple-minded replication to sly ironic criticism, from self-promotion to political strategizing.

Much of the best art that is about the "Society of the Spectacle" takes a position with irony, intelligence and distance. Barbara Krueger and Jennie Holzer along with performance and video artist Lynn Hershman, are among those artists whose work includes clever and complex analyses of the role media plays in individual and mass psychology.

Jennie Holzer's work began with anonymous posters, "truisms" authoritatively worded, that unnervingly turned the tables on viewer expectations. As she progressively intruded upon the public space through billboards, LED electronic signboards at banks and sports events, and on television, her messages explored the interface between language and media within popular culture and public imagination.

Holzer's attempt to question and reveal the spectacle of language in our media society is paralleled by the work of Barbara Krueger, who often adds imagery drawn from magazines and newspapers to her language system. In works that appear in art collections, popular magazines and on billboards, Krueger explores the shaping of identity by subverting conventional advertising forms, using the tools of the "Spectacle Society" to call attention to its effects.



In many communities we are the ones who do the volunteer work now. Younger people are all employed. I deliver meals on wheels. Practically everybody who delivers meals on wheels is over 65. Since most of the people over 65 are women, most of the people delivering meals on wheels are women. More and more we are doing the volunteer work of the society.

However, once outside the gallery, when these art images become part of the larger media environment, what separates them from mass produced commercials? Do they also assume implicit voyeurism, passive spectatorship? These works confound the expected consumer response by providing "advertisements" that direct us nowhere thereby provoking a useful self-consciousness. But it remains to be seen whether the increasingly broader audiences addressed by these works will result in helpful confrontations, a more active engagement with their audience.

Lynn Hershman delivered a lecture on her work from a studio of a local TV station⁷. Her audience, expecting her live appearance, was surprised to be greeted by Hershman on multiple monitors, live broadcast from a nearby studio. They were invited to talk back, their image supplanting hers on the monitors. This situation provoked anxiety, outrage, and humor. And an intense engagement with questions of mediation and authenticity.

In another manner, my "media campaigns", connected with large scale works, are strategies calculated to involve participation and enhance the visibility of specific social issues.

Such mass media work is part of an aesthetic as well as political strategy and is integral to the structure of the art. In a three year work in Minnesota that resulted in *The Crystal Quilt* performance, media was integral to community organizing, and performers were trained for grass roots media appearances in small rural communities. Media was the venue for the political theme, arrived at with community representatives: Older women, frequently invisible in popular culture, are potential leadership resources. A sub-theme of this was, of course, the exploration of the role of art in setting the public agenda.



I think a lot of senility comes from the fact that nobody asks you anything. Nobody includes you in the social ceremonies. Nobody asks you to speak. Pretty soon you lose your memory. I suffer a lot from people not listening to me. It's like not having a great aged tree to sit under, to protect you or to look at or to feel. I think its a great cultural loss.

—Meridel Le Seuer

We used the interest generated in the developing spectacle of *The Crystal Quilt* as a means to attract media, but the press team maneuvered articulate older women rather than the "artist" into the limelight at every opportunity. To this end, each approach to the media, including television and radio talk shows, public service announcements, feature articles, hard news reports and live coverage of the performance was carefully crafted. Absence of older women in the media was thus changed to visibility through the artwork.

Work that involves media is not without problem. How can one evoke audience engagement using a medium that encourages passivity? We might look to issues of values and meaning to begin to make distinctions and clarify artistic approaches. A disturbing example is the recent exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum (through December 1989), a "mid-career" retrospective of Robert Longo. In a media blitz from the city that produced Hollywood, Longo has been hailed as one of the greatest living American artists; according to an advertisement for his "stage spectacle" entitled "Dream Jumbo: Working the Absolutes", his name "is perhaps THE adjective of the future". What is perhaps clearer to those in the artworld than to uninitiated audiences is that this calculated promotion in the service of its sponsor AT&T, and with the blessing of the artist, magnifies the importance of cultural forms at the expense of content. The flagrant coupling of Longo's self promotion, his dealer's marketing efforts, and the commercial interests of AT&T is perhaps the most urgent explication of our need to develop a critique that explores the relationship of media and spectacle:

*Far greater than the sum of its parts,
Louder than sound
More vibrant than color
More explosive than inspiration ...*

*Longo has made it his business to
redefine communications,
and so do we.*



The only terror of getting old for me is economic. I was put in the hospital a year ago and it wiped me out. Everything I had saved—I used to call it having enough to die on—all gone. Now I'm afraid. I'm not going to be dependent upon my children. What's going to happen to me?

I want to go directly from my home to the undertaker. I wouldn't want to go into a nursing home.

—Etta Furlow

Consulting the dictionary again; spectacle is "extraordinary or worthy of notice, a pageant; a public show on a grand scale." In refining our understanding of the relationship of spectacle art to the "Spectacle Society", size is a most important consideration, including the size of audience and presentation itself, as well as the scope of subject matter. Newton and Helen Harrison, creating master plans using science, poetry, art and planning to address urban and social problems; Judy Chicago, working on an extensive analysis of the Holocaust and its relationship to contemporary society; Mierle Ladermann-Ukeles, designing a waste disposal plant as a work of public art; Judy Baca, organizing hundreds of ghetto youth to create a mural over a mile long on the history of Third World California — all of these artists work with inclusive concepts of history, a comprehensive range of issues, and often they employ mass communication forms in their work strategy. They draw a large circle around the methods and processes they will include as part of their practice, and they tackle daunting social problems with an aggression akin to that of political activists. In a word, these artists think big.

They think in big enough terms that their pieces could conceivably produce community, and here is perhaps the crux of this matter of scale. Large scale artwork in the form of spectacle, situated within and broadcast by the media of a community, has more in common with politically engaged actions such as those by Greenpeace than it does with theories about the "Spectacle Society". Artwork that intends audience participation may be called into being by the very comprehensiveness of the issues inherent in the work, and the strategy of spectacle is then appropriate to the cultural environment in which such themes are played out.

Within the grand sweep of our culture, how else is an alternative to be voice heard?

FOOTNOTES

1. A title drawn from Judy Baca's billboard project for Venice Boulevard in Los Angeles.
2. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Black & Red Publishing, Detroit, 1983. For the record, the concern with the relationship of mass media to culture and values did not come solely from French theory, though that is often cited as the major source. Media theorists began critiquing television as early as 1950 and during the late sixties and early seventies social scientists such as George Gerbner and Irving Goffman were direct sources for feminists who developed an analysis of the iconography of female representation in media environment.
3. "The Art of Spectacle" interdisciplinary performance festival was presented by Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, (LACE), Some Serious Business, Inc., and UCLA Center for the Arts. Participating artists were Glenn Branca, Remy Charlip, Ping Chong, Lin Hixson, Robert Longo, Rachel Rosenthal, and Carl Stone.
4. It is interesting that during the early 1900s, this movement coincided with even larger mass audience performance events in Russia, heralding the victory of the revolution.
5. Linda Nochlin, "The Patterson Strike Pageant of 1913", *Art in America*, May/June 1974 p64.
6. *Women in American Theater*, Ed. Helen Crichinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins. Crown Publishing, 1981.
7. *CitySites* was a series of site-specific lectures on the socio-political dimensions of public art sponsored by the California College of Arts & Crafts and the Oakland Arts Council. Participating artists include Newton & Helen Harrison, Allan Kaprow, Marie Johnson Calloway, Judy Baca, Adrian Piper, John Malpede, Suzanne Lacy, Mierle Ladermann-Ukeles, and Lynn Hershman.

As I come to realize that death is going to be a part of my life in the next few years, I become more and more aware of what I have given and not given to my children. And I try to make my contribution to their lives more colorful, more exacting in standards, but also more enjoyable. So that if they have to go through that period of indignity with me, they will have the remembrance of a richer, better relationship.

Toine Horvers

My work involves movement: hence, it also entails space and time, changes, life, history.

I perceive an overwhelming beauty in processes of movement and change. We only have to take a simple change like light into darkness. It displays such an amazing amount of spatial, physical and psychological aspects that it may be likened to a journey from one world into another.

I'm particularly fascinated by the intangibility of all the subtle movements lying in between these extremes.

In the case of theater, music and dance, these kinds of changes and movements are mostly used as means towards narrating a story. Although they constitute the actual story in my work, they are in fact metaphors of life itself.

Initially my work focused on the movements of my own body; *transformations* that are subject to a stringent formal and temporal process and that gradually tauten my relaxed body.

The sensation of such a movement is that of an adventurous physical and mental journey through time.

A composition of this sort—lasting but several minutes—consists of only two elements: body outline and strength, change and time.

The nature of this process causes me to concentrate on these elements alone, or carrying it even further, *forces* me to concentrate on these elements. I feel that, as a re-

sult, it creates an aura and I strive towards compressing the elements I wish to deal with into a sculpture of concentration.

It is in fact this quest for perfection that, to my mind, is the quintessence of every work of art. The searching acts as a kind of leitmotif throughout my work: each element should contribute as much as possible to the concept, in an eternal attempt to capture the impalpable.

It is a constant battle with the composition's elements. Every new composition requires one to redefine the subject and determine the existential and non-existential factors.

I also touch upon the traditional forms of expression of past centuries: rituals, theater, architecture, dance, vocals, drums, music,...

At the same time I long to establish contact with these traditions; history plays a major role in every composition.

These initial body changes occasioned a greater involvement with space, both on an architectural and on a cosmic level.

My body (physical strength) functions as a central motor for a spatial and temporal movement.

The compositions become encounters between human and other sources of energy: light, clouds, waves, the wind.

In a further stage I no longer consider it essential that I myself am actually performing the composition, and I invite

other people to participate in the composition.

What remains is pure form, both in space and in time, whereby I act as a designer and organizer.

However, by making the composition dependent on other people, it grows more vulnerable, unstable, but also livelier.

To me, it is precisely this instability and vivaciousness that create the movement's monumentality.

In the end, the quest for space and freedom is what matters most, even if the shape is strict and symmetrical.

"Clouds" and "waves" are about the only words that are available to me as titles for my pieces. But don't they also describe unstable and poetic occurrences?

This dichotomy is perhaps a part of the Dutch tradition of art: land of the sea, clouds, rains, whilst at the same time being so small and orderly in symmetrical and rhythmic lines and spaces (I'm referring to Mondrian).

TRANSFORMATIONS

Starting from an upright, relaxed position, I add a simple alteration to of my physical posture, until I've attained a state of extreme tension.

Afterwards, the shape and tension diminish until the initial position is resumed.

I approach the completion of the entire process as slowly as possible and with the utmost degree of concentration.



CHRISTINE BOND

T W I L I G H T

Movement sound sculpture

Temple Bar Studios Dublin Ireland 29/5/86.

Performed by 25 volunteer participants.

The new hall-space of the Temple Bar Studios has one short side (which is almost entirely made of glass) that faces onto the street.

Because these are the only windows in the 20 meter long hall, the effect of the daylight is progressively diminished the further into the space one walks. I measured the course of daylight during the twilight hours with a light meter. Before this piece I conducted a workshop with the participants.

PERFORMANCE:

At 9 pm, when there was still some trace of daylight left, 25 people stood along the space's central line, (in other words): from the light to the dark side.

They stood side by side, alternately looking in opposite directions and making low relaxed vocal sounds.

The volume of those standing in the light part was quite loud while those in the darker area were quieter.

The people in between tried to pitch their voices at a volume relative to their position in the line.

Every four minutes, the person nearest to the window (who was holding a small clock) would take a sideways step towards the dark part and accordingly lower the volume of his or her voice.

The other people would also move up and, in turn, adjust their volume to the new situation.

The person next to the dark wall would then leave the row.

As the daylight diminished, the row became shorter and the total volume of voices decreased.

The work ended after about two hours when the last person who was standing at the end of the row in the dark and working at a very low vocal volume, left the row.

POSTSCRIPT:

During the whole process, the door onto the street was left open so that anyone interested could walk in and out. This meant that as the sound of the voices became weaker, all kinds of elements from the street, such as the voices of passers-by and the lights and sounds of cars, gradually took over the space.



S T I M M E N

Movement Soundscape.
Moltkerei Werkstatt Cologne 17/9/86.
Performed by visitors.

I wanted to make a sound-wave of voices that would travel through the space and where the course and duration would be defined by the order and time span in which the visitors (who had been requested to participate) entered and remained in the space.

SITUATION AND PERFORMANCE:

Chairs were placed in a row along the central line of the L-shaped space, each facing in a direction opposite to the one next to it.

There was large clock in the corner

It was announced that the work would begin at 8 pm.

On arrival, each visitor was presented with the following text:

You are requested to participate in this voice sculpture for 30 minutes.

Please wait until you've taken to your place.

Sit down and make long, relaxed vocal sounds.

You should make your volume a little lower than the person next to you.

You can define the pitch and the length of the pauses yourself but do it so that you can continue steadily for half an hour.

Try to keep the sound at the same volume as best as possible for 30 minutes.

If each participant stops after half an hour and leaves the row, the sculpture will finish when the last two arrivals, who will make low soft tones, leave the row.

POSTSCRIPT:

Fourteen people participated in the sculpture (almost all the people who visited the performance).

The last people began at 8:30 pm so that the whole process lasted an hour. Hence, the sound not only became softer, but travelled from the closest points on the L-shape to the furthest; the last two performers couldn't see each other.



HENK GERAEDTS

B A L A N C E 5

Installation of Motion

Amstelpark Triennial for Sculpture 1984.

12/5, 1 and 16/6, 14/7/84. Amstelpark Amsterdam

Out of parts of bamboo I have composed a rod of about eighteen meters in length, going from thick (5 cm) to thin (0.3 cm). The rod is painted white.

For during the period of the exhibition I chose four dates on which to show my installation of motion, "Balance 5."

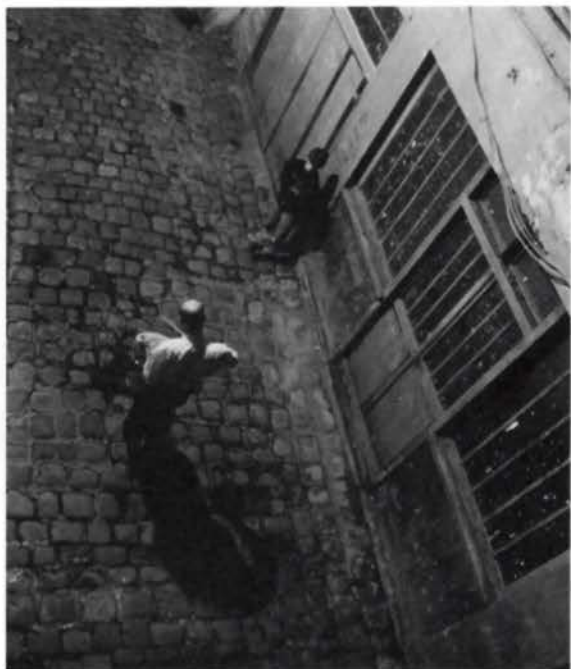
On those days, from 10 am to 6 pm near the edge of the park pond, I balanced the rod for short intervals. During those performances I dress in white. I chose a quiet place in a reeds near the Japanese garden.

I put one end of the rod on a wooden pier and extend the other over the water.

Around my back, and under my armpits, I have a belt with a rope attached, the end of which is connected the rod.

By moving this rope up and down the rod, I can find the position which brings the weight of the rod and mine in balance. I adjust the balance in such a way that I can lean backwards with my body at full stretch, my feet against the foot of the rod and the thin end of the rod resting above the surface of the water, as still as possible, and thus, making it possible to read off when it is out of balance.

Because of the physical inability to stand absolutely still, the length and flexibility of the material used, and the influence of the wind, there is a continuous motion. Again and again I'm busy making small corrections in the balance.



TRACEY MEAD

V A G U E S

Movement Sound Installation

La Genie de la Bastille Passage Rue de la Roquette
Paris France, 29/10/88.

SITUATION AND PERFORMANCE:

For one hour I walked up and down the deadend alleyway beating the unbroken drumroll.

My gradual shifts in walking tempo and volume of drumming were directed at making audible and visible waves of human energy that floated along the entire length of the alleyway.



W R I T I N G 1

Movement Sculpture
Lokaal 01 Breda 11 18/9/87
Performed by visitors.

SITUATION AND PLAN:

The two most striking landmarks of the Lokaal 01 space are its pillars. They form twin centers; the surrounding volumes of space are almost equal.

My plan was to translate, as it were, the spatial emanation of those pillars into human energy.

To make the assembled energy—both physical and mental—of a number of people readable by means of writing on the floor.

For eight days those interested could contribute to this writing sculpture.

SET-UP AND ORGANIZATION:

Starting from the centers—the pillars—concentric circles are drawn on the floor that covers almost the entire surface. The distances between are ten centimeters. The two sets of circles partially overlap one another.

THE NEXT INSTRUCTIONS ARE GIVEN TO THE VISITORS:

Starting on one of the rings, you are invited to keep writing your name in black crayon until you reach the pillar. You have to write on the ring where you start—whether that is the outermost or one nearer the center—with as little pressure on the crayon as possible.

While continuing to write towards the pillar, this pressure has to be increased as evenly as possible so that in your opinion the blackest and heaviest impression of your name is on the ring closest to the pillar.

You can specify whether you prefer to write a lot (by starting on one of the outer rings) or just a little (by starting on a ring close to the middle.)

SOME IMPORTANT POINTERS:

It is important to write facing towards the middle. This way you can constantly control the ratio between writing pressure and distance.

It is important to write in the space between the lines and preferably as large as possible.

When you come to the end of a ring, you have to go on to the next one, towards the one in the middle.

You have to pay as little attention as possible to those who have been writing before you and try to concentrate on your own writing.

It is important to try not to smudge the crayon with your feet.



HENK GERAEDTS

W A K E 1

Movement Sculpture

B.K.R. -presentation, Stichting ENNU Tilburg 29/8/84

SITUATION:

Above the middle line of the 21-meters long space of Stichting Ennue, above man's height, I have stretched a nylon thread, with small pieces of paper attached. At one side are hanging close together and, according to a gradual series, to the distance between them becomes bigger and bigger, from two centimeters till twelve meters. These small pieces of paper are numbered from one to thirty and mark the distances which have to be covered every minute.

PERFORMANCE:

I am at one end of the room, bare-footed, situated so that number one is right above me. I'm dressed in white, carrying a sowing-box filled with white flour. In my left hand I have a digital-clock and behind me, against the wall, there is a metronome marking the seconds.

When the clock has started, I take a handful of flour during the first two seconds and during the third and fourth second I sow it to the right and left as far away as possible. This action is repeated until the end, during 30 minutes. At the same time I move to the next piece of paper, by "dragging" myself forward by my toes. As the distances grow bigger, the shifting becomes walking with very small steps. Because the flour is spread over a larger distance per minute, a white path develops, from covering till transparent, with a dark line in the middle marking the movements of my feet.



PETER COX

T U R N I N G 1

The factory, Baarsstraat Eindhoven 11/4/81.

In the center of the hall I have drawn a circle of one meter with chalk. Around it a circle of ten meter and another one of twelve meters. The audience is requested to stay outside the largest circle. In the middle, at eye level, is a clear lamp of 300 watts in a fitting made to weigh 1 kg. When the lamp is switched on I run— all dressed in white—as fast as I can along the circle of ten meters and then go to the center spirally and at the same time reducing speed, until I come to a standstill as close to the lamp as possible. Then I take the lamp, to which a steel cable has been attached, in my hand and make it slowly turn around my head, increasing the speed and the radius of the circle. This increase goes on until the lamp, humming, turns circles with a diameter of 10 to 11 meters at the highest possible speed.

PERFORMANCES

Nina Sobell



CONES: People devising their own ways of working them, standing them up, stacking them, rolling around...

I BEGAN TO DOCUMENT with videotape people's un-directed interaction with my sculptures that I anonymously placed in public areas. When they saw themselves on video, a curious phenomenon occurred; they viewed themselves with fascination. I began to explore video-sculpture time/space. I was intrigued with creating psycho-sociological transforms; the Urban Sculptural Environment came

into play. An oasis where urban dwellers could come, enabling them to control their environment instead of it controlling them. I made environments in which one could physically engage, derived through traditional art strategies. Huge Cones, Rockables, instant Night Boxes of brightly colored foam/black satin interiors, green foam mountains with simulated sunlight and more. Working with time, perception, exploring cognitive theories as art, led me further into the non-static world of video. At this point, I needed to retreat into an intimate personal dialogue, making sculpture for video camera space only, compressing time and private experience.

I set about elemental explorations of space/object, through the lens video of my living environment; getting closer to a more clearly defined voyeurism. I became the public and the image in between. I dove into the intimacy of the screen. I made no rules, no requirements to entertain. I could conjure mystery, melancholy, unabashed sensual sentiment or cold detachment. What expression did my mouth make when formally breaking pieces of glass without goggles? What rhythm was created by the hammer hitting the glass? What attitude did I have to maintain without being maimed? The pursing of my lips, the flinching eyes revealing apprehension of possible pain. Primitive analysis through personal ritual, an art.



Steve Kahn

GLASS BREAKING: Hammering pieces of glass without goggles, observing the perception of fear and control

If the video (voodoo) could touch the subconscious then it could be massaged by the subconscious, to feed back upon itself. The eclectic electronic communication between two people ... hmmm ... If I am working with an



Steve Kuhn

electronic medium and I myself am emitting electrical frequencies, how can I get

BRAINWAVE DRAWING: Two people creating an image, watching and changing their physical and mental portrait.

closer to these wave patterns? "Brainwave Drawing": Two people communicating non-verbally, when they emit the same brainwave at the same time, an irregular circular configuration appeared on the screen. When one person was more distracted, the circle distorted horizontally or vertically. I began working with Dr. Barry Sterman at the Sepulveda Veteran's VA Hospital, Neuropsychology Lab in LA. I brought the video equipment for participants to record their communication superimposed simultaneously on their faces: creating a mental and physical portrait they were sure was their own. TV speaks the truth, when on TV we are real. Our innate ability to create a drawing with our brainwaves was realized. Retreat time, into the daring socialized behavior, breaking through the patterns of complacent existence. Extreme art, response art, near death art, marginal life.

I abandoned tech for rice paper and charcoal, drawing out from the paper, dissolving the glass on the screen. A year of isolation, painting and drawing. My love/hate relationship with tech crowds my mind, video sculpture resurfaces. I begin working on the videophone installation.



Steve Kuhn

HAIRCOMB: Mirrored movements explore transsexual inferences, using the video space to push expressions otherwise undisclosed.

When observing our televised image, while communicating with another, are we more observant of our cognitive abilities? Have we come to accept our surveilled image as being more powerful with TV's embrace? London, the Acme Gallery, Covent Garden: street level display window, telephone on ledge accessible to

passersby. Window space screened off from rear of gallery, people may observe piece, me, without me knowing they were there. Two split screen monitors, one facing me, as I sit at a 45 degree angle, one facing them. We see and speak with each other through this matrix only. Eventually the public accesses the "window seat." I retreat giving them

the power to perform the piece independently, with their own interpretations.

Replacing the screen of an old empty TV with a two-way mirror, and



VIDEOPHONE RELAY: Exhibiting the behavior of people's communication in response to their televised image. They see me behind glass, I refuse to turn to them, instead we talk through the TV.

putting a closed-circuit camera inside, I could have eye contact, having the recorded image be direct, instead of side glances, at the camera. In this manner I contrived a public/private space. A closed-circuit monitor faced the audience, displaying the intimate activities I was engaged in. I was adjacent to it with my back facing them.

Defying the separation of private/public art, Baby Chickey permeates the air; cavorting in places too private to be public, too revealing to remain private.



BABY CHICKEY: "If you're not able to walk, not able to talk, not able to identify yourself in society, then into the pot you go."

Back in L.A., I'm able to delve into censored intimacies with Baby Chickey. Other pieces weren't censored. Those which didn't display physical manipulation (necrophilia) or penises flopping onto butts "Flip Flop" etc were acceptable video art fare.

A live performance at LACE. A fine time to reveal "Murder with Mother" having a live Baby Chickey performance as an appetizer, wearing a dead chicken as a mask, I breast feed Baby Chickey. Part II. My lover plays my mother, we reenacted recapitulated the sensational incident when she shot me. I was eleven, close to death but still alive, I didn't die. Enduring this life, long after death of my real baby; long after Baby Chickey was chided onstage by not being able to walk, to talk, to identify itself in society, into the pot it went, to be eaten. My own daughter was devoured by the AIDS virus from a transfusion at birth. She was no longer to walk or talk and we were exiles. While enduring this cruelty with her, we were subjected to countless interviews and sadistic machinations of modern medicine in the pursuit of survival. This impotent omnipotent masquerade self-referential contrivance as our lives were reduced to a struggle for life, the ego stripped, an existential prescience prevailing.

INTERVIEW WITH CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN

William Peterson

William Peterson: How do you usually work with your dreams? Do you usually let them integrate themselves into the work or do you ever try anything more systematic with your dreams like keeping a journal?

Carolee Schneemann: Well the dreams use me. I'm not interested in dreams as such. I pay attention to them but most dreams sort nonsense and debris like an electrical system that has to keep clarifying its own information and charges. When the dream is really persistent, when the dream presents a lot of images then I'd rather...It's a combination of being rather eager and reluctant—I mean I would just like to feel that things are going on in a more rational, projectile way—and then these dreams begin to settle in and occupy a territory between conscious and unconscious that's very full, that's very fixed. That's how most of my work comes. *Meat Joy*—starting way back then (1964)—that was a received dream initially, the whole sense of synergy, the initial images. So that's why these two guys are here [referring to her two kittens].

Is there much difference in the way your static work evolves compared with your performance work as far as the process is concerned?

Some of the installations evolve from dream information—or that area where the mind is very permeable and fluid so that a kinesthetic, synthetic motive or provocation begins to attract certain materials to me.

William Burroughs has said that sometimes he uses dreams from beginning to end in his work. Do you ever do that?

Fresh Blood-A Dream Morphology, for example. That completely follows a dream from beginning to end. It started first as a morphological research. In this dream two persistent attributes—or two essential objects remained from the dream: an umbrella with which I had accidentally pierced a man's thigh, inducing spurts of blood; and a bouquet of dried leaves that had little doll's heads tucked in it. Because I had started to menstruate, I woke up remembering the dream. It had a funny narrative. I had no money at the time. I was having trouble doing any work at all. I was so broke I thought I'll concentrate on this dream and perhaps it will lead to something. As I started to draw the umbrella and the dried leaves, the dream composed a question: "What do these two objects have in common?" As I drew them I saw what they both had in common was a V-shape.

The umbrella formed a triangular V with its stem below, and the bouquet of leaves formed in inverted pyramid, with stems below. I looked at it and thought, well that's a basic vulva shape. V for "vulva". V for "victory". So I went to the dictionary and got all the words with "V's" out and put them all on cards. "Velocity", "vortex", "vector", "virago", just a whole "vocabulary". Then research began in science books on organic forms, natural forms and I photographed sets of micro and macro branching

patterns ranging from leaf cells to surface tensegrity. I collated a "vocabulary" of sacred artifacts that had to do with mandalas, sacred "V" forms, and found a sacred Tantric umbrella! A sacred tantric tree, a pyramid shape with a stem on the end, crisscrossed with little squares that are cut into it and each square has a calligraphic stroke which is a part of a mantra which means "sacred vulva, sacred vulva, sacred vulva"... I organized this "vector vocabulary" with its morphological relays on to cards, and formed them into four units so that each card combined four photographs. Four cards composed page, including a unit "V" from science/nature, one from sacred artifacts, one a drawing—say of figures demonstrating velocity and another from a popular culture source (Busby Berkeley etc.). These pages consisting of the four units of various vectors were then photographed as a slide relay to accompany the dream and a feminist analysis of its themes.

? *Interior Scroll*: people are just as confused and upset about it as when I did it. When I did it I felt that I definitely didn't *want* to do it. It was a dream image again. I woke up and had this old image of a figure—I drew it right away as I saw it in the dream—pulling this coil out of its vagina and the message of the dream was the value of interior knowledge, that everything I've ever done and everything I've ever known comes through my erotic self and this was to absolutely emphasize that and position it physically. So that was just a a drawing and then I wrote about it and the writing about it is my book *More Meat Joy* I think that's a really wonderful piece in which phallic space is diverted and inverted. It posits a perceptual possibility of analyzing space in terms of vulvic space so that everything becomes an impress of what the generative inside *is* rather than being sort of absence, a hollow impression of phallic determination. I write about vulvic space as being the impress, the mold, the structure, the construction of form and I take it in to all forms; I just invert the overtness of phallogocentric analysis of objects and form. So the problem of this little drawing. I was asked to do something at a conference of women artists at a summer event in Easthampton. I said well, I'll read something, I'll paint something and there was like this monkey on my back saying, "you have to enact the drawing." "Go away. Leave me alone. I'm here on vacation; I'm here to have fun." And the next thing I knew I was folding up these little strips of paper, folding them into accordion shapes, and writing a message on them. So I said to my companion, "You have to help me, you have to show me how this works. You have to help me stuff all this inside." And it hurt, like all the edges were cutting so we got out a lot of cold cream. We folded up the narrative—it was like a Japanese origami exercise—we folded it all up because in the drawing the strip was this long. *Indicating arm's length*. I said somehow I have to get something that long inside. And that was real hard





and not only that, I had written in ink so that when I pulled it out it all ran. And I knew that since I had that image I had to make it work and that it should be this wonderful kind of thread of knowledge that was going to be emerging. So I went to the typewriter and I could fit in like six letters per line on the folding of the strip. And I was petrified. I'm nearsighted and I can't perform with lenses on because if I see the people then I'm really petrified. So being very nearsighted gives me a certain audacity because I never know exactly who's out there and I can concentrate on whatever it is I have to do.



Positioned on a high table in front of the audience, a sequence of physical actions evolve momentum for revealing the scroll. People were just flabbergasted, stunned, horrified, ecstatic. And a banker who was a close friend, living out blips of the psyche about power and manipulation and keeping control, whose whole sexual life was a tangled source of confessions, was deeply affected. Sex for him was very confused and mixed up with dominance, power, control.

And so yielding, dissolving, sensitivity and female erotic experience was tainted and destructive for him; he loses power if he identified with that aspect of himself. He was in a bliss over this piece, said, "I finally understand the ticker-tape! I finally understand the transparency of the direction of all my life!" It's the umbilicus, it's the rainbow, it's the ticker-tape, it's the unfolding, the secrets that should be revealed because then you get to real secrets rather than the degraded ones.

Do you know Karen Finley's work? Have you talked with her about the way she uses her body in her work?

We meet on the street corner by accident and we have a few words. Her work is different and it has another strand that's very connected to mine but mine comes out of a lack of repression and hers comes out of this very Catholic, ferocious dynamic to assault and confront and break free. So mine always seems a little sloppy to repressed people because it's coming out of something which I call my farm-girl background. "Hey, you know, c'mon, look, this is real simple; this should be obvious; what's the problem?"

•

Some people turn away when they see me. It is one reason why I might lose a decent job.

What do you mean?

Well, they think I'm going to run around naked, that I'll be sitting in my office doing something obscene when the students come in to consult about their projects. I remember a critic, an historian, that did a panel on gender in which the body was totally obfuscated. She said. "Yes, I understand that your project has been this work with the body." *Project*, it's not a *project*, it's a life process! So, even the terminology just kills you; it drives you into the wrong garage. [laughter] "*Project!*" I don't park there.

I met a happy man
a structuralist filmmaker
-but don't call me that
it's something else I do-
he said we are fond of you
you are charming
but don't ask us
to look at your films
we cannot
there are certain films
we cannot look at
the personal clutter
the persistence of feelings
the hand-touch sensibility
the diaristic indulgence
the painterly mess
the dense gestalt
the primitive techniques

(I don't take the advice
of men who only talk to
themselves)

**PAY ATTENTION TO CRITICAL
AND PRACTICAL FILM LANGUAGE
IT EXISTS FOR AND IN
ONLY
ONE GENDER**

even if you are older than
me
you are a monster I
spawned
you have slithered out
of the excesses and vitality
of the sixties.....

he said you can do as I do
take one clear process
follow its strictest
implications intellectually
establish a system of
permutations establish
their visual set.....

I said my film is concerned
with **DIET AND DIGESTION**

very well he said then
why the train

the train is **DEATH** as there
is die in diet and di in
digestion

then you are back to metaphors
and meanings
my work has no meaning

beyond
the logic of its systems
I have done away with
emotion intuition inspiration-
those aggrandized habits
which
set artists apart from
ordinary people-those
unclear tendencies which
are inflicted upon viewers.....

it's true I said when I watch
your films my mind wanders
freely.....

during the half hour of
pulsing dots I compose letters
dream of my lover
write a grocery list
rummage in the trunk
for a missing sweater
plan the drainage pipes for
the root cellar.....
it is pleasant not to be
manipulated

he protested
you are unable to appreciate
the system the grid
the numerical rational
procedures-
the Pythagorean cues-

saw my failings were worthy
of dismissal I'd be buried
alive my works lost....

he said we can be friends
equally tho we are not artists

equally I said we cannot
be friends equally and we
cannot be artists equally

he told me he had lived
with
a "sculptress" I asked does
that make me a "film-
makeress"

Oh No he said we think of
you
as a dancer



Bill McAllister



Mrs. Phipps



Evelyn Williams



Clara Bentel



Marsha Johnson



Antoine Richardson



Nat Richardson



Janice Koppenhauer



Shelia Amos



Lena Richardson



Florence Blakely



Karl-Blaze Yeary-Johnson

MEET THE NEIGHBORS

Wednesday, August 17, 1988 6:30-8 pm
Max Below + Kim Irwin 713 W. Club Boulevard
Durham, NC

Starting a conversation within a community is key to our artwork in that we believe art should be an action that engages people in a community. By organizing a potluck in our neighborhood, we wanted to meet our neighbors, to give our neighbors information about ourselves and to open up a dialogue within the neighborhood. By acknowledging everyday life with a consciousness and sensibility to ordinary experiences, we try to integrate our art and life with the lives of others. We celebrate the present and the way things are—a celebration of people, place and time. We reaffirm everyday human contact by creating situations or opportunities for people to come together and talk, sometimes forming new bonds and relationships.

We began MEET THE NEIGHBORS by drawing a radius around Kim's house and selecting the twenty nearest houses. We then walked around the neighborhood and knocked on doors, introducing ourselves and inviting everyone to a potluck supper. We followed up with an invitation in everyone's mailbox. The day of the potluck was a typical hot and humid North Carolina day—the temperature was 105°F. The dinner was originally planned for the backyard but due to the heat it took place inside with one small air conditioner in two small rooms.

Mrs. Phipps was the first person to arrive. She told stories of her carousing in Chapel Hill when she was young and how she always enjoyed a drink and could she please have a bourbon on the rocks. Soon after twenty-five neighbors began to arrive with their covered dishes and the two small rooms began to fill up. A third of the dining room was taken up by a large table of food which included fried chicken, potato salad, tomatoes, corn, potato chips, sodas, chocolate



Cercherise



Paul Hollar



Max Below

cake, cornbread, green beans, brownies, coconut cake, deviled eggs and tabouli. Some people sat on the floor, elbow to elbow eating, drinking beer and ice tea, and talking. Conversation included where people worked, how the gardens were doing in the heat and various hobbies, such as, growing orchids, crewel work and floral painting on fireplace screens. Mrs. Williams talked about the wedding dress she was making for her daughter. In a discussion about how long people have lived in the neighborhood, Mr. Williams realized that he and Buck Smith, who lived around the corner, had not met after being neighbors for twenty eight years. People also shared information about the few break-ins that had occurred and how the dogs alerted everyone of strangers in the neighborhood. At the end of the evening, everyone agreed that another neighborhood potluck was a great idea. Two people offered their backyards for another get-together when it was not so hot.

Initially MEET THE NEIGHBORS was to include friends and acquaintances outside of the neighborhood, but we realized that these people would have become an audience, therefore creating a performance event. We feel a "Real Time" experience can more easily happen when everyone is a participant and not a viewer. We set up a loose framework like a potluck picnic, in a traditionally non-art environment to encourage this kind of "Real Time" event. The basis of our work is art as direct communication rather than as an indirect means of communication, for example, painting or video. By using direct communication, such as, a conversation, we are exploring and expanding personal ideas about arts purpose in our lives and in our society. By stressing participation, we hope to go beyond a neutral or isolated position to one of partnership and mutual understanding. Currently, we are bringing together diverse groups of people who live or work in the same community. Since the neighborhood potluck, we have continued to work outside of the art environment and have organized a celebration of all the workers on a city block with a pancake supper. We have also sponsored a bowling event which brought together art administrators, artists and park rangers, who work in the Golden Gate National Park.



Ed Williams



Raeshawn



Bianca Wright



Asia Yeary-Johnson



Joy Hollar



Jennifer Thomas



Kim Irwin



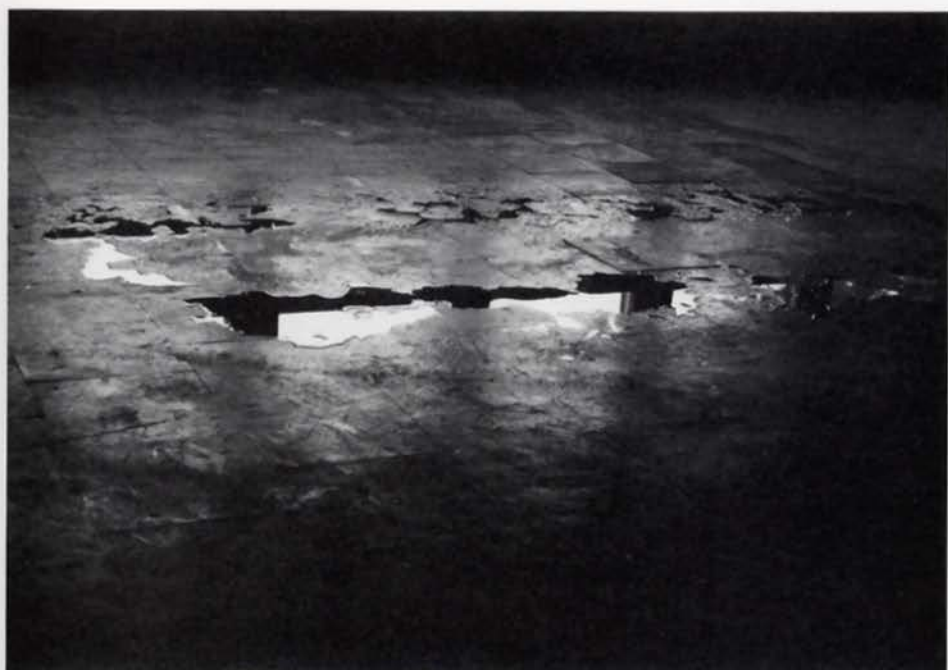
Franklin Bentel



David Koppenhauer



THEY REMAIN IN THE STATE OF METAMORPHOSIS. THEY ARE INDEFINITE. THEY HAVE RESULTED NEITHER FROM EMOTION NOR INTELLECT. THEY ARE PENETRATED NEITHER BY IMAGINATION NOR INTUITION. THEY ARE NEITHER REASON NOR INTELLECT. THEIR CAUSE CONSTITUTES NEITHER NUMBER NOR ORDER; NEITHER BIG QUANTITY NOR SMALL QUANTITY; NEITHER SIMILARITY NOR DISSIMILARITY. IT IS NEITHER SOMETHING UNIQUE NOR EVERYTHING AT THE SAME TIME.



IT HAS NEVER BEEN UTTERED AND IT HAS NEVER BEEN THOUGHT OF. THESE OCCURRENCES HAVE ALWAYS REMAINED BEYOND EXPLANATION. THEIR MEANINGS AND ATTRIBUTES HAVE ESCAPED. IF THEY EXIST SOMEWHERE THEY EXIST SEPARATELY. BEYOND THEMSELVES, BEYOND THEIR IMAGE AND BEYOND ME. THERE ARE NOT ANY OCCURRENCES. THERE IS NEITHER MEMORY OF THEM NOR EVEN THE RECOLLECTION OF MEMORY. IT WOULD APPEAR



THAT THERE IS NOTHING AT ALL BUT THEN THEY JUST COME BACK.
ALL OF A SUDDEN RISING—LIKE AN ECHO—THE DECIMATED FRAG-
MENTS OF THEIR FORMER PRESENCE, SOME ANONYMOUS AND INDIS-
TINGUISHABLE PIECES THAT GIVE AN APPEARANCE ONLY TO
SOMETHING THAT PASSED AND THAT CANNOT BE REVEALED. IN THIS
WAY—AS FRAGMENTS—THEY CONTINUE TO EXIST. INDEPENDENTLY



OF THE OCCURRENCES WITH WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN CONNECTED
AND WHICH HAVE ESCAPED, AND AGAINST OUR NEED FOR EVIDENCE.
I KEEP REPEATING THE SAME THING IN A SIMILAR WAY. NOT TO PROVE
SOMETHING, NOT TO DISCOVER SOMETHING. I KEEP REPEATING IT AS
I EXPECT THAT THE PRESENCE WHICH I CAN SENSE, OR RATHER WHICH
EXISTS IN MY EXPECTATIONS, SHOULD REVEAL ITSELF.

THE MENTAL TECHNOLOGY OF REQUIEM

Aviva Rahmani



First
quarter.
Photo:
Jennifer
Kotter

It's incredible how much pain you can cause if you don't feel your own

My father violently abused me. We achieved reconciliation before he died, after a lifetime of hatred and acrimony. That resolution and preparation for his death was commemorated with REQUIEM, 366 minutes of consecutive meditation on the balance between grief and happiness, for 366 consecutive days.

Abuse both over-sensitizes and de-sensitizes people emotionally and sometimes physically. Death evokes old griefs and abuse itself is death of the spirit. In childhood abuse is a death of the child's life and becomes a form of terrorism carried into *normal* life. Abuse and death are irrevocable experiences.

Private events of lonely duration and emotional focus had been part of my work since the mid-sixties. But unforeseen was my father's actual death, four days before the planned first meditation, and his burial on the day of the third meditation.

REQUIEM is a burial ritual: for surviving an abusive past; for my father's slow death by cancer; for the end of an un-marriage of 23 years; for myself and all the people I've worked with over 20 years of art projects about outsiders: the insane, abused children, violent men and battered women... REQUIEM recognizes that torture victims have to make public their experience in order to survive. In the face of despair, there is the unexpected discovery of hope, and the transition to peace. Personal abuse often mirrors a larger cultural situation; and must be understood as both personal and political. Changes created by abuse are deep and pervasive. REQUIEM freeze-framed a view of the reverse: the recovery process.

Mourning death and mourning abuse. Each have parallel stages of recuperation: as denial, anger, exhaustion, and the need for contact.

Recovery from abuse, however, may take a lifetime, because the extent of the problem is often unrecognized and public support is minimal. REQUIEM sought to address these problems.

A molested three-year old girl and a beaten brawny man in a cell, live the rest of their lives with the same baggage of self-blame and rage. When the past is exhumed to change the future, both may experience their pain more intensely than in the original incident.

The image shows a handwritten form titled "DAILY RECORD OF REQUIEM WORK TO PROMOTE...". The form is divided into several sections, including "PERSONAL INFORMATION", "REQUIREMENTS", "DAILY RECORD", and "REMARKS". It contains extensive handwritten notes in cursive, including names like "Cheryl", "Paul", and "John", and dates like "9/12/88". There are also some diagrams or sketches at the bottom of the page.

Weekly
Review
9/12-
9/18/88

During violent threat, adrenalin and the need to survive are numbing. Assault can evoke an aphasic panic for many victims. Few people willingly talk about these things though the statistics on domestic violence and child abuse imply many more are victims than not. Yet persistent social taboos often ostracize those who break their silence. The survivor may feel caught in a bind: there is no comfortable place in society for these things, but if this residue is ignored, it often gets turned inwards or is acted out against others. Moreover, the victim feels guilt and humiliation beside anger and fear.

I was designing for change.

REQUIEM bore two promises to myself: to truth and to the accurate recording of truth. The ensuing records sometimes shamed me to tears with their revelations. I attached the shame of my victimization to my residual psychic scars and present imperfections. I kept my promise to be truthful, by reminding myself that there was no other way to map the relatively uncharted territory of change and recovery. And there was another reason to be explicit and systematic about the details of my life: abuse survivors often abdicate their own physicality, particularly when remembering body as scene of the crime. I kept daily and periodic records to keep a grip on my well-being.

The most difficult aspect of my commitment was the decision to continue and complete my ritual every day for a year. The first day began with 365 minutes of opening to grief, and then segueing to 1 minute of happiness. Each day I shifted that balance one minute until at the end of the year it was one minute of grief balanced by 365 minutes of happiness.

Each day, at the precise moment, I made the decisive transition from grief to happiness. This strictness pushed me to see the shadows of happiness and grief, shadows I wanted to ignore. When I left the Doctor's office with a scary diagnosis and I had to do a transition to happiness, I called two friends and then had my boyfriend meet me.

I found the expansion into happiness seductive. I dreaded seeing another friend who was dying of AIDS and occasionally walked by street people with a frown.

This first day of REQUIEM, Yom Kippur, October 3, 1987, was also my father's birthday. Yom Kippur begins a cycle in the Jewish Holy season from atonement to the joy of forgiveness.

Each day was identified with a particular source of grief from the Argentine Desaparecidos, to male incest victims, as well as my own traumas from rape, to the crack house across the street. I documented and monitored everything I did and experienced. I made maps and complex schedules for charting everything I did and experiences including meticulous grids of personal routines, photographic series of the changes in my appearance, shifts in my state of mind, diaries and videotape. The purpose of these techniques was to isolate patterns and progressions of change. I sought a kind of scientific strategy: three years of previous charts provided a back-up control. The use of different forms avoids biases caused by genre or media.

I chose just to isolate myself. Since Requiem took place during much of each day. I had to choose what activities I could responsibly do with the meditation. For example, I could not teach since I would have to respond in terms of absolute happiness or absolute grief, something that would not help my students. Personal stamina had to be kept high. I did that with two hours of daily work-outs, careful eating, sleeping, and psychological caution.

I found myself poorly educated. Friends were worried for me because I have a history of deep depression. The further I went with relentless grief,

the more I internalized. The first half of REQUIEM was so severe that responding to other's grief felt like drowning. The most realistic sense of balance, the midpoint, when the reality of grief grounded me in life and the openness to happiness gave me hope and energy in interactions with others.

Excerpt from List of
Daily Requiems

- 63 Dinner Party
- 64 Nightmares (Fighting with Gary)
- 65 Self-deception
- 65 Depression (Gary)
- 66 Almost Dogfight
- 67 Anger
- 68 Reviewing My World
- 70 Relating to World
- 71 Poses
- 72 Gary's Work
- 73 Love-Time Conflict
- 74 Frenzy Over Work
- 75 Fedders & Car Accident
- 76 Insurance & Work
- 77 Good Session
- 78 Ken Peters
- 79 Party
- 80 Fun with Gary
- 81 Sickness
- 82 Continued Sickness & Village Voice
- 83 Strength Before Anxiety
- 84 Happy with Gary
- 86 Home Life
- 87 Serious Money Concerns
- 88 Nurturing
- 89 Worries
- 90 Mahabara
- 91 Worries and Party
- 92 Ken (AIDS) vs. Raphael
- 93 Sharing Worries
- 94 Erika's Requiem
- 95 On-going Anxiety & Pressure
- 96 Sickness, Depression
- 97 Murder, Mother & Gary's Show (lost glove)
- 98 Cold & Chopin
- 99 ArtWorld
- 100 Art, Circus & Gary's Ambivalence
- 101 Acting Out
- 102 Self-hate & Jerri
- 103 Gary's Complications & Requiem Mailing
- 104 Ken vs. Artist's Space
- 105 Meeting Gary Despite Fight; Karen Finley
- 106 Talking with Teh Ching

The second half began with 183 minutes of grief to 183 minutes of happiness. Grief loaded me down like gravity, but there was enough happiness to open me to others and encourage me to reach out for help and support.

During this time I became more receptive to male and female friends. Other's sorrows felt more tolerable. It was easier to reach out to the homeless people in my neighborhood with money or personal contact. The homeless pregnant girl who silently opened the bank door to resolutely oblivious customers. They let me know that being treated as part of the community was as important as money to keep them going. Breaking patterns of internalization and secrecy are at the heart of the transitions, but happiness often came from simple sources: a child's smile, my animals, subway musicians, laughing at taking myself so seriously.

The third quarter brought conflicts into focus but the stress put my psoas muscles into spasm, paralyzing my back. I began to work with an osteopath, body therapists and specialists in Shiatzu and Yoga to learn to move differently, as I was learning to move emotionally. The paralysis was unlocked by accessing terrible memories of abuse. The process of self exposure and stretching was framed in periodic formal body portraits, each excruciating because of my modesty and self-doubt. At the end of the year, the trajectory of my spine, where grief was somatized in

photo:
Jenniffer
Kotter



the uneven arc of my shoulders and lower back, balanced itself and smoothed the line from the base of my skull to my hipjoint.

Part of *REQUIEM*'s intention was to use one's mental technology to help others with their grief. Requiems included friends, acquaintances and often, people who I never met or who had no idea I was doing a Requiem for them. When Judite Dos Santos did a Requiem in my studio, we closed with a collaborative drawing as a record. Barbara T. Smith, in Los Angeles, did a month of Requiems for old relationships and we stayed in touch with periodic phone calls and by mail. In Eleanor Antin's class, a student expressed fears of her own grief before beginning, and in the end, described a sense of relief and comfort from giving in to pain instead of holding it at bay. But Aurora Hector found it difficult to transit to happiness after leaving the grief phase: shortly after leaving my studio she called me from the subway, still in grief. From her I learned that it was crucial to maintain a responsible connection to those I work with. After that, the one variable I tried to control when Requiems were done with others, was making strong personal contact at the exact minute of transition. In Arlene Raven's case, she spoke of having too much grief to do it herself, though she did a Requiem later and thanked me, as did others, for doing a "kaddish" for the deaths and tragedies they'd felt. In each case, I had to find the balance between being open to my own feelings and other's. I came to speak of grief and happiness as a riverbed, sometimes full and sometimes empty.

Sometimes treasured relationships are temporarily or permanently lost. By undertaking *REQUIEM* as a public ritual, through mailings, media mentions and word of mouth, I provided myself with an extended family of other survivors and people concerned with social change.

A victim of abuse is a casualty because of their healthy human vulnerability. Survival depends on denying that. Healthy recovery demands owning one's past. This self-consciousness conflicts with narcissistic models of success and personal empowerment, the soap opera perfection glorified in our culture. The confusion between a healing self-consciousness and narcissism trivializes the strength and courage the slow, incremental healing process requires.

WOOLGATHERER-FILMMAKER

Tyler Stallings

A Definition of a Woolgatherer-Filmmaker

A Woolgatherer-Filmmaker engages in trivial employment and indulges in aimless reverie. Originally, the Woolgatherer-Filmmaker wandered the countryside filming and picking wool off bushes from sheep that had brushed against them. The name is now applied figuratively and has been in use as long ago as the late nineteenth century, as mentioned in Jacob Larkins's *The Arte of Somnambulists*: "Two woolgatherer-filmmakers to one philosopher."

Who is a Woolgatherer-Filmmaker

A Woolgatherer-Filmmaker is the most important person...in person, by mail, or in film. A Woolgatherer-Filmmaker is not dependent on us...we are dependent on them. A Woolgatherer-Filmmaker is not an interruption of our work...s/he is the purpose of our work. We are not doing a favor by serving him/her...the Woolgatherer-Filmmaker is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.

A Woolgatherer-Filmmaker is not someone to argue or match wits with. Nobody ever won an argument with a Woolgatherer-Filmmaker.

A Woolgatherer-Filmmaker's Philosophy

To say to oneself:

"I'm the luckiest in the world.

"I'm the smartest in the world.

"I'm the happiest in the world.

LIFE/ART PROJECTS

An Interdisciplinary Idea

Ellen Zweig

I began teaching Life/Art Projects in 1985 because of an intuition about the nature of the interdisciplinary program I was trying to develop at San Francisco State University. In the Fall of 1984, I had been asked to run the Graduate Program for a department which was then called the Center for Experimental/Interdisciplinary Art (now called the Interarts Center). I taught the introductory course for one semester as a seminar in which students presented their work-in-progress, but this course seemed to me to be going very badly. Basically, the students in the program had little or no shared experience; they came from a wide diversity of backgrounds, worked in various media and intermedia, had different ideas about what experimental might mean, and different ideas about what their ultimate goals were as artists. Thus, in order to give students some sort of shared experience, and to push them beyond their media concerns, I risked imbuing them with my point of view by beginning their Graduate course work with the idea that any life could be framed as art.

This is, of course, a very powerful idea, and particularly so as a teaching tool. First, it allows students to explore autobiographical concerns, but to do so with a strict conceptual underpinning which many of them would not have brought to their work. Life/Art is not a romantic notion; and Life/Art Projects was not meant to be a purely therapeutic experience (more on that later). Second, it introduces students to a whole body of work, both historical and contemporary. In the course, we read books such as Gianfranco Baruchello's *How to Imagine* and Marcia Tucker's *Choices*. Linda Montano visited the class at least once a year; Linda's visits were always inspiring, and since she is in the middle of a seven year piece, we became part of that piece, following her growth through the chakras. Finally, the class created a close community; all of the students in a given semester had revealed part of themselves to each other, sometimes in very moving sessions (not always emotional, sometimes humorous, sometimes with ironic detachment, but somehow still very personal) and every Graduate student had gone through the course. It was like an initiation. Although students were not expected to continue with this kind of work, and many didn't, they could embark on their own explorations with a shared experience that gave them new and expansive ways to think about art.

When I began teaching Life/Art Projects, I described the one semester-long assignment in the following manner: Choose an aspect of everyday living that can be explored and expanded into art. It might be a job, a family, an apartment, a neighborhood. Students will present a series of works or transformations of life into art; presentations will be works-in-progress. I soon found two major problems with this description. First, students thought that the works-in-progress were supposed to add up to a final, finished, polished presentation at the end. I continually had to remind them that this whole exploration was about process, not product, and that there was no necessary final goal.

The second problem was more troubling; students sometimes tried to use the class as therapy. I found that I had to put more stress on the idea of a strong conceptual basis for the project, and although this tended to reward students who were more inclined to thinking rather than feeling, nevertheless, it was still a necessary reminder that class was not really the proper place for therapy. There was a fine line between therapy that could not happen in class and therapy that did happen. I felt that as a teacher I was always juggling this complicated series of definitions and powerful emotions.

Some examples might clarify this dilemma. Each student was required by the second week to describe to the class his or her project. One semester a student suggested that she would stop taking drugs and alcohol as her piece; she was heavily addicted to these substances. This clearly seemed to me to be an inappropriate project; I felt unable to deal with the possible repercussions and thought that class was too public a place for this particular set of problems. In a private conference, the student and I decided that it would be better for her to solve her drug problem with a therapist and she dropped the class.

On the other hand, several projects which were conceptually strong were also both very emotional and therapeutic. For example, in the Fall of 1985, Diane Stemper decided to deal with the fact that she was frightened of her new neighborhood by sweeping the steps of her apartment house every day, documenting the process in a journal and with photographs. She also picked up pieces of litter from the steps and made a series of color xeroxes of the objects with text from the journal. Through the course of the semester, Diane found that she began to have conversations with the men who sat on the steps, that they teased her for sweeping, but also tried to cooperate by leaving less litter. Other people in the neighborhood noticed her sweeping and began to talk with her; one man said that he used to sweep but the street was like the bottom of a bowl and litter just fell into it from all over so he eventually got discouraged and gave up. One day Diane came to class very distraught because she had tried to plant flowers around the tree in front of her house and the litter that collected below the tree had killed the tiny plants. I suggested that she plant plastic flowers in a kind of fence and then put her real plants inside, because people couldn't really get the idea when the plants were so small. Although she resisted this idea, hating the image of plastic flowers, she decided to try it out and, indeed, there was no longer any litter around the tree. People commented on the pretty flowers and thanked her for making the neighborhood look better; and eventually the real flowers had a chance to grow. Diane's piece, which she summed up in xerox book at the end of the semester, change her experience of her neighborhood, made living there easier for her, and helped her to interact with her neighbors. The piece was thoughtful and carefully

executed; and the book worked well as a record of the processes of the piece.

In the Fall of 1986, Marguerite Thayer decided to document everything that she put on and took off her body in order to pay more attention to her appearance. Marguerite, an older student who admitted that she didn't like the way she looked and felt that her body was aging and therefore unattractive, began by taking polaroids of her clothes each morning before she put them on. In addition, each time that she cut her fingernails, or found hair in the drain of the bathtub, she would collect these objects in a plastic bag, take them to work, and xerox them. As the semester progressed, Marguerite had collected quite a lot of powerful and somewhat creepy objects which she would lay before us in her presentations, describing her feelings about her body as she did so. In her last presentation, Marguerite also showed a videotape in which she documented her naked body; holding the camera close to her leg, she panned up her body commenting: "look, I have varicose veins, my thighs are too fat, I always hated my hips." The younger students in the class, especially the women, found this tape so moving that they were in tears by the end and rushed up to hug Marguerite and tell her how brave and beautiful she really was. This is the kind of therapy that could happen in a life art class, because the work was so deep and so courageous.

All sorts of projects occurred in the three years that I taught Life/Art Projects. Some students created personae and lived as them for the semester. Other students documented the sounds of their job, or the number of times they made phone calls or their obsessions with water. One student created a publishing company, did all of the business aspects and advertising for it, but never intended to have any real books. His descriptions of those books, in a catalogue sent out to prospective buyers, were hilariously funny. Some projects were ultimately unsuccessful, but still provided an opportunity for the student to explore a variety of conceptual approaches to both art and life.

Just as doing Life/Art Projects is a personal endeavor, so is teaching Life/Art Projects. When I left San Francisco in 1987, I was especially pleased to be able to turn the class over to Christine Tamblyn, who I knew would teach it from her own experiences as a Life artist. Although I would guess that our approach is somewhat different, I think that we share the basic idea that this class is crucial as both an introduction and initiation for our students. In 1990, I will teach Life/Art again, this time at Franklin and Marshall College to undergraduates in the context of a Performance Studies Program. In this new context, I will try to explore with my students how life and art and life as art can be seen as performance; for performance, like life art, is a powerful beginning in a life as an artist.

ANGELS HAVE BEEN SENT TO ME

Jerri Allyn

On May 2, 1987, my 87 year old grandmother, Maria Alvarez, had a major stroke and almost died - but she didn't. Her care fell to my brother and I, and our lives have not been the same since. Visiting her in a critical care home (only!) twice a week and handling the innumerable details of her life, has been the most difficult, and most deeply moving work I've ever done.

Angels Have Been Sent to Me - which is what she exclaims every single time we visit - is my way of coping with her. The following are stories from Angels, an environmental installation about Maria, aging, and disability, in which I ask the "normal" public to temporarily disable themselves. Then people travel from the gallery to Maria's home to see a talent show by the patients and talk. This activity takes half a day; people are encouraged to return and volunteer.

MAMA 3 YEARS LATER (1987)

I visit my grandmother. Muy abuelita, in Bellevue Hospital. The place you get sent when you don't have insurance, or you're old, or insane.

She is laying in shit. Her own shit. Her hands covered. Feces on her face, her cheeks. She keeps rubbing her jaw and moaning in confusion, (toothless), "Oh, my God, how has this happened? How has this happened to me?" Feces on her nightgown, on her robe. Feces ALL OVER THE SHEETS.

My eighty-seven year old grandmother covered. Primal, maybe is the feeling. Repulsed and compassionate all at once. An instinctual knowing that she needs a sense of dignity in this.

I leave, find a nurse, tell her Lita must be changed IMMEDIATELY, and as usual, she tells me she'll come when she has a minute. There are not enough minutes for them. And there are not enough nurses for me.



Photo:
Peter
McCracken

Photo:
Peter
McCracken



I cannot wait. I decide to change her myself. Denise, a young black woman in the bed next to Lita's, also had a stroke - at age 30 - a side effect from acute epilepsy. She's been in Bellevue four months with grand seizures daily, but she's not paralyzed, and comes over to help.

I brace myself against the stench and the vision of my grandmother covered.

First, the bassinet with soapy water. Second, towels to wash and wipe. Third, clean diapers, plastic and regular bed sheets, and a clean nightgown. Denise expertly rolls her to one side, as I strip one half the bed, then Lita of one half her clothes. I clean the folds between her thighs and buttocks, the lips of her vagina, her upper legs, her back, her everything. She is shocked at the feel of cold water.

She is moaning, exclaiming repeatedly, "Oh my God! Oh mi Dios!" Pleading for hot towels. Of course there are none. Forgive me, please, forgive me these cold water towels. Praying frantically. Moving as fast as I can. Her body shaking, covered in goosebumps. Lita is pleading, demanding, cajoling that we heat the towels in the oven.

Gently we roll her onto the now clean side of the bed, push the last half of the dirty sheets aside, the rest of her dirty gown and robe. I start the 'wipe down' here. Sponge the bed sores with the gentle aplomb of an imagined fairy princess. Medicate the sores.

Denise starts cackling and says, "Now, come on, Mama, where we gonna get an oven? We're on the Neurology Ward. They ain't gonna give us ovens, 'cause they know we'd stick our heads in to get over this pain!"

I smile wanly in the midst of my terror. I thank whoever profusely for Denny's help, her compassion, her humor. Her constant banter with my grandmother. She starts kidding Lita about flirting with the male aid, Jose.

"Luscious you said, Mama. Like heaven, you said, Mama!"

"Yes, he was good. So gentle feeding me lunch!"

She brings a smile to Lita's lips. I kiss the ground beneath Denny's feet.



Photo:
Dona
Ann
McAdams

ANOTHER YEAR LATER (1988)

(Spoken as if toothless. If you've got a set, speak as if your lips are wrapped around your teeth.)

"Sometimes I am so angry at God about being in this place! But what can you do about the guy? He does *anything* he wants and you can't take a breath without him."

I, like her in this place. I mean, I don't like that she has to be here, in this critical care home, but it beats Bellevue, it beats a state asylum, and I *like* how she is. She needs me. She treats me good here. Only a little scrap now and then, in this place.

CUPS AND SAUCERS

(Toothless.) "This is what you've brought to talk about?" she asks, clearly annoyed.

I ignore her and continue, "Can you see the flying saucer in this picture? Are your eyes still good enough to see it?"

She is straining, then laughs, and asks, "Where's the cup?"

I show her more Unidentified Flying Objects.

"Am I supposed to remember these?" she (toothlessly) asks, still laughing. "I can only remember the saucer!"

"You don't have to remember a thing. Dr. Frema told us we should try and engage our intellectual powers. I thought you might enjoy this book, *Folk Concepts of Outer Space*. It's fascinating to me."

"I don't understand any of it"

"It's as simple as this: Some people think there are lives on other planets that visit us on earth."

"That's very advanced intellectual talk. I can't understand a thing you're saying."

"There's not a lot to understand. Some people have organized to worship outer space, and they think they had past lives on other planets."

(Toothless) "What?"

"Past lives."

"What's that?"

I stare at her, trying to figure how to explain to my Catholic grandmother, who is clearly completely lost talking about UFO's, what a "past life" is.

I return to pointing out UFO and spaceship pictures.

"Look, there's Mother Theresa at a UFO landing pad in Canada. You know her, don't you? The Catholic Saint who's devoted her whole life to working with lepers in India?."

(Toothless.) "She devoted her entire life to working with animals?! she asks with equal amounts of disdain and incredulousness.

"No, not leopards, the black cats!" Now I'm laughing. Talking with Lita can be like visiting another planet. "Lepers, the people dying with leprosy, the one's who are quarantined in special colonies, that no one will go near but Mother Theresa!"

(Toothless.) "No, I don't know this Mother Theresa, and what's she doing with a spaceship? I can't understand a thing!"

"Lita, it's not real hard to understand!"

But I have to remember this woman came into the world riding a donkey, not even a horse, on a farm in a foreign county, using an outhouse and wearing bloomers. Her lifetime is the whole twentieth century. In her years, she has seen the tractor, water running through faucets, the car, the airplane, radio, television, the washing machine! She's washed everything by hand for as long as I can remember. She has seen jets and rockets, and astronauts walking on the moon. Maybe this is where the buck stops. Maybe spaceships and aliens truly are beyond her comprehension. Besides that, she is what people in the United States call an "alien" coming to this country from another.

I tell Lita, "Maybe reading these people's stories will help it make sense."

(Toothless.) "You may think reading is a good exercise in gaining understanding but what's the point of reading if I can't remember what I've read?"

Her usual bulls eye shot to my heart, but I am trying the practical approach lately.

"You have a hard time remembering anything these days, Lita, so maybe you should entertain the notion that reading is pleasurable just for the freaking moment!"

(Toothless.) "What a great idea, darling!"

Thank heavens she goes for it! We leaf through the pages, reading about different kinds of UFO's, her favorites being all the ones that are saucer and cup shaped. I like that she's made these UFO's into saucer and cup shapes. For both of us, our favorite twentieth century pastime—coffee in a breakfast joint.



Photo:
Dona
Ann
McAdams

THIS IS NOT PART OF THE BELIEF SYSTEM*

(Experimental Video in the Corporate Context)

KS Fleming

The root of spectacle lies in abundant economy.[†]

For eighteen months beginning in August, 1987, Canadian video artist Norman Cohn was engaged by a financial institution, First Bank Systems (FBS), Minneapolis, to execute a participatory, interactive video project that would involve taping employees. Norman would follow them about during their day, attend their meetings, witnessing their work, interviewing them, engaging them, videocamera on shoulder.

Cohn has developed and refined ways of recording moments in the lives of individuals—children, senior citizens, laborers, athletes, etc.—within certain social and institutional settings. The primary characteristic of his work is the way in which it has from the start *resisted* characterization and fallen between recognized categories of video and performance production. The tapes have been defined *post facto* as objects of study, in hospitals, medical colleges, nursing schools, and as works of art in galleries, museums, and universities.

In the introduction to the project catalogue which the bank published in June, Cohn wrote: "What is the connection, if any, between this kind of video making and the art world? Would these tapes be of interest to another audience or are they only meaningful to the people in them?"

Cohn has always had a greater commitment to having a relationship with his subjects and the careful and observant recording of them, than to working in the prescribed modes of documenting narrative. The bank project is the first time he has so thoroughly acknowledged the relationships inherent in video *per se*, and he does this seem-

The activities of the FBS Division of Visual Arts runs parallel to those of the company itself, and function under the influence of bond-trading catastrophes, portfolio restructuring, corporate belt-tightening and shifts in management. Over the course of the division's five-year history, its manifesti have been almost verbatim equivalents of the mission

statements of the bank itself.

Nevertheless, because its field of expertise is non-financial, the division has to some extent been left to function autonomously within the corporate structure regarded by other departments as "the token radical element in the bank." Taking it upon themselves to help the institution "recognize and place value on conflict, diversity and dissonance", the division has been unafraid to anger or upset employees and clients by forced exposure to work which is provocative, expensive, and admittedly "chic". By 1986, the art acquisition budget at FBS was \$500,000. By 1987, FBS had spent about \$3 million on art. Then, in 1988, the acquisition budget was completely eliminated and the emphasis of the art program shifted toward various forms of collaboration and education." With the various power and monetary shifts within the hierarchy and the slowly increasing, carefully cultivated receptiveness to the art program on the part of employees, the early, almost adversarial stance taken by the division in its acquisition

and dissemination of art has given way to a responsive, collaborative program of activities which address

The oldest social specialization, the specialization of power, is at the root of the spectacle. The spectacle is thus a specialized activity...the diplomatic representation of hierarchic society to itself. The spectacle is the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself, its laudatory monologue...It is the self-portrait of power.

* Former FBS employee referring to the company's visual art program. Interview tape, June 1, 1988.

† This, and all other boxed citations: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1983, *passim*.



the processes of power, aesthetics, and communication within the context of corporate art.

First Bank System, Inc., is a regional, multi-state bank holding company headquartered in the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. With assets of roughly 24-billion, FBS is ranked 14th among banking institutions in the U.S.,

and first among the top twenty American banks in terms of philanthropic contributions as a percentage of assets (about 3.5%). The company's outstanding South African loans total \$39 million, although FBS stopped lending money to the government of South Africa in 1980 and stopped all loans to private borrowers in 1985. Since 1978 FBS has contributed more than \$48 million dollars to human services, cultural and other non-profit community organizations within its six-state jurisdiction. The full-time staff of the Division of Visual Arts comprise four out of roughly 10,600 FBS employees.

"Relationship Banking: Using Total Solutions To Help Our Customers Succeed...This is the heart of relationship banking. We want

ingly at the expense of a finished product.

Process is the primary word Cohn uses to describe the bank project. What this meant in real terms was that taping was conducted in loose phases; documenting introductory conversations with employees about the art program and what role video might play within it, a series of single portraits following subjects through one com-

The present phase of total occupation of social life by the accumulated results of the economy leads to a generalized sliding of having into appearing, from which all actual "having" must draw its immediate prestige and its ultimate function.

plete working day, meetings of the F B S

Women's Group, art selection committees, and finally individual interviews between employees and Visual Arts staff. Duration and frequency of taping was determined by the events/people being recorded, and over the course of the project over seventy tapes were made, ranging in length from half-to 3 1/2 hours. A means of observation and evaluation, the tapes were given to the people in them or erased, according to their wishes, and were not ultimately used as raw material for a final, authored production. Hence, there is no final, edited portrait-of-the-organization by Norman Cohn.

Making static, interior, real-time video documents interesting without creating a talking-head Ring-cycle depends to some extent on the quality of discussion recorded. With Cohn's silent or spoken intervention (his disembodied voice is always a slight surprise since we take the place of the cameraman when viewing the tape), discussion often takes on a candid, personal tone even when embedded in organizational diplomacy and corporate

In the spectacle, which is the image of the ruling economy, the goal is nothing, development everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself.

dress. The outsider fortunate enough to view these tapes is the privileged witness of articulate expressions by, for example, a young financial analyst who alludes to quantum mechanics, the human immune system, tribal modes of decision-making, spirituality and classical music as analogies for his perceptions about various functions within the bank. Quasi-sociological observations become possible: one notices the propensity of male employees to use analogy in expressing their ideas, while women formulate direct, astute observations of the particularities of personalities and situations. Subject matter ranges from the working conditions of women within the corporation, the corporate structure itself and the role played by art in the bank, to people's subjective feelings about being taped and seeing themselves on tape, sometimes repeatedly. Cohn's penetrating, observational strategy is augmented here by the employees' sustained, intelligent verbal analysis:

This is not a process-oriented organization. We're a task organization. You could argue from a research point of view that high performing teams spend time paying attention to not only what they are doing but how they are doing it. I think video became a vehicle that gave people license to communicate in that way.

I think that probably one of my most moving experiences was the first time I watched a videotape by Norman, because just like now, participating in a discussion you have one perception of what's going on and when you watch it later you get to kind of remove yourself from the heat of the moment and look at the dynamics that were going on and how people are reacting to what's being said. I think it was really helpful, in fact, I've recommended it. As we move our culture to more of a consultative, cooperative and problem-solving, conflict-encouraging environment, I think video can be a great tool to help business groups discover what they are doing that gets in the way. Process is so intangible that when you talk about it, a lot of people can't relate to it but when you watch the video, it's right there. How people were behaving and how decisions were being made, how consensus was built, how peer pressure was affecting an individual in the group is very visible. Then it's something you can act on. I think video is a very wonderful tool for helping people get better at problem solving, at being collaborative, and I'd like to see it more widely used.



Bob Laird from the FBS Visual Arts Advisory Team 8/4/88.

to draw every customer into a deeper and more secure relationship with us".

Visual Art Statement

Over the last three years the focus of our work has shifted from object management to relationship management the creation through a variety of interactive processes, of meaningful, more democratic relationships between people and art.

The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images.

My thinking and a lot of other people's thinking is that this organization operates in a patriarchal mode. We do more controlling and more think-

ing for people than we allow them to do for themselves. One result of such a culture is that people are then not truly engaged in what they do. They don't have any authenticity nor do they have any real connections or enthusiasm for the job, be-

What hides under spectacular oppositions is a unity of misery. Behind the masks of total choice, different forms of the same alienation confront each other, all of them built on real contradictions which are repressed. The spectacle exists in a concentrated or a diffuse form depending on the necessities of the particular stage of misery which it denies and supports. In both cases, the spectacle is nothing more than an image of happy unification surrounded by desolation and fear at the tranquil center of misery.



because they don't have the authority to do the job that they've been instructed to do. My work has been an attempt to try and transform our organization's culture into one in which people could have authenticity in their work because they have the authority to make decisions and deliver what they've been asked to deliver. It is really about the empowerment of the employee. If you want to have empowered employees, people who have real authority, then they have to be free to have conflicts and resolve those conflicts. It felt strongly that this organization was conflict averse, and so you could never have real resolutions. I feel that the art program has been trying to help people learn that conflict is productive and creative and that out of it comes your best ideas. Also, it suggests how we might debate, and think about those conflicts and come to resolutions. The other part of the art program which is of interest to me is the empowerment part. The way I've seen the art department evolve over time has been to put more authority and empowerment in the hands of employees about how it will display artworks, how art will be used in the work place, and what kinds of dialogues we will have around process.

I enjoy very much the heightened sense of awareness that the video process provokes. Like right now, while being videotaped, I'm very much aware of things in the environment that I normally don't pay attention to. It's because I feel like I'm performing. One of the things that I will see when I watch this tape is that I can achieve this

state on my own, without being in front of a camera. I could engineer the same feeling.

The spectacle is always visible. It de-contextualizes and re-presents. It is used by forces greater than those which produce it. In his portrait-process, Cohn rejected outright the potential to make spectacle of the way in which these people function in this environment. Foregoing the impetus toward "proof" in work, autonomy in art and documentary authority, he instead left the documents in private possession, in the fragmentary form which most honestly serves the purpose. These videos will not transfer contexts to find an audience; interpretation has been left to those under scrutiny. The process is complete by definition, by virtue of openness.

The real challenge now is to determine whether it is even possible to introduce such privileged video to contexts other than those in which it was created, without "spectacularizing" it in the process.

Spectacle is the opposite of dialogue.



Video still from Bank: A Video Portrait Process

The Journal Of Skin William Pope.L

Excerpt from a letter to the editor:

I've been developing my own practice...I call it "Speaking through the Prepuce." Literally, its attempt to teach my penis to communicate. I do experiments, lectures, interviews, flagellations and model-building.

My most recent model: A 6 ft. obelisk of creosote and plywood. Designed along the lines of Wilhelm Reich's Orgone containers. The regimen: for an hour each day for 2 months I place my penis in the base of the structure. The penis is wrapped in a suit of aluminum foil and plastic rubber hosing filled with a liquid: water and nitrate crystals. Each insertion, its entire duration is recorded on video tape.

*Excerpts from THE JOURNAL OF SKIN
(Books 1-4, 1989 and Books 2&3, 1987)*

The *Journal of Skin* is an on-going sketch book on the theme of: Penisity. Or, the nature of the penis.

I've been keeping the journal since 1985. There are 37 books in all.

I began the journal because I began to notice my penis more. This sounds simplistic, I know, but just because one has a penis doesn't mean one is aware of what is between one's legs (or one's head for that matter). Either way, the penis is my terrain and vice versa.

As a little boy
I was stung on my
pecker by a bee.

My mother put
ice on it.
I thought it
would fall off.

Later, I got
ice cream for
being so brave.

I TOUCHED MY DICK TODAY
—William.L

That night, in bed
I let my brother
look at it.

**The talking
penis as a
conduit to the
internal speech
of the male body.**

The theme of the penis is unavoidably
univocal...

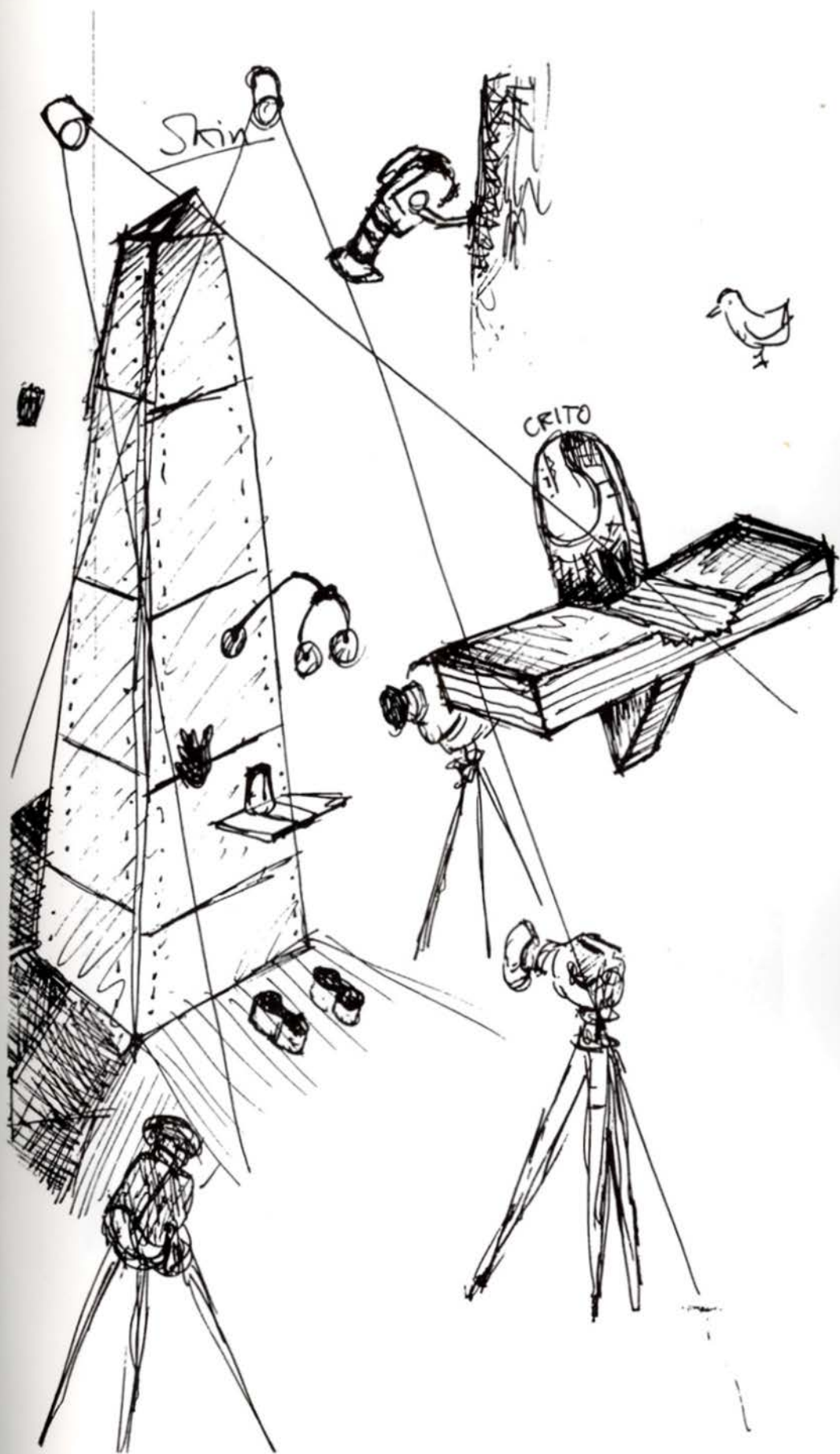
He couldn't
see the
hole.

**If menstruation is the regulatory cycle of the female what
is a comparable system in males?**

Violence.

Seeing my face in the wrinkles of my penis.

Imagine a soul whose
essence is neither
energy nor light nor
knowledge. But direction



GIFT EVERY DAY

Christine Tamblyn

July 7, 1989

Dear Editor,

I decided to do a private work for you. The work entails sending you a gift every day, along with an explanation about the circumstances surrounding the selection of the gift.

•

July 10

The object in question is a mushroom brush made out of brown plastic. The store carried similarly designed green celery brushes and orange carrot brushes. The sales pitch claims that prospective buyers should stop washing vegetables, because of the risk of losing valuable nutrients. Instead, dirt should be removed by scrubbing with the appropriate brush. It may not be facetious to refer to mushroom-gathering as a genre of life art performance. For John Cage, the mushroom hunt epitomizes the receptivity of finding, as opposed to the aggressivity of searching.

•

July 12

It is difficult to maintain the energy to enact arbitrarily constituted scripts when worldly concerns press in. I suppose it violates principles of psychic economy. Since I keep feeling embarrassed and self-conscious about this piece, I've decided to end it by sending you a small rubber monkey mask.

July 7, 1989

Dear Editor,
I decided to do
sending you a
about the circus



...entails
...planation
...tion of the gift.

July 10

The object in question
brown plastic. It is a
celery brush. The
claims that pro
vegetables, be
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performance. For John Cage, the mushroom hunt
epitomizes the receptivity of finding, as opposed to the
aggressivity of searching.

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July 12

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SANITATION MANIFESTO!

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Artist in Residence, NYC Department of Sanitation, May 8, 1984



Why Sanitation Can Be Used As A Model For Public Art

Sanitation is the working out of the human design to accept, confront, manage, control, even use DECAY in urban life.

Sanitation, face it, is the perfect model of the inherent restrictiveness imposed by living inside our corporeal bodies, via material "necessity," in urban civilization (and its discontents), in finite planetary "reality".

We are, all of us whether we desire it or not, *in relation to* Sanitation, implicated, dependent—if we want the City, and ourselves, to last more than a few days. I am—along with every other citizen who lives, works, visits or passes through this space—a *co-producer* of Sanitation's work-product, as well as a *customer* of Sanitation's work. In addition, because this is a thoroughly *public* system, I—we—are all *co-owners*—we have a *right to a say* in all this. We are, each and all, bound to Sanitation, to restrictiveness.

Now, if that is true, how does that inextricable bond impinge on my commitment to Art in democracy as *the* primary system articulating the forms of (individual) *freedom*? What happens to the inherently "free" artist in a most mundane inherently restrictive public work system? Obversely, what happens to the notion of freedom and limitless value of a "public service" sanitation worker in this "free" society? How do these extremes relate? The contextual edges, boundaries and limits of each conflicting field-structure—free-art and social-necessity—shape, frame and ultimately define each other, in tension.

Sanitation is the principal symbol of Time's passage and the mutable value of materiality in organized urban life.

Sanitation, as an environmental energy system, is trapped in a miasma of essentially pre-democratic perceptions. The public generally doesn't 'see' beyond the tip of its nose—or see where we put our waste, or see what we do or should do with it, or see what choices we have about managing our waste. Waste is our immediate unwanted past. Do we "conserve" its energy through transformation, or do we drown in it? We are facing an environmental crisis, because we are running out of space to put it "away". To begin to accept as "ours" the difficult social task of dealing with "our" waste at the highest, not the most mediocre, level of intelligence and creativity in reality, in all its effulgent scale here, people need to understand how they connect one to the other across our society, in all *its* scale. We need holistic inter-connected perceptual models of how we connect and how we add up.

As a first step, we certainly need to peel away and separate ourselves from the ancient, transcultural alienating notion and aura of the caste-stigma of waste-worker, of "garbageman", which has always translated, trickily, into "their" waste, not "ours"; they're "dirty", we're "clean".

Sanitation is the City's first *cultural* system, not its displaced-housekeeper caste-system. To do Sanitation is to husband the City as home. I think it can serve as a model for democratic imagination, as follows:

Sanitation serves *everyone*; it starts from that premise: it accepts that *everyone must be served in a democracy*, and the City must be maintained in working works *everywhere*, no matter what socioeconomic 'culture'. Sanitation works *all the time*, through all seasons, no matter what the weather conditions. *Sanitation is totally inter-dependant with its public: locked in—the server and the served.* Sanitation, in democracy, implies the possibility of a public-social-contract operating laterally, not upstairs-downstairs, but equally between the servers and the served. This is accomplished at totality of scale; yet it deals on an incremental basis (house to house, bag to bag), and it cuts across all differences. Out of these most humble circumstances, we can begin to erect a democratic symbol of commonality.

I believe we *do* share a common symbol system: we are all free citizens of this City. We all [should] have equal rights. We all share responsibility for keeping the City alive. We are inherently INTER-DEPENDENT: that is the essence of living IN a City. That is simply a basic commonality; it does not deny each citizen's individuality, nor diminish the inestimable value of each living being. Rather it sets each of us in a CONTEXT of inter-dependance. We're in this together. Just as by law, we can't ship our garbage OUT, but *have* to deal with it IN our common 'home' manage it so doesn't destroy us, *we too, all together, have to work our individual freedom out without destroying each other.*

Now, here is the intersection between Sanitation as the symbol of inter-dependent reality with free art:

WORKING FREEDOM—THAT'S AN ARTIST'S JOB.

CONTACT ART

Barbara T. Smith



Nativity:
Pageant of
the Holy
Squash.
12/21/88.
Alexis Grey

Contact Art:

It *shatters* the dream of the artist as recluse.

It *shatters* the dream of control.

It *shatters* the dream of a happy retirement.

It is the reality of now.

Borders are broken.

Flux is celebrated.

Participatory art shatters our inherent narcissism.

The world is not in my perfect control.

I get the excitement of having to cope. The surprise of the unexpected. The sense of the heightened reality of the unrehearsed moment in the specialized context called art. The grating nerves of the conditioned expectation or contextual framework set against the situation of novelty, a cognitive dissonance that is an utterly unique experience.

Considering the issue of participation as a qualifying characteristic of contact art, one has to point out that the onset of such work in contemporary art history arose from a major change in world view. Something happened in 1960 give or take a few years. The power of that period was a great awakening sense of Liberty. The individual suddenly had the right to break forms and habits and to act in behalf of others, to be a representative vehicle, to indicate through action the potential of the human being. (If I can do such things, so can you.) The process of life, the human journey through time, became a quest. In a seeming contradiction, 1960 also brought the sense of an interconnected whole earth community and of the dissolving of boundaries between self and other, the body knowledge of our unity with all things material and immaterial, plant, animal, mineral, technological and ancestral.

As performance developed, the question emerged whether it was meant to further the ideas of separation or unity. Much of the art spoke of alienation, although its catharsis could bring on a relieved wholeness. In the cases where its form moved back to the stage and the frame, this body of artworks increasingly set itself up as distinct, thereby emphasizing the separation of subject and object, good and bad, high and low, and other judgemental discriminations that play into the hierarchical patriarchal system.

Other contact art addresses the world and audience differently in terms of form, content and function. Here a feminine matrix—from whence comes all form—is the basis of a connected universe whose members pulse between their communal being and their ego identification. For the members, the surrender to the encounter of self with other is necessary for transformation.

This performance work has change as its qualifying condition. The actions, thus, are purposefully flux-oriented and ephemeral. It pursues openness, energetic clarity, and the deconstruction of old concepts and structures.

Working on this non-material level has a different theory of causation. My art seeks to operate on a pre-causal level and can radically change the realm of conditions, habits, and beliefs. In other words, I believe that my work carries direct and indirect power to effect change, operating on levels other than pragmatic, in ways that cannot be “quantified” or “proved”. At times an artwork has indirect causal relationships in the world at large; at times it is totally and directly apprehended in a single moment, bypassing all filters, if the participant is ready.

Who participates? First of all, I do myself. I am the major participant and the major beneficiary of my work, the only one I can really speak for. I do these things. I do them with a certain intent. There is something very profound that happens when the body is put in alignment with belief or confronted with the unexpected. Self trust is learned and self-awareness is experienced. And information is gained that cannot be verbally expressed.

Who is the art for? I do it to satisfy my own needs, explorations and curiosities and my own inner directed development. I believe it can also affect or benefit others, giving participants the experience of sensing themselves in a performance context, or seeing me do or try to do things I believe. Primarily a non-verbal manipulation of signs, colors, sounds, forms, and symbols in unusual structures, it invites the courage of participation with me in the piece. The literal physical contact made by being in and doing this art is like the body-level grounding and incorporating that happens to the crawling infant, who learns and thus masters a world not so much by language but through the physical senses.

The integration of body and mind is my goal through the breath of spirit.

I

GROUND ZERO

I recently completed a piece in the community I live in, Venice, California. For sixteen days I walked along eight mile-long routes radiating from the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC). I went to every door, business or residential. For me and my assistant it was a series of constant surprises of getting to know this community in depth in ways I never otherwise would.

I was offering a gift, a free art event, and I invited them to participate in a procession along each color-coded ray toward SPARC on an evening in May. There the assembled participants would "circle the world" led by their radial guides and come into a ceremonial space at whose center GROUND ZERO I sat.

I had been preparing a long time for this piece, taking in all that I had learned of community strife and fears (including gang violence, drugs, gentrification, and ecological calamities). I had fasted and lived in the gallery space meditating on these issues. I asked myself the question; where is that abject fear of helplessness and its concomitant killer reaction in myself? For I realized I am not separate from nor above the construct that sets up GROUND ZERO. Each day I'd put on the walls the gleanings of scraps and photos and written texts from each ray that I walked and saw there the accumulated expressions of my town. And so I compounded my own sense of insecurity and helplessness with those of my community, while I sought to find an answer to the kill/or be killed/or kill myself syndrome.

In the performance circle of the May night (the ancient time of Beltane May poles and Cinco de Mayo), in solidarity with the nature-worshipping tribal cultures of the world, the earth people who had for centuries been oppressed for valuing the living earth and the female snake energies, the witches and gay men who were tortured and burned (from whence the name "faggot" derives) in the midst of a culture desiring to suppress all female powers and behavior, I began first to hear and take on the woes of the community, surrounded by the fires of transformation. Then I began to dance out of the void of death, to return the feminine undulating sensuality and powers to heal, to help end the domination of one group over another. I wore sequins and a flowing gown. However, more than an erotic dancer, I became the indomitable spirit of life, and I was joined by my community in this rite.



Ground Zero:
Yellow Spoke,
May 6,
1989 /
Trish Doherty



Ground Zero.
Dave Friedman

II THE PAGEANT OF THE HOLY SQUASH

This last winter on the solstice, I created a performance at Fashion Moda in the South Bronx and at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City. I chose these sites because they are not commercial art galleries but are significant institutions in the broader context of where they are. For a month I was on site at Fashion Moda, confronting and creating in a neighborhood where cab drivers refused to go. By being there, I began to feel I understood where and how it is "safe" and "not safe" on the streets



Nativity:
Pageant
of the
Holy
Squash.
Alexis
Grey

and got rid of my expectations. There, I created a pageant and tableau. The piece on December 21, at the Cathedral, was a gentle parody of church and school manger scenes, but the issue was ecological.

A Farmer and a Cook carrying gigantic Hubbard squash wander among the audience seeking a place to lay their "child." They find

this place in Fashion Moda's storefront window. First speaks a Shepherd who had heard about the giant Holy Squash and brings with him some local Bronx kids "to see this thing which had come to pass." The three "magi" follow, three women. In tribal dress Twylah Nitsch, a Seneca elder and medicine woman speaks of the ancient prophesies and teachings and the wisdom of the squash. Olean For, who has created a wonderful public garden in the East Village and works to help adopt abandoned buildings for housing, speaks of the dangers of our times and the choice we all face of life or death. And Arlene Raven, the feminist critic and historian, speak of the importance of art that goes beyond the boundaries of the ordinary art audience to create measurable social change. Following a litany of squash lore from ancient times to the present, recipes and gardening tips by Cook and Shepherd, the Farmer splits open a squash pinata scattering seed packets with planting instructions for all to have.



Pageant:
The Holy
Squash.
Andrew
Scialino

The next day this huge Holy Squash was carried to the Cathedral through the streets of the South Bronx and Harlem in a celebratory procession. Four men bore the Squash on a canopied litter surrounded by colorful banners, special music, a large "bride of the world" puppet, and shamanic actions for protection and healing. A permanent tableau remained in the Fashion

Moda window. In both situations, random people on the streets were told of the meaning of this symbolic artwork and offered squash seeds to plant.

At the cathedral on a very cold winter solstice night, many people gathered to perform a "pagan" art rite of renewal on this, the darkest night of the year. Honoring the squash and Mother Nature as our source, both of life and nourishment, all the participants put their own small squashes on the fire along with the huge Holy Squash. It was a ceremony reminiscent of tribal rites everywhere, but we were doing it for our own health and healing, for own need to invoke the spirits of life for a viable future. (I was joined in this performance structure throughout by my friends, other performance artists and new colleagues, who as participants, not actors, generated with me the energies of the piece.)



Artists have always keenly felt the pains and ills of the culture. They often act as hypersensitive "antennae", the first to pick up the vital issues facing society. In an era when popular art is expressing a nihilistic emptiness and symbols devoid of meaning, it is incumbent on other artists to sense where new sources of vital energy abide...In this way, artists act as spokespeople for the earth, through their lives and their artworks.

My work has continued from a feminist perspective to address issues of food and sexuality, spirituality, meaning and symbology. At this point I presume to guide others in shamanic healing rites. Where I go now is anybody's guess; in the art/life dialog there is always the possibility of becoming invisible in the fabric of culture, but it will follow the way of my quest.

The intent of such participatory work now is to seek a new course and sense of survival. To slow things down and shift ourselves to life. To be willing to give up artificial needs and attain a simplicity of means. To have a solidarity with people everywhere. To have a sense of local community which guides us to appropriate acts at appropriate times in appropriate scale. To the realization that ethical or right action performed anywhere can affect anywhere. One only needs to step in and act where the situation presents itself and alchemy or magic is performed.

Stuart Sherman's Invisible Theater

Stuart Sherman

I used to think that, as a performer, I was invisible, or that most of me could, in performance, escape unnoticed. Manipulating small objects on a table top with some or all of the fingers of both hands, I imagined (no, *believed*) that, from the wrist up, I was irrelevant to the performance and that the audience would register their implicit agreement with this assumption by regarding me from the wrist down only.

But, based on comment after comment from one audience member after another, I came to realize and, sadly, to admit (to myself, *all of myself*) that my entire corpus had indeed been espied during performance—had, as it were, been caught in the act, the act of performing.

Nevertheless, I don't know of a better place for me to hide than in performance. For by exhibiting only pre-determined acts in public, I absolutely exclude from view all acts of an undetermined nature—all unartistic, "natural" acts. Onstage, I am not natural, therefore not real, therefore not myself. And what better place for the self to hide than in the midst of its own illusion of non-existence? This is what I tell myself in order to give myself the courage to perform in public. It is a technical strategy to get myself to do what I most wish not to do—expose myself in the act of pretending not to exist., playing the part of a man with no part to play.

STUART SHERMAN'S INVISIBLE THEATER

(At the playwright's request, the letters appearing in the title of this play—"S-T-U," etc.—have been removed from the paragraph below in a deliberately random and highly arbitrary manner, direct evidence of which may be obtained by close inspection of both ends of the light gray "guide lines" drawn between the letters in the title and their corresponding points of non-appearance)—Ed.

ACT I.

(PERFORMER)

HE LI S IN BED WITH A E PTY ECORD ALB M CO ER PROPPED UP AGAI S HIS IGH LY UPRAISED KNEE . ON THE ECORD
 AL UM COVER'S UITABLE FLAT SURF CE HE H S PLACED A P ECE OF W ITE PAPE (6" x 11") O W ICH H IS NOW WRI ING
 WITH BLACK, FEL -TIPP D P N.

(AUDIENCE)

B E S N M R A U V A I T E E N T SL T N H S R T

ACT 2.

(PERFORMER)

B E S N M R A U V I N T S L T N H S E R T
A A A H R E E

(AUDIENCE)

HE LI S IN BED WITH A E PTY ECORD ALB M CO ER PROPPED UP AGAI S HIS IGH LY UPRAISED KNEE . ON THE ECORD
AL UM COVER'S UITABLE FLAT SURF CE HE H S PLACED A P ECE OF W ITE PAPE (6" x 11") O W ICH H IS NOW WRI ING
WITH BLACK, FEL -TIPP D P N.

ACT 3.

()

()

ALTERNATING CURRENTS

Ceremonial Magick And Performance Ritual

ANTERO ALLI

My friend, author Robert Anton Wilson, took me aside one day and confided: "Forget Art. It's too late now for Art...it's too late for anything but Magick." Knowing Bob, he didn't mean stage magic, i.e. sawing people in half. (One of Bob's influences, Aleister Crowley, added the letter "k" to the word "magic" to symbolize private ritual work as distinguished from staged illusion.) What I'm learning about Bob's remark is this: We are a nation of WATCHERS...TV, MOVIE, & LIFE WATCHERS... audio-visual addicts transfixed and immobilized by pictures, ideas and insights. I'm a watcher too but ritual shows me how much I need to be undone, sawed in half, seen through, and, at the very least, be seen as much as I have seen.

It is in the spirit of undoing that the following ritual exercises are presented. The intention is to set up conditions conducive to being seen through. They are offered as a sequence of three ritual tasks to:

- 1) Charge the Space (No-Form)
- 2) Balance the Energies (Polarizations)
- 3) Dissolve the Charge (No-Form)

PREPARATION: To start the process, find any indoor open space (no furniture) and do what it takes to eliminate external interruptions. Then, execute whatever motions are necessary to produce a felt sense of total dominion over that space. Then, find a spot and sit still for at least five minutes. Now, render your spine more flexible; stretch your muscles and... finally, do something to break into a sweat. (The point here is to wake your body up, by *feeling it deeply*, before starting the ritual. This tends to minimize dispersion while stabilizing your own energy; it grounds the ritual.)

Exercise One: THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

Stand in any position suggesting readiness. Adjust your stance to accommodate Emptying...emphasizing the exhale, closing the eyes and dropping the spine. Internally, locate your contact point with the potential state of being (what Zen calls No-Form, Nothingness, Uncarved Block, etc.)...and drop your "act" while you're at it. Find your own way into being nothing, where you don't have to be anybody or anything.

When you've exhausted your personal resources for hollowing out, project or visualize or sense (whichever works now) a cloud...six feet above your head, slightly larger than the size of your body. Postulate that this cloud's substance is made up of the very essence of Void; let it hover suspended above you a few moments.

When you cannot get any "emptier" on your own efforts, beckon the cloud down. (Don't push the cloud, invite it.) Let the cloud drift down at its own speed, enveloping your entire body as it falls to the ground below. Stay with the exhale, eyes closed, while dropping your spine into the earth below. Once the cloud has completely encompassed your body, let it enter you through your skin in as

many areas as it pervades. When it's time, BE THE CLOUD. MERGE WITH NO-FORM.

EXERCISE TWO: POLARIZATIONS

From No-Form, sense or visualize or project (whichever works now) a circle—about ten feet in diameter—in front of you. Mentally, divide it in half. Designate each side to a **charged polarity**.

NOTE: Select any one set of opposites carrying a strong personal excitement and/or resistance. For example: Good/Evil, Love/Fear, Order/Chaos, Decay/Growth, Freedom/Entrapment, etc. These are current here/now expressions of living internal states; not to be confused with concepts or socially-accepted definitions ABOUT them.

Upon discovering your "hot" polarity, send it into the circle with all its inherent heat, light and information. Permit its autonomy, so it acts *as if* it has a life of its own. Resettle back inside a deeper NO-FORM.

From a moment of "peak No-Form," step into one side of the circle and allow its force inside you. Absorb its current into your body and do not move until the accumulation of this current animates your body into motion, i.e., an arm raises "by itself."

Try something new. Instead of controlling or directing this force, merge and surrender in to it. Serve its intention by yielding space for its direct expression through you. Follow its most direct kinetic pathways through the space around you. The direction is constant follow-through...moment to moment commitment to serving the source of the current.

When you personally feel saturated enough with one side of the polarity, step over the dividing line and subject yourself to the opposite state. Allow the same degree of absorption, surrender and expression. For the rest of this exercise, alternate currents by stepping back and forth between opposite states for the overall purpose of stabilizing a point of balance or, integration.

NOTE: After you're done, return to the NO-FORM zone outside the circle to dissolve any leftover identification with these forces. This tends to begin the crucial process of restoring "ordinary consciousness" back again so you can actually end the ritual and get back to whatever you were doing in the first place.

These elementary exercises are actually preparatory stages for longer more involved processes. However, the basic principles of **No-Form**, **Contact Point** and **Polarizations** seem to exist inside all effective ritual mediums no matter what the spiritual orientation. Genuine exposure to No-Form alone is enough to enliven and thus separate any ritual from the rote mechanism of routine. (Checking in with one's imminent status as another piece of void keeps things in perspective, I might add.)

Alternating Charged Zones

Ceremonial magick turns into performance ritual whenever ceremonial skills are converted into successful theatrical conventions (towards communicating theatrical truth through spiritual evocation.)

One ritual device I've converted to performance is laying out a floorplan of **alternating charged zones**, right onto the stage itself. (This contributes to the infrastructure though the audience never needs to see or even know

about it.) Centerstage might be designated to "surrender to brainstem"; downstage left to "negative force" and downstage right to "positive force." The entire upstage area could work as a No-Form Zone, where performers charge and discharge during the course of the ritual. Outside elements like music, poetic narrative and environmental design can possibly flesh out the underlying skeletal framework.

THE RITUAL FUNCTION OF CONTAINMENT

Stage presence is often developed to significant degrees by a heightened sense of self-regulation. The ritual skill of **containment** may be of special interest to performers carried by a terrific, or overwhelming, force of presence. When applied, this technique guides the individual's outgoing emanation back to its originating source (instead of its dispersing out to the void beyond) for the purpose of its regeneration.

The process of containment allows the radiation of one's energy out to the periphery of one's field, or aura. Then, instead of extending past one's personal energy boundaries, one learns to "bounce" it back to one's center again. As this process repeats itself in the moment-to-moment of stage reality, the performer's energy "recycles" itself while accumulating a greater reserve of charge. This seems possible only insofar as one's awareness includes the outer boundary of one's center and periphery, the force of our presence oscillates and eventually resides.

With practice, the force of one's presence is fed back to oneself *as it is sent out*. The effect is of being under the influence of and subject to one's own emanation. By becoming more familiar with the placement of one's energy center and its energetic periphery, the performer grows more intimate with the tendencies of his/her totality or, **wave form**. It is in one's complete identification with the unique signature of this wave form that an irresistible integrity blossoms where there are no false moves and every moment is, a miraculous tribute to what's most true.

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