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FROM MARGIN TO CENTER: THE SPACES OF INSTALLATION ART,
1958-1993

by

Julie H. Reiss

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1996

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INTRODUCTION

In 1992 the Jewish Museum in New York planned an exhibition of contemporary art as one of four exhibitions to be presented upon the opening of their newly renovated space. The building had been closed for construction for over two years, during which time the museum had presented its exhibitions in temporary galleries at the New-York Historical Society. The entire renovation and expansion project took three years and 36 million dollars to complete.

The enlarged building was intended in part to provide facilities that would reinstate the museum as a center for contemporary art. In the 1960s the Jewish Museum had been arguably the premier avant-garde art museum in New York. Primarily while under the directorship of Alan Solomon, it had shown more work considered to be at the cutting-edge of new art than did any other museum in the city. But that image of the museum faded in the 1970s as its exhibition program became more conservative and was focused more specifically towards the Jewish community. Beginning in the 1980s, under the directorship of Joan Rosenbaum, the museum sought to find a balance between art-world interests broadly defined and the culturally specific mission of the institution. The administration was anxious to reinstate the museum as a venue for showing the best of contemporary art, so it was essential that an exhibition of contemporary

art with general art-world appeal would be on view when the museum reopened in June 1993. The decision was made to commission artists to create works especially for the reopening, thus demonstrating an active relationship between the museum and the art community. To this end, From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists was conceived, a group show of eight artists, seven of whom created Installation art for the exhibition.

In the course of the preparation for the exhibition, the curators--including the author of this study--worked closely with the artists, trying to balance the needs of the institution and its visitors with the sometimes conflicting needs of the artists. The curators acted as liaisons between the artists and the rest of the museum staff, a difficult position, as the two were often at odds with each other. At times it seemed that the works could not be adapted to the museum's needs, or the museum to the artists'. The nature of these conflicts illuminated many of the ways in which Installation art, which by 1993 was no longer marginal but had instead come to set a standard in avant-garde museum exhibitions, still clashed with museum practice.

For example, the Russian artist Ilya Kabakov wanted his space in the exhibition to have twelve-foot high temporary walls that would go right up to the ceiling, but this request could not be accommodated because such floor-to-

ceiling walls would have interfered with the building's ventilation system. He also wanted an extremely narrow doorway, but as a public building, the museum was required to make all doorways at least four feet wide to allow for wheelchair access, in conformity with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Further, Kabakov wanted to place a table that would hold texts in the narrow hall leading up to his "room." When he was told the table would interfere with traffic flow and make the hall too crowded, he became even more insistent upon having it, saying that the crowded conditions would make the experience feel more authentically Russian. In the end, the walls were only ten feet high, the doorway four feet wide, and there was no table in the hall.

The Canadian Barbara Steinman was initially going to make a new Installation for the Jewish Museum exhibition. Then she decided she would exhibit Signs, a work she had exhibited once before in her native Canada. The piece consisted of sixty light boxes that flashed the word "Silence." Steinman wanted the same amount and same configuration of space she had had when Signs was originally shown in Montreal. She was reluctant to tailor the piece to the specific space the Jewish Museum could offer her, which was smaller. Ultimately she did alter the piece, showing forty instead of sixty light boxes, using a flat wall instead of a curved one, and putting all the boxes on one wall instead of around the room. She would not put them all

around the room because there were doorways in two of the walls. As a matter of fact, she did not want the doorways but the museum put them there to ease the flow of traffic to the other Installations in the exhibition. Steinman's concerns were for how she felt the viewer would best experience her work, and she did not want to make what she saw as concessions to the museum's operations staff. She saw the museum as a bureaucracy trying to compromise the integrity of her piece.

The curators became closely involved with the actual production of some of the works. The most extreme case was the Museum of the Bar Mitzvah, Christian Boltanski's entry for the exhibition (fig. 1). Boltanski wanted to display photographs, invitations, yarmulkes, and other objects related to the American bar mitzvah. The conception was his, but he left the amassing and selection of the objects, the framing of the photographs, and the construction of the display cases, up to the curators--who spent several months gathering these materials and preparing them for exhibition. Even the final arranging of the photographs that hung on all four walls was left to the curators' discretion. This was an unprecedented level of curatorial participation, changing the curator's role from merely selecting works to direct involvement with both the content and production of the piece. Shortly before the exhibition opened, Boltanski came and spent less than four hours arranging the material in the

cases.

As one of the curators for the Jewish Museum exhibition, I became curious about when and how Installation art came to be exhibited in museums, and how it related to museums in general. After I began my research in earnest, it gradually began to become clear that the issues surrounding the widespread acceptance and subsequent "domestication" of Installation art had a broader significance: Installation art can be used as a barometer for the historical relationship between avant-garde art and the museum. Originally a radical art form presented only at alternative art spaces, Installations are now routinely commissioned by major art museums and galleries. Despite the fact that museums have become the subject of a growing body of critical literature, no attention has been given to the relationship between museums and Installation art. The move of Installation art from the margin of the art world to its center should therefore be examined to identify the effects of this shift on the works created and on museum practice. Moreover, the connection between the changing status of Installation art and certain social and political forces is fundamental to this history, and needs to be given careful consideration.

This dissertation will examine the development of Installation art in America since 1958, the year that Allan Kaprow created his first "Environment," exhibited at the

Hansa Gallery in New York. Kaprow is a seminal figure not only for his pioneering Installations, but also for his published theoretical statements on this subject.

Throughout this study, primary focus will be given to Installations in New York City, since a great deal of activity in this regard was concentrated there, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. As Installation art became more prevalent, other important venues emerged for showing this work. The final chapter of the dissertation includes discussion of Installations done at museums in Pittsburgh and Chicago. Installation art has not evolved in a neat, linear fashion, and thus cannot be treated in a strictly evolutionary manner. I will, however, give some attention to its European origins in the early decades of this century, as works were then made that are acknowledged as prototypes for Installation art in America.

Definition of Installation Art

Before any other issues related to Installation art can be addressed, the term itself requires some explication. There is a divergence of opinion as to what the term refers to. In recent articles and catalogue essays, many by younger emerging scholars, varying definitions emerge. Ellen Handy's article, "Installations and History," states that:

Though in casual speech it is easily agreed that a type of art called "installation" exists, that is about as

far as we can easily get before the troubling divergences of assumption appear: is installation a genre? a medium? a mode of conceptual practice? Does the term describe objects, events, locations? Is it permanent or temporary?

Handy answers these questions by concluding that "belief in the irrelevance of defined categories is indigenous to the art practice of installation."¹ Installation is defined by Dan Cameron as something that "slips into our visual vocabulary during the mid-1960s, as a consolidation of many of the extra-formal premises put forth by the Pop/Fluxus/Judson network."² Anne Rorimer's definition is a "broad spectrum of works that have in common the desire to veer away from making spatially autonomous, discrete objects." She goes on to say:

Once limited to the overall placement of individual objects in a museum or gallery space, the meaning of the word "installation" now extends to the formation of works that seek to stake out their own territory. There is no one prescribed form to which an installation need adhere. Instead, the loosely applied term has come to signify any work that in some fashion takes part in its surroundings. Relinquishing their traditional, self-sufficient object status as a painting or sculpture, installation pieces of the last two-and-one-half decades have rigorously endeavored to elucidate the nature of their support--from exhibition walls to their economic base-and/or to acknowledge the spectator and the (f)act of spectatorship within the body of the work itself.³

It is one of the goals of this dissertation to define Installation art more precisely, and thus to see what characteristics constitute it as a discrete art form rather than a series of aberrations or barely related phenomena.

It took many years for "Installation art" to become

part of the vernacular of contemporary art. First came the term "Environment," which was coined by Allan Kaprow in 1958 to describe his room-sized multi-media works.⁴ This term was picked up by critics and used to describe a range of works for two decades. In the mid-1970s, the term Environment, while still popular, was joined by others, including "project art" and simply, "temporary art." Eventually there was a shift in terminology. It was not from Environment to Installation art, however, but from "exhibition" to "installation". The artist Daniel Buren recognized this in 1971 in his essay "The Function of the Studio." Writing on the need to preserve the relationship between the work and its place of production, he asks: "Hasn't the term Installation come to replace exhibition?"⁵ Installation began to be used interchangeably with exhibition to describe work produced at the exhibition site. All Environments (as per Kaprow's conception of the term) could also be described as installations, but the reverse is not true. The word "installation" does not always refer to Installation art, which describes something more specific. A useful working definition of Installation art is: art where the artist treats an entire space, large enough for people to enter, as one work of art, rather than as a gallery for displaying separate works, where there is no separation between object and environment. The spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the

work.

Despite the widespread use of the term Environment, it did not appear in The Art Index until volume 18, November 1969-October 1970. There, for the first time, "Environment (Art)" appeared. The first issue of The Art Index that lists Installations is volume 27, November 1978 to October, 1979. Under "Installation" it says "See Environment (Art)." In the next 14 volumes, that is how Installation is indexed--with no actual listings under the word, just the cross-reference to Environment. However, beginning with volume 42, November 1993 to October 1994, The Art Index lists Installations without referring the researcher to Environment. Under "Installations" are actual listings of articles about this art form. It took twenty-four years for Installations to be officially recognized as an independent category.

The term Installation entered into general reference books sooner than it did to The Art Index. The Oxford Dictionary of Art, (1988) defines installation as a "term which came into vogue during the 1970s for an assemblage or environment constructed in the gallery specifically for a particular exhibition."⁶ The Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design (1992) concurs, saying "the word 'Installation' has taken on a stronger meaning. i.e. a one-off exhibit fabricated in relation to the specific characteristics of a gallery space. . . . In the late 1980s some artists began to

specialize in constructing Installations with the result that a specific genre--'Installation Art'--came into being."7 Interestingly, neither of these definitions specifies that an Installation need surround the spectator on all sides. The term Environment, in fact, has remained in use to describe this sort of work. Edward Lucie-Smith in The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms (1984) describes Environment as a "term used from the late 1950s for a three-dimensional work of art, often of a temporary nature, which the viewer can enter (although in practice exhibiting authorities often prevent this)."⁸ It is interesting that Lucie-Smith adds this parenthetical comment as part of his definition. This is an issue that will be explored in this dissertation.

Tableaux are occasionally grouped together with Installations. But this is a confusion of genres. For all its large scale, the tableau differs greatly from the Installation in that it does not surround the viewer and is thus in no sense participatory. There is no room for the spectator. As Brian O'Doherty points out in a discussion of George Segal's tableaux, "since the environment is occupied already, our relationship to it is partly preempted by the figures. . . . Their occupancy of their environment is a large subject. But the effect on the spectator who joins them is one of trespass."⁹ This is quite different from Installations in which the viewer is considered integral to

the completion of the piece. Tableaux are also not ephemeral, nor do they necessarily take a particular space into account. These are ways in which they differ significantly from Installations.

While the term Installation art has become widely used, it is still relatively non-specific. It refers to a wide range of artistic practices, and at times overlaps with other interrelated areas, including Fluxus, Earth art, Conceptual art and Process art. These were all conceived as alternatives to traditional art forms and practices. Along with performance art, all were developed in part as a challenge to museums in particular and to the art marketplace in general. Even though aspects of all of these alternative forms eventually left the margin, they were initially conceived to avoid coaptation with the market. Successfully retaining that stance was difficult, and not always desirable to maintain. Even Earth art, the most unwieldy of the art forms in this group, has found its way under the museum umbrella. However, although the above-mentioned alternative forms are related to Installation art, they are different modes of practice. Earthworks, for example, are (in principle) remotely situated, and thus do not rely on viewer participation in a fundamental way. They are also meant to be removed from, rather than engaged with an institutional or social context the way Installation art is. Because they are outdoors, Earthworks tend to be

approachable from more than one position, unlike an indoor Installation which generally has a single point of entry. Earthworks are ephemeral only inasmuch as nature will eventually erode them, not, in general, because they are dismantled.¹⁰

Fluxus, like Installation art, has varying definitions. As Bruce Altshuler points out, a purist definition of Fluxus is "all and only that which is connected with [George] Maciunas' activities from his first use of the term in 1961, designating a planned publication, to his death . . . in 1978. Other material might be pre-Fluxus, post-Fluxus, or Fluxus-like, but it is not Fluxus."¹¹ This definition guided the approach taken in the 1993 exhibition, In the Spirit of Fluxus, organized by the Walker Art Center. Barbara Haskell, however, included Fluxus in the 1984 Whitney exhibition, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1958-64, emphasizing the overlap between Fluxus and Happening activities in New York as early as 1959. This overlap was due in part to the fact that artists who would later become associated with Fluxus, including George Brecht and Jackson MacLow, took the same class of experimental music at the New School as Allan Kaprow did.¹² The circles of association overlapped, as did some general philosophical underpinnings. The distinctions and dividing lines between groups were less clear then, with Brecht exhibiting alongside Kaprow and Jim Dine, and Kaprow

participating in some Fluxus activities. Fluxus artists were concerned with audience participation both in their performances, called Events, and in their "games" that invited the viewer to touch or move objects around. Like Kaprow, Jim Dine, and Claes Oldenburg, they sought to integrate art and life. To this end they focused on everyday activities, such as switching on a light or making a salad. There was a shared reluctance to make things that could become precious collectibles. By and large, the Fluxus artists accomplished this through making things that were cheaply reproduced and widely distributed, rather than by making site-specific, ephemeral Environments.

Conceptual art has both a broad and a specific definition, and in this study it will be used in its specific sense, since arguably, much Installation art could fall under its most general umbrella. Simply to describe Installation art as conceptual is not especially useful or illuminating. Conceptual art by narrow definition is based on language, and its materials or "objects" are often documents or written proposals. It can be immaterial in a way that Installation art is not. But like Installation art, Conceptual art has many different forms. Robert C. Morgan is quite accurate when he observes:

To write a history of Conceptual Art would be a somewhat presumptuous task. Not only is it questionable to think that a "movement" so loosely defined could have a central core of significance, but it is pretentious to assume that one could tackle the enormity of the project at this juncture in history

without leaving out essential components--that is, specific artists and their works--from the linearity of its development. That would seem to be a problem not only in the writing of a narrative account of Conceptual Art, but in writing about any relatively recent artistic development.¹³

Indeed the organizers of a 1995 exhibition of Conceptual art at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles avoided using the term at all. They chose instead to title the show Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975.¹⁴ However, the origin of the term Conceptual art is not debated. It was coined by the artist Edward Kienholz in the early 1960s, and Sol LeWitt introduced it to wider use when he stated in Artforum in 1967 that: "I will refer to the kind of art in which I am involved as Concept art. In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work . . . all planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art."¹⁵

Conceptual art can be site-specific--one has only to think of LeWitt's wall drawings or Lawrence Weiner's words painted directly on walls. It can be participatory--Hans Haacke's polls, for example. But in general it is not physical in the way that Installation art is. It need not define a separate space. It can be large-scale, but it can also exist in a minute form. In its most extreme state of dematerialization, it need not have a physical existence at all, but can exist simply as an idea or concept.

Conceptual art has a history of institutionalization

that closely parallels that of Installation art, with many of the same issues underlying both. Because of this parallel, important landmarks in the history of Conceptual Art will be noted throughout this study, as they were part of a similar response to a general situation in as well as outside of the art world.

Process art is also related to Installation art. It too is ephemeral and non-portable. New York Times critic Roberta Smith describes it succinctly when she writes: "Some artists . . . held on to materials but jettisoned the object, divesting their work of structure, permanence and boundaries via random, temporary distributions, 'scatter pieces' both indoors and out, of non-rigid, ephemeral substances--sawdust, cut-up bits of felt, loose pigment, flour, latex, snow, even cornflakes."¹⁶ The use of materials such as Smith mentions are also found in some Installation art, beginning with the so-called "junk" Environments of the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, in the Environments, the materials were part of a structure that included the walls and sometimes even the ceiling as well as the floor.

The questions of origins and definitions are significant for Installation art because Installation art has been an important development in the twentieth century, and one that has received only marginal scholarly attention. Particularly in the case of earlier twentieth-century

artists, Installation art has often been regarded as tangential to their works in more traditional media. Without a doubt its ephemeral quality has been one of the reasons that Installation art has not been subject to the kind of scholarly investigation that other media have received. Since Installation art is not easily collected, commodified, or experienced after it is dismantled, it resists traditional art-historical approaches. Indeed its resistance to historicization has been a lure for many of the artists who have chosen to work in this genre. There are other modes of artistic practice that share this transient quality, fleeting gestures or acts made by artists that cannot be collected or stored except in memory. An example would be Vito Acconci following strangers in the street. However, that type of private act that does not include audience participation (at least not consciously), and is quite different from an Installation, which has a physical presence while it is on view.

Spectator participation, in one form or another, is an integral part of Installation art. It is so integral, in fact, that without having the experience, analysis of Installation art is difficult, and as a result few historians have seriously studied it despite its proliferation as an art form in the last thirty years. As recently as 1993, Arthur Danto wrote of Installation art that "it is impossible to speak of any one piece without

having undergone the experience it demands," and thus he did not even attempt to discuss the works yet to be installed in From the Inside Out at the time of publication of the catalogue.¹⁷

One of the goals of this dissertation is to develop a cogent way to approach Installation art that is no longer extant. There are four main sources for dismantled Installation art that can be used by the historian. One is the published criticism of the works. Reviewers see the works, walk through them, spend time in them and based on this, they describe them. Their reviews not only demonstrate what was considered important about this revolutionary art form at any given time, they function as eye-witness reports. That it is the report of only one individual does not diminish its importance, as first-person experience is one of the main points of Installation art. Throughout this study, criticism will be relied upon to reconstruct and evaluate works. In addition to preexisting accounts and documentation, individuals whose work has been important in the development of Installation art can be interviewed, including artists, curators and critics. Their memories and perspectives form another source of information, and interviews with a number of people directly involved with Installation art will be used in this study.

Another major source for historians is photography of the Installations, whether it be for a museum catalogue or

an informal shot made in an alternative space. Photography in general has assumed an enormously important role in the study of art history. In Museum Without Walls André Malraux states that "for the last hundred years . . . art history has been the history of that which can be photographed."¹⁸ He is referring to the use of photography as reproduction rather than as documentation. Yet without photographic documentation, Installation art would be even more peripheral to art history than it is. The photograph preserves ephemeral art, and few major Installations have gone unphotographed. Lawrence Alloway addresses the issue of photo documentation, saying that:

One of the uses of photography is to provide the coordinates of absent works of art. . . . Documentation distributes and makes consultable the work of art that is inaccessible, in a desert say, or ephemeral, made of flowers. The photographic unit is evidential, but it is not a reproduction in the sense that a compact painting or a solid object can be reproduced as a legible unit. The documentary photograph is grounds for believing that something happened.

Alloway describes these photographs as "evidence rather than . . . source objects."¹⁹ Because it is documentation rather than reproduction, a two-dimensional image of a three-dimensional space, the photograph of an Installation cannot function as a substitute for the original. Although obviously one can glean a certain amount of visual information from a photograph of an Installation, one must avoid the temptation to use the photograph as if it were a reproduction, and formally analyze the piece based on it

alone. However, the photograph can be an extremely useful tool if viewed critically. The way in which an Installation has been photographed says a great deal about the piece and its context. For example, Ilya Kabakov was perturbed that the Jewish Museum had his piece for From the Inside Out photographed for the catalogue without spectators in it (fig. 2). His feeling was that spectators were integral to the piece, and should have been included. It had never occurred to the museum staff to include them. The main concern of the museum was to find an architectural photographer who would be able to successfully photograph a whole space as opposed to a discrete object. All the Installations in the exhibition were treated as architectural settings in the photographs, and the lack of spectators reveals a particular attitude on the part of the museum.

The fourth way to approach Installation art is through the context in which it was exhibited. Installation art is and always has been a public art form. (The great historical exception may be Kurt Schwitters' three Merzbau. The first and most elaborate one, which developed out of a column the artist had begun in 1919, was done in Schwitters' own home in Hannover, Germany (fig. 3).²⁰ The other two versions, begun in 1937 and 1947 respectively, were also done on private, although not domestic premises.) Historically, Installation art has been a showcase form.

Its site-specific nature is one reason for this--it is not typical for an Installation to first be created in the privacy of an artist's studio and then transferred to a more public place. It does not have an autonomous existence. Even if the same Installation is remade in more than one location, which has increasingly occurred, it is dismantled between venues and will not be exactly the same in two places, owing to the differences between spaces. Because of this, the nature of the space has an enormous effect on the final product.

There has been a surge of interest in the effect of exhibition context on a work of art, particularly since the 1970s when many artists became self-conscious about this issue, and addressed it through their work. The notion of a "neutral" exhibition space has gradually been dismantled. One of the aims of this study is to examine the relationship between Installations or Environments and the spaces in which they were created and presented. The history of exhibition locale is inseparable from the history of Installation art on several levels. The effect of the physical properties of the spaces--for example the raw, unfinished "alternative" space as opposed to a pristine white gallery, will be discussed. The physical properties of a space dictate the outcome of the works. Through its decrepitude a raw space can represent continuity between the Installation and the street. Or a break between the

Installation and the world outside can be communicated through the rarefied atmosphere of a museum. In addition, the status of the spaces vis à vis the art world, and the effect of this status on the works shown, will be examined. Carol Duncan, in her collection of essays The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History investigates various types of art in their institutional context. In the essay titled "Who Rules the Art World," she states that "works shown at [The Metropolitan, the Whitney, the Guggenheim and the Museum of Modern Art] validate other works like them shown elsewhere."²¹ The role played by institutional context in validating Installation art will be examined in this dissertation.

It should be said that Formalism per se does not work as an approach to Installation art; this is one art form that cannot be removed from its social context. Michael Fried, in his seminal essay, "Art and Objecthood," printed in Artforum in the summer 1967, criticized some Minimalist sculpture for verging on the theatrical, which for him, then a Greenbergian critic, was a threat to the pure categories of painting and sculpture. Art that acknowledges the presence of the viewer, or needs the viewer to be complete, violates essential Greenbergian tenets. Violating the basic principles of Greenberg's notion of Modernism was part of the radical agenda for many artists, and a host of theatrical practices were born after Fried's article--

including Performance art and video art--that openly rely on the spectator. Installation art can also be understood in this context. Environments were born at a time when aesthetic specialization as articulated in the 1950s and 1960s by Clement Greenberg ruled. There is a social and political context that is partly responsible for this burgeoning, but the internal art world context must be considered as well. Part of the impetus towards Installation art was a rebellion against Greenbergian Formalism.

State of the Literature

Much of the scholarship on Environments is tied in with scholarship on the "Happenings" of the early 1960s. These theatrical events, in which artists performed and the audience often participated, evolved in the same time period and in the same circles as Environments. However, an Environment should be differentiated from a Happening because of its lack of human presence other than the viewer. An Installation is essentially static: an event involving the artist need not take place. In Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, published in 1966, Allan Kaprow predicted that "the differences [between Environments and Happenings] will eventually blur and matter less."²² However, that has not happened over the last thirty years, nor was it true in the years preceding his statement for any artist except

himself. It will be valuable to examine the distinctions between Happenings and Environments during this period. The lack of distinction between these different forms is carried through in later literature. Despite the all-inclusive title of Luciano Inga-Pin's 1978 book, Performances - Happenings, Actions, Events, Activities, Installations, no photographs are included of what can accurately be called Environments or Installations. Rather, in each image an artist-performer is performing an action.

Brian O'Doherty's essays on the ideology of gallery space were published in Artforum in 1976. A former art critic for The New York Times as well as a former editor of Art in America, O'Doherty is also an Installation artist, exhibiting under the name Patrick Ireland. His essays on the gallery space were timely because they addressed concerns about the sanctity of the gallery and the role of the spectator. O'Doherty credits Duchamp with starting "a seepage of energy from art to its surroundings" on the basis of Duchamp's installation of 1200 bags of coal at the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1938. O'Doherty claims that: "This invention of context initiated a series of gestures that 'develop' the idea of a gallery space as a single unit."²³

Germano Celant's 1975 article, "Art Spaces" focuses entirely on the spatial aspect of Installation art. Celant identifies two kinds of environments: one where "the surface

of the casing represented by the room or other environment identifies with the surface of the work of art."

Renaissance frescoes fall into this category. He goes on to say that "in the second type the artist's work not only occupies the planes of the walls, but is also volumetric. The wall surfaces are, as it were, pushed outward and the volumetric matter is spread over the walls, ceiling and floor. Plastic forces applied to the structure of the interior give it movement in every direction."²⁴ It is this second type with which the present study will be most concerned, as it is primarily this type that has survived into the contemporary period. Celant attempts to place Installations into comprehensive categories, using the language of formal analysis. In his hands, Installations become categorizable and approachable in the same way as works in media more traditionally approached via formal analysis, such as easel painting. By looking for a number of underlying theories, Celant is able to posit Installations as part of a continuum, with philosophical underpinnings that allow him to discuss Marcel Duchamp, Bruce Nauman and Yves Klein in the same paragraph.

In the 1976 Venice Biennale, Celant curated a pavilion titled Ambient/Art. He provided an international twentieth-century survey of ambient art that began with the Italian Futurists and included some Fluxus artists, Kaprow, Pollock, Nevelson, Warhol and Carolee Schneemann. The guiding

principle, based on this list, was that these artists had all worked on a room-scale in some way.²⁵

The most recent addition to the scant body of literature on Installation art is Installation Art, written by Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry.²⁶ The authors are also the founders of the Museum of Installation in London. The book contains an essay which introduces broad issues related to Installation Art, and briefly discusses historical precedents. The book is divided into four categories: site, media, museum and architecture, and the bulk of the book consists of photographs of examples of these types of works. The authors shy away from defining Installation art, instead presenting it in its broadest possible terms, indoors and out.

History of Installation Art Before 1958

The starting place for a history of Installation art is open to question. Historically, one of the appeals to artists working in this mode has been its relative lack of precedents. But when museums began to show Installation art, the first way to approach and present it was to situate it safely within art history. In looking at the literature, it quickly becomes clear is that there is no consensus about this history. Deciding where Installation art began depends on who is presenting the history, and for what purpose. For

example, Kaprow, in his widely-read 1958 essay, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," proposed that Environments evolved from 1950s American action painting and late 1950s assemblage.²⁷ However, Jennifer Licht, writing the catalogue essay for Spaces, the first exhibition of Installation art at the Museum of Modern Art in 1969, instead cites Schwitters as the most direct prototype for Kaprow and his contemporaries.²⁸ She thus places their work into a European framework, reflecting the museum's general bias. Not only does she leave out Kaprow's suggested American lineage, she also overlooks important environmental sculpture done in the United States in the preceding two decades, including the work of Americans Frederick Kiesler, Louise Nevelson, and Herbert Ferber. Kiesler had exhibited his Galaxies at the Sidney Janis Gallery in 1954, extending thematically related units of sculpture into the entire space.²⁹ In 1958, at the Grand Central Moderns Gallery, Nevelson created a sculptural environment titled Moon Garden Plus One, which incorporated the space of the gallery, including the window frames. Ferber had shown a full-scale environmental sculpture at the Whitney Museum in 1961. Commissioned by the museum, it filled a gallery with forms emerging from the walls, ceiling and floor.

This is not to say that European precedents are unimportant to Installation art's later history. El Lissitzky's Proun Room, constructed for the Grosse Berliner

Ausstellung at the Landesausstellungsgebäude in Berlin in 1923, the painted abstract environments of the De Stijl artists, and Schwitters' Merzbau are all important precedents in part because they were made by artists who figure among the most important pioneers of modernism. These works in a sense gave permission to later artists to create room-sized works of art into which the viewer could enter. The early works opened up the way to a variety of possibilities, and at times it seems that they may well have served as a model in the abstract for later artists. For example, Schwitters' Hannover Merzbau had cut through its original domestic interior and in its later stages, reached the exterior. In New York in 1970, George Trakas would make The Piece that went through the Floor and The Piece that went through the Window, two site-specific Installations that contained a similar relationship to interior and exterior space (fig. 4). In addition, the early European examples were generally not done for conventional art museums. They were often done in temporary exhibition halls or in galleries.³⁰ In this way they presage the status of Installation art in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

Ultimately, constructing a linear history of Installation art is not only difficult, but is also not the most meaningful way to approach so diverse a range of works. It is more productive to approach Installation art thematically, as there are certain themes that consistently

appear. One such theme is the notion of the Gesamtkunstwerk.

Throughout the twentieth century, the nineteenth-century concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk is frequently cited in relation to Installation art. Few, if any, works of Installation art contain all the specific elements of the Gesamtkunstwerk as articulated by Richard Wagner in 1850 and 1851. Wagner's ideal was a synthesis of music, dance, poetry, architecture, painting and sculpture.³¹ However, the term "total work of art" is used consistently by artists and critics in relation to Installation art, redefining it to fit particular situations. Invoking the Gesamtkunstwerk simultaneously provides freedom, since it does not have a rigid definition, and stability, since it is a recognized historical concept. The first Environment that Allan Kaprow exhibited, for example, was accompanied by an essay on the Gesamtkunstwerk titled "Towards a Total Work of Art." Soon after, as he became more confident, Kaprow abandoned this term and invented his own.

For Wagner, the ultimate goal of the Gesamtkunstwerk was to unite society through a common, uplifting experience. By the turn of the century, the Gesamtkunstwerk was being interpreted by artists involved with the Vienna Secession as the unity of the fine and applied arts. Integration between art and the stuff of everyday life was considered essential in order to keep art meaningful. One way to achieve this

desired integration was to make the space in which art was shown inseparable from the art itself. In the Vienna Secession exhibitions, held between 1898 and 1913, every aspect of a space, from its wall paper and furnishings to the art on the walls, was conceived as part of a unified whole. The fine art was no longer to be considered separate from the environment in which it was shown.³²

Being surrounded by an environmental work of art duplicates the experience of being surrounded by rooms in everyday life. In The De Stijl Environment Nancy J. Troy describes the sources and concerns for the de Stijl artists who were creating environments. While they did not use the word Gesamtkunstwerk, the unity between art and life was a primary impetus. As Troy says of these environments, they were "an expression of a goal that virtually every advanced artist active in the period after the First World War held dear: to work through the arts to achieve an ideal future when all the walls that separate man would be broken down and when society would be truly integrated and capable of constructing a utopian urban environment of abstract forms."³³

Decades later, the term Gesamtkunstwerk has come to describe the integration of art and life. The appeal for some artists of the all-encompassing environment as a way of establishing continuity with everyday life persists. The desire for this continuity has led to the use of materials

and spaces that are contiguous with life. This accounts for one aesthetic strain of Installation, in which junk is used, giving the works an entropic quality and further bringing them into the realm of the familiar. This is not a defining formal characteristic of all Installation art, but it is true of one branch of it. Environments and Installations also often incorporate sound or music, flat painting and three-dimensional objects, synthesizing some, if not all the arts.

Another theme that carries through Installation art is that of active spectator participation, although the definition of participation varies greatly from one time period to another. One artist to articulate an interest in this early in the twentieth century was Lissitzky. Lissitzky wanted to make the experience of his art an active one for the viewer. Regarding his 1923 Proun Room, he wrote that "one keeps moving round in an exhibition. Therefore the room should be so organized that of itself it provides an inducement to walk around it."³⁴ Lissitzky's interest in the viewer's experience carried through into those exhibitions in which he designed the space for other artists' work. For example, in the Raum für konstruktive Kunst (Room for constructivist art) that he designed in Dresden for the Internationale Ausstellung in 1926, shifting panels allowed the spectators to control their experience of viewing the art on the walls.³⁵ At the time, Lissitzky

said that "if on previous occasions in his march-past in front of the picture-walls, he was lulled by the painting into a certain passivity, now our design should make the man active. This should be the purpose of the room."³⁶

Lissitzky's sentiments are prophetic of those later in the century. As O'Doherty would say in Inside the White Cube, Lissitzky "acknowledged the bystander, who became the involved spectator."³⁷ Historically, Installation art has been a place where art and the spectator meet, and in the end this is perhaps its most distinguishing characteristic.

Organization

The first chapter of the present dissertation focuses on post-World War II American Environments. Distinctions are drawn between different types of Environments, with attention given to major representative figures including Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg. I explore the connections between the flourishing of this art form and the climate of cultural revolution at the time. I focus on the critical reception of Environments, and the rhetoric that quickly became associated with them. The issues of site-specificity, the role of the alternative art space, and spectator participation are all examined. I consider the Hansa Gallery, the Reuben Gallery and the Judson Gallery in New York. In this section I also explore the distinction between Environments and Happenings.

The second chapter deals with the first confrontations between museums and Installation art. Among the issues that will be explored in this section are the nature of the pressures that caused museums to become patrons of Installation art at the end of the 1960s, and the way in which the protocols of museums may have impacted the direction of this radical art form, particularly in the area of audience participation. I will evaluate the success of the opening of museum doors to artists who wanted to create works in situ. I will also examine the fallout of that experiment. I focus in particular on the history of Installation art at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, because of the immense influence and authority of that institution.

In chapter three I examine how Installation art flourished outside of the museum world in the 1970s, and I chart the simultaneous flourishing of this art form and the emergence of alternative exhibition spaces in New York. The radical nature of the genre as tied to the social radicalism of the period is also discussed. I show how the definition of Installation art expanded during the 1970s, particularly in the area of site-specificity. I look at the differences between Installations created at museums and those created at alternative spaces during this time.

In chapter four I look at Installation art as an established genre at museums in the 1990s. Using four

exhibitions that occurred in major museums in the early years of the decade, I examine the rebirth of Installation as a museum form. I explore the conflicts that still exist between museum practice and Installation art, as well as the changes in Installation art that have made it possible for museums to accommodate it, not only for exhibition, but for collection as well.

Notes

1. Ellen Handy, "Installations and History," Arts 63, no. 6 (February 1989): 62.
2. Dan Cameron, "Four Installations: Francesc Torres, Mierle Ukeles, Louise Lawler/Allan McCullum and Todt," Arts 59, no. 4 (December 1984): 67-68.
3. Anne Rorimer, "Context as Content/Subject as Object: Installations in Chicago Since 1967," in Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 43.
4. Kaprow used the word "environmental" in relation to his room-scale work at the Hansa Gallery. See Allan Kaprow, "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art" (New York: The Hansa Gallery, 1958).
5. Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Studio," trans. Thomas Repensek, October 10 (Fall 1979): 56.
6. The Oxford Dictionary of Art, ed. Ian Chilvers and Harold Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 253.
7. John A. Walker, Glossary of Art, Architecture and Design Since 1945, with a foreword by Clive Phillpot, third edition, revised and enlarged (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1992), 357.
8. Edward Lucie-Smith, The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1984), 76.
9. Brian O'Doherty, Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (San Francisco, Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1976, 1986), 49.
10. For further discussion of Earth art see: John Beardsley, Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape, expanded edition (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989), and Alan Sonfist, ed., Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1983).
11. Bruce Altshuler, "Fluxus Redux," Arts 64, no. 1 (September 1989): 66.
12. Barbara Haskell, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1958-1964 (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1984).
13. Robert C. Morgan, "Idea, Concept, System," Arts 64, no. 1 (September 1989): 61. Morgan articulates clearly the relationship between Conceptual Art and Minimalism. Conceptual art developed in part as a response to the weighty objects of Minimalism. He also

discusses "concept art," which evolved into Fluxus earlier in the 1960s. That there is some relationship between Fluxus concept art and later Conceptual Art is acknowledged by some artists. See also Robert C. Morgan, Conceptual Art: An American Perspective, with a foreword by Michael Kirby (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Co., Inc., 1994).

14. Goldstein, Ann and Anne Rorimer, eds., Reconsidering the Object of Art: 1965-1975, with essays by Lucy R. Lippard, Stephen Melville and Jeff Wall (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), introduction.

15. Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," Artforum 5, no. 10 (June 1967): 80.

16. Roberta Smith, "Conceptual Art," in Concepts of Modern Art, ed. Tony Richardson and Nikos Stangos (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 259.

17. Arthur C. Danto, "Postmodern Art and Concrete Selves: The Model of the Jewish Museum," in From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1993), 21.

18. André Malraux, "Museum without Walls," in Voices of Silence, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1953), 30.

19. Lawrence Alloway, "Artists and Photographs," in Topics in American Art Since 1945 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1975), 202.

20. For a discussion of Schwitters' Hannover Merzbau, see Dorothea Dietrich, The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 164-205.

21. Carol Duncan, "Who Rules the Art World?" in The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171.

22. Allan Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments and Happenings (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), 22.

23. O'Doherty, Inside the White Cube, 69.

24. Germano Celant, "Art Spaces," Studio International 190, no. 977 (September-October 1975).

25. See Germano Celant, "Ambient/Art," in La Biennale di Venezia: Environment/Participation/Cultural Structures, vol. 1 (Venice: Alfieri Edizioni D'Arte, 1976), 187-194.

26. Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry, Installation Art (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1994).

27. Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," Art News 57, no. 6 (October 1958): 24-26, 54-55.

28. Jennifer Licht, Spaces (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1969).

29. For further reference to Kiesler see Whitney Museum of American Art, Frederick Kiesler, Lisa Phillips, et al. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with W.W. Norton, 1989).

30. An important exception is an exhibition space that Lissitzky designed at the Hannover Landesmuseum in 1927-1928 for an installation of international modern art. Titled the Abstract Cabinet (Abstraktes Kabinett), the project was done under the direction of chief curator Alexander Dorner. For further discussion of the Abstract Cabinet see Samuel Cauman, The Living Museum: Experiences of an Art Historian and Museum Director Alexander Dorner, with an introduction by Walter Gropius (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 98-108.

31. While the Gesamtkunstwerk concept is widely associated with Richard Wagner, a similar synthesis of the arts was proposed by Philipp Otto Runge more than fifty years earlier. See Rudolf M. Bisanz, German Romanticism and Philipp Otto Runge: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Art Theory and Iconography (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1970).

32. For further discussion of the Vienna Secession, see Kirk Varnedoe, Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture and Design (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986) and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Vienna 1900 (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1993).

33. Nancy J. Troy, The De Stijl Environment (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 5-6.

34. Lissitzky quoted in Troy, The De Stijl Environment, 126.

35. For further discussion of the Raum für konstruktive Kunst see Kai-Uwe Hemken, "Pan-Europe and German Art: El Lissitzky at the 1926 Internationale Kunstausstellung," in El Lissitzky 1890-1941: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer, ed. Jan Debbaut et al., trans. Kathie Somerwil-Ayrthon et al. (Eindhoven: Municipal Van Abbemuseum, 1990), 46-55.

36. El Lissitzky, quoted in Sophie Küppers-Lissitzky, El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Text, trans. Helene Aldwinckle (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1967), 362.

37. O'Doherty, Inside the White Cube, 86.

CHAPTER I

FROM JUDSON TO JANIS: ENVIRONMENTS IN NEW YORK 1958-1964

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the development of Installation art in New York during the years 1958 through 1964. The beginning of this six-year period marks the debut in alternative art spaces of artworks called Environments. Six years later, in 1964, artworks with the same name first appeared at the Sidney Janis Gallery on 57th Street. This chapter also recounts the commodification of what was initially supposed to be uncommodifiable, since the move to 57th Street represented more than a qualitative validation. Barbara Haskell traces the events of these years briefly in the catalogue to the Whitney Museum exhibition Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1958-1964,¹ but her focus is on the progression towards Pop art, whereas I will focus on the history of Environments as a genre.

The history of Environments begins with Allan Kaprow, who exhibited his first one at the Hansa Gallery in 1958. While his were not the first room-sized, environmental works shown in New York, they were the first to be critically received as defining a new genre. Through his works and his publications, Kaprow was one of the first people to articulate many of the issues that would continue to be important in relation to Installation art. As will be seen

in the analysis of the critical reception of Environments, Kaprow was regarded as a leader and spokesperson for the new "movement," even though there were significant differences between his philosophy and those of the artists with whom he was associated. Kaprow's Environments are often grouped and discussed together with those of Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine. But in fact, important distinctions existed between all their work, and they will be examined in this chapter.

Kaprow's definitions of Environments were quoted in many reviews, even in reviews of Environments by other artists. His perspective was adopted by critics to approach a broad range of works. Even the term Environment was Kaprow's own, though it was ultimately used by critics and dealers as a convenient label for works that deviated far from his original definition. Kaprow also wrote articles himself, whereas the artists with whom he was associated did not. This contributed to his being regarded as a leader by the critics because it gave him a platform and thus greater visibility. Among the artists, there was acknowledgement of Kaprow's breakthroughs even though they ultimately resented being grouped together with him, and in retrospect have sought to distance themselves from him. Claes Oldenburg did not like the term "Happening" being applied to his performances, and today dislikes the term Environment, because these were Kaprow's words.² However, in an interview for Artforum in February, 1966, Oldenburg

acknowledged that: "The only reason I have taken up Happenings is because I wanted to experiment with total space or surrounding space. I don't believe that anyone has ever used space before in the way Kaprow and others have been using it in Happenings. There are many ways to interpret a Happening, but one way is to use it as an extension of painting space."³

While there may have been resentment towards Kaprow on the part of artists who did not feel he was accurately representing them, Kaprow's overall influence has been underestimated. As Barbara Haskell states in Blam!:

Kaprow's reputation . . . was adversely affected by the fugitive nature of Happenings. While other artists went on from Happenings to produce static objects which won them fame, Kaprow did not. His contribution to the formulation of the aesthetic of the early 1960s is thus often undervalued. In fact, he played a dominant role in the avant-garde community during this period, exerting incalculable influence not only on Happenings but on Pop Art as well.⁴

Sources for Environments

Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau, the Futurist theories on the interpenetration of objects and space, and Duchamp's contributions to the Surrealist exhibitions in New York in the 1940s are often cited by art historians as precedents for the Environments of Allan Kaprow and his contemporaries.⁵ Dada theories were disseminated in the 1950s largely through Robert Motherwell's book, The Dada Painters and Poets, which had been published in 1951, and was widely circulated. In his foreword to the second

edition of this book, Jack Flam discusses the importance of it as the first English-language source for Dada: "As the first comprehensive Dada anthology, this book helped to define and contextualize--and virtually to resurrect--the Dada movement. . . . When this book appeared in 1951, the material it presented, and the 'anything goes' attitude that it embodied, struck a sympathetic chord, especially among artists and writers just coming into their maturity."⁶

Kaprow acknowledges the impact of The Dada Painters and Poets, especially the Dada theories, on his own development. There are no illustrations included in the book of Schwitters' Merzbau, but there is an essay by Schwitters that talks about his drive towards the creation of a total work of art, something that was to intrigue Kaprow as well. Kaprow also read literature on Futurism and Russian Constructivism, and, as he has stated: "I began to discover in a minor way . . . that what I was interested in doing had plenty of prototypes in Art History."⁷ However, ultimately Kaprow suggested a different line of development for Environments, one which looked toward more immediate American sources.

Kaprow wrote "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" in 1956, and it was published in Art News two years later.⁸ In this article, he put forth the notion that the arena created by American action painting led artists first to assemblages and ultimately to three-dimensional spaces, or Environments.

This article was well received. Ten years after it was published, Oldenburg would still remember being impressed by it. This progression from painting to assemblage to Environment described Kaprow's own artistic development as well as that of Jim Dine. Joseph Ruzicka traces Dine's Environment, The House, back to a 1959 assemblage Dine made called Household Piece.⁹ Oldenburg, however, came to Environments through sculpture.

Pamela Lehnert, in her dissertation, "An American Happening: Allan Kaprow and a Theory of Process Art," argues that the progression from assemblage to Environment to Happening is a formal, not a theoretical one, and is thus an insufficient explanation. She is looking for a theoretical model, and finds it in "a context of process theory, criticism and practice."¹⁰ Process theory as she defines it is purely American and has a lineage beginning with John Dewey, and continuing with Harold Rosenberg, John Cage and Kaprow. In particular, Lehnert attributes Kaprow's interest in spectator participation to his reading of Dewey's Art as Experience. Her argument is convincing as far as it goes. However, what is more likely is that Environments were the result of a combination of the awareness of European prototypes, the American theory, and the particular historical moment.

Lehnert's dissertation, which is the only one that has been written about Kaprow to date, devotes only three pages

to his Environments. While it is true that Kaprow is better known as the inventor of Happenings, his Environments merit equal attention. Although Kaprow saw Environments and Happenings as interrelated, it is the Environments that introduce many issues germane to Installation art, and thus they are historically important in and of themselves.

In 1966, after several years of planning, Kaprow published the book Assemblage, Environments and Happenings. The book created a stir even before it was published. William Seitz quotes from the then unpublished manuscript in the catalogue to his landmark exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1961, The Art of Assemblage.¹¹ In quoting from the manuscript, Seitz accepts Kaprow's theory that Environments and Happenings developed out of assemblage. In addition to the importance of Kaprow's text, Kaprow's book remains an important source of images of works no longer extant. There are some pointed juxtapositions. For example, Kaprow places a photograph of himself in his Environment Yard opposite a photograph of Jackson Pollock at work in his studio.

In order to avoid too much overlap with Michael Kirby's book, Happenings, which had been released the previous year, Kaprow chose a different selection of artists to include in the Happenings section. Unlike Kirby, few of the artists he chose were American. He included Wolf Vostell, the Gutai Group, Milan Knizak, Jean Jaques Lebel, George Brecht and

Kenneth Dewey. However, he included Environments by Oldenburg and Dine in the section of the book devoted to Environments. In addition to providing photographs of assemblages, Environments and Happenings, he elaborated on the progression, saying that assemblages and Environments "are at root the same--the only difference is one of size. Assemblages may be handled or walked around, while Environments must be walked into. Though scale obviously makes all the experiential difference in the world, a similar form principle controls each of these approaches, and some artists work in both with great ease."¹²

Tellingly, the third illustration in Kaprow's book is an assemblage by Robert Rauschenberg, Interview, 1955. Rauschenberg is an important source for the junk Environments of the late 1950s and early 1960s. As Barbara Rose has stated:

Robert Rauschenberg's use of common objects, and his paintings that spilled forward to occupy the spectator's space rather than creating an illusionistic, pictorial space, must also be taken into consideration in any attempt to reconstruct the artistic milieu of New York in the late 'fifties. A succès de scandale from the moment he began exhibiting in New York early in the decade, Rauschenberg further attracted widespread attention among younger artists through his first show at the Castelli Gallery in 1958 and his subsequent inclusion in The Museum of Modern Art's "Sixteen Americans" exhibition in 1959.¹³

Kaprow, in his 1966 article "Experimental Art," said of Rauschenberg's all black and all white paintings that "[they] were an end to art and a beginning. Once a man's shadow gets into a painting for a moment, everything becomes

possible and the conditions for experimentation are thrust upon the scene."¹⁴ While Rauschenberg did not create Environments in the same sense that Kaprow, Oldenburg, Grooms, Dine and Whitman would, he incorporated everyday materials into his work, challenged traditional genre divisions, and took large steps towards making a complete Environment. He went as far as creating large, free-standing assemblages, but the viewer could not enter into them. Later, in 1968, with his work titled Soundings, he made a room-sized piece which the viewer could physically enter. He also made stage sets for performances by Merce Cunningham, but they were never shown alone as Environments.

The Nature of Spectator Participation

Kaprow's Environments introduced the idea of active spectator participation. This was of paramount importance to Kaprow in a way that it was not to other artists with whom he was associated. Although he exhibited with Robert Whitman, Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine, among others, he feels his true affinities were with Wolf Vostell, Milan Knizak and Jean Jaques Lebel, who, in their performances, were greatly interested in involving the audience. However, as Kaprow said, "the press noise misled everybody into thinking [audience participation] was a massive movement."¹⁵ Kaprow's Environments were conceived with the participation of the spectator in mind; this involvement was

part of the whole spirit of the works, and consistent with Kaprow's philosophy of integrating art and life. It is worthwhile to devote some attention to the different types of activities Kaprow gave the spectator to do beyond the "activity" of simply entering and being in the space.

The importance to Kaprow of spectator participation in Environments is borne out by his eventual development of Happenings, which, in Kaprow's case, ultimately eliminated the audience altogether, leaving only participants. The progression was fairly rapid:

. . . there was a sense of mystery [in the Environments] until your eye reached a wall. Then there was a dead end. . . . I tried camouflaging the walls one way or another. I tried destroying the sense of bounded space with more sound than ever, played continuously. Hidden up in the lights were all kinds of toys that I had gimmicked up so that it was impossible to tell their identity: bells, tinkles, rattles, grinders, marbles in tin cans that turned over, and so on. But this was no solution. It only increased the growing discord between my work and the art gallery's space and connotations. I immediately saw that every visitor to the Environment was part of it. I had not really thought of it before. And so I gave him occupations like moving something, turning switches on--just a few things. Increasingly during 1957 and 1958, this suggested a more "scored" responsibility for that visitor. I offered him more and more to do, until there developed the Happening.¹⁶

The notion of involving the audience, whether in an assemblage, Environment or Happening (and he offered active involvement in all three), also came to Kaprow in part out of the teachings of John Cage, with whom he had studied at the New School for Social Research. Cage had taught a class there titled "Composition as Experimental Music," and it was

in this class, in 1957, that Kaprow did his first Happening. Kaprow has said regarding the Happenings, "a lot of these things were actually set up very much under the permissions granted by John Cage."¹⁷

For Kaprow, spectator participation in an Environment meant there was some specific activity for the viewer. Kaprow's assemblages in the late 1950s had already begun to offer some activity, although they were still free-standing discrete objects, and could not be entered into. For example, Penny Arcade, an assemblage presented at the Hansa Gallery in 1956, had canvas strips hung in front of works that the viewer had to move aside or peer through in order to see the works hung on the wall. Wall, 1957-59, had rearrangeable panels for the viewers to manipulate. The activity in some of the Environments had to do with the demands on the viewer in traversing the piece. For example, An Apple Shrine, presented at the Judson Gallery in 1960, was a mazelike labyrinth with newspaper on the floor through which viewers shuffled as they walked. The narrow alleyways and the newspapers forced the viewers to physically interact with the piece, and, one imagines, with each other. Yard, presented in the courtyard of the Martha Jackson Gallery in 1961, required the viewer to walk on piles of tires.

The most elaborate Environment that Kaprow created in terms of spectator activity was Words, presented at the Smolin Gallery in New York in 1962 and at New York State

University at Stonybrook in 1963 (fig. 5). In both versions, Words consisted of two rooms separated by muslin curtains. Rose Moose's description in the catalogue that accompanied the 1963 presentation describes how there were signs directing the viewer to "turn on the phonographs; roll the rollers; add your own words."¹⁸ The spectator-participant, or gallery visitor could match up different words by unrolling the rollers to different levels, and add their own. At the same time as the viewer could make his/her own decisions, the viewer was being manipulated. Not only had Kaprow established separate rules for each of the two rooms, but there was a particular direction the viewer had to take, a path to follow. As he stated in the catalogue:

Of course, being active, we can misuse any environment, natural or artistic. We can destroy a landscape through carelessness, and here we can refuse to consider what responses are appropriate to the nature of the idea. For instance, it is inappropriate to staple word-strips askew, onto the floor or anywhere in the smaller room; and it would be just as unfit to write with the colored chalks in the larger room. There are freedoms for the visitor (as there are for the artist), but they are revealed only within the limits dictated by the art work's immediate as well as underlying themes.¹⁹

While Words may have been the closest thing to a free-for-all that New York gallery-goers had ever experienced, it was, in fact, controlled to a certain degree. This vague boundary between a democratic notion of participation and of manipulation and control of the visitor by the artist will come into sharper relief by the 1970s. For Kaprow, the

boundary between the audience and the artist would eventually vanish as he focused more on Happenings in which there was no separate audience. But for some later artists, manipulation would come to be synonymous with participation.

Kaprow's accompanying statement in the catalogue for Words in 1963 is worth quoting from at length because it sets down his definition of an Environment, his philosophy of integrating art and life, and his distaste for conventional exhibition spaces and the passive way in which art is experienced in them:

Words is an "environment," the name given to an art that one enters, submits to, and is--in turn--influenced by. If it is different from most art in its impermanence and changeableness, it is like much contemporary work in being fashioned from the real and everyday world, a world it celebrates, probes, comments on, perhaps, and surely dreams about.

I am involved with the city atmosphere of billboards, newspapers, scrawled pavements and alley walls, in the drone of a lecture, whispered secrets, pitchmen in Times Square fun-parlors, bits of stories and conversations overheard at the Automat. All this has been compressed and shaped into a situation which, in order to "live" in the fullest sense, must actively engage a visitor.

This may be difficult for those bound by the habits of respectful distance essential for older art. But if we temporarily put aside the question of the sacred in aesthetic matters and see in Words activities analogous to some in which we normally engage--doodling, playing anagrams or scrabble, searching for just the right word to express a thought, climbing a ladder to hang a picture on the wall, listening to records, leaving notes for someone--then the accessibility of the work may get across and its art as much as its mystery becomes apparent. I doubt that mere passive observation is very rewarding.²⁰

Words was listed in the catalogue as an environment. It was on exhibit for several weeks, and did not require the

presence of the artist. The press release for the original presentation at the Smolin Gallery focused on the participatory aspect of the Environment: "From September 11 through September 22 . . . people coming to the Smolin Gallery at 19 East 71 St. singly, in pairs, or in groups, for the fifty cent admission, will have the thrill of active participation in an Environment created by Alan Kaprow."²¹ Throughout the press release, the visitor is referred to as the participant. Words, along with Yard, and An Apple Shrine are some of the Environments pictured in Assemblage, Environments and Happenings. In nearly all the photographs, spectators are engaged in some sort of activity in the Environments, indicating how integral their presence was to the work.

Spectator participation was part of the agenda for Oldenburg and Dine in the years that they were creating Environments, but in a different way and to a far less explicit degree than for Kaprow. In 1960, when Dine and Oldenburg constructed Environments at the Judson Gallery, under the collective name of Ray-Gun, part of the exhibition was to allow visitors to the gallery to see the works under construction "in order to encourage participation," as stated by the artists in the Spring calendar of events at the Judson Gallery.²² In a conversation with Barbara Haskell in 1984, Oldenburg said that The Street did include an aspect of spectator participation. As Haskell relates,

"Oldenburg invited the audience to add its own debris to the floor of The Street and encouraged other artists to pin up anything whatsoever on the 'communication board' he had set up adjacent to the gallery."²³ However, this is quite different from what Kaprow was doing at the time. Dine never included any activities for the viewer in his Environments. He would say later that: "For me, frankly, what I did in so-called Environments was just larger works than painting or sculpture could be at that time. . . . I never wanted anyone to be part of my art other than to take from it, you know, take part, but I don't want anyone to participate."²⁴

Divergence Between Environments and Happenings/Performances

For a few years, from 1958-61, Kaprow gave primacy to the Environment--supplanting painting, collage and assemblage in favor of it. At the time, Environments were not a sideline to his work in other media, but an outgrowth of that work. For a brief period, Kaprow did Happenings along with Environments, but by 1962, he was involved mainly in the creation of Happenings, which he saw as a clear outgrowth of Environments:

Environments are generally quiet situations, existing for one or several persons to walk or crawl into, lie down or sit in. One looks, sometimes listens, eats, drinks, or rearranges the elements as though moving household objects around. . . . Fundamentally, Environments and Happenings are similar. They are the passive and active sides of a single coin, whose principle is extension. Thus an Environment is

not less than a Happening. It is not a movie set which has not yet seen action (like the blank canvas-arena of the 'action' painter). It is quite sufficient in its quieter mode even though, in the point of evolution, the Happening grew out of it. I expect that the differences will eventually blur and matter less.²⁵

This last prediction, about Environments and Happenings merging into one form, proved wrong. In fact, Happenings, or performances, and Environments grew further apart. For all its radical character (site-specific, ephemeral, large scale), an Environment could still be treated to some degree as a static object, albeit a very large one. It could be placed on exhibition for the public, all day, every day for as long as an institution chose. If the artist's presence had been integral to the genre, as with a Happening, it would have been far more difficult to have this happen, for obvious practical reasons.

Michael Kirby, in his 1965 book Happenings, argues for a greater distinction between Environments and Happenings, finding them to have descended from two different lineages and rejecting the notion that Happenings grew out of Environments. He sees Environments as having grown out of a collage tradition beginning with cubist collage, whereas Happenings grew out of a performance tradition beginning with Dada cabaret.²⁶ He makes a distinction between a "found environment," an existing location where a Happening might take place, and an Environment. In a "found environment" the relationship between the viewer and the action need not be on all sides, whereas he defines an

Environment as "a work of art or creation that surrounds or encloses the viewer on all sides."²⁷ Some Happenings took place in traditional theater settings with the audience facing the action. Sometimes the audience could only peer through the door, as was the case with Oldenburg's performance of Snapshot of the City at Judson Church in 1960. Kaprow's Happenings eventually involved no separate audience at all; everyone present was a player. For Kirby, while surrounding space need not be present in a Happening, it is the defining characteristic of an Environment. Many Environments were constructed and exhibited without related Happenings.

When Happenings were staged in Environments, there was not always a direct connection between the two. At times, theirs was a marriage of convenience. This was the case with Jim Dine's Environment, The House, which was shown at the Judson Gallery early in 1960. The House became the setting for his performance, The Smiling Workman simply because it was available space. The performance was not related conceptually to the Environment.²⁸ Oldenburg's Environment, The Street, shown at Judson at the same time, was the setting for his performance called Snapshot of the City. Here there was more of a conceptual overlap since the performances consisted of encounters such as one might have on the city streets. However, the performance and the Environment were initially conceived by the artist as two

separate entities: As Oldenburg later related:

The original performance was supposed to take place in front of the Judson on Thompson Street. It was called Post No Bills. We had planned to block the street at the moment of performance by stalling a car, but the more I thought about the piece, the more I felt it was very closely connected with the construction I had made. I decided that I wanted to show my construction at the same time that I presented a performance. . . . So, from my first performance, my theatre work was linked to my sculpture or construction.²⁹

Later in 1960, Oldenburg remade The Street for an exhibition at the Reuben Gallery. He cleaned up the piece considerably, eliminating much of the debris that had been in the original version, and exhibited it without any performance at all. In his journal he referred to the Reuben Gallery version as the "environmental counterpart" of the Judson work.³⁰ It could stand alone as an art exhibition, and clearly was not merely the scenery for a performance that had occurred. This distinction is important because it is too often assumed that Environments are inseparable from Happenings. Environments were not merely the settings in which Happenings or performances took place. And when Environments eventually moved uptown, they did so without accompanying performance.

This is not to say that there was never a direct overlap between Environments and performance. Later in 1960, Dine would stage the Happening Car Crash at the Reuben Gallery, where he lined the walls with drawings and paintings also related to the car crash theme. The

resulting Environment was specifically designed for and related to the performance, although Dine would say in retrospect that "the set was as strong an environment as I ever built, without the people."³¹ Claes Oldenburg's The Store, which ran from 1 December 1961 through 31 January 1962, at 107 East 2nd Street, is a good example of this overlap as well (fig. 6). The artist was present at all times in the role of proprietor, selling the individual pieces that made up the Environment of The Store. This was essentially a performance, with the Environment an actual store (or even a gallery, since the objects sold were works of art). Oldenburg also functioned as the manufacturer, since the store contained his studio, where the merchandise was created. Oldenburg cites prototypes for The Store in Chicago, where some artists used stores, rather than lofts, as studios.

In Oldenburg's The Store, the viewer was synonymous with the customer, and participated, in the fashion of customers everywhere, by browsing and perhaps eventually purchasing. These activities contributed to erasing the boundaries between art and life. Oldenburg's store was an Environment in which the viewer could participate, in true Kaprow spirit, doing something, shopping, which he or she did every day. After the store closed, Oldenburg staged a series of performances in the back of the space under the collective title of the Ray-Gun Manufacturing Company.

Visitors had to go through the former store to gather in the room where the performance was to be held. Items from the store were still hanging around the space, but the store itself was no longer open for business. The performances were related thematically to the store, but the store was not really functioning as a set, having already been mostly dismantled. From his first Judson show on, Oldenburg has conceived of his exhibitions as environments in which all the elements are related thematically.

The Junk Aesthetic--Inside and Out

The forms that the new art took were inseparable from its substance. The aesthetics of "junk" dominated, as artists aimed for a continuity between their works and everyday life. Kurt Schwitters had used junk, stating a desire to make "new art forms out of the remains of a former culture," but his detritus-filled collages were not intended themselves to be thrown away.³² For the Environment makers, the use of junk added to the ephemeral quality of their work. Many of the Environments were made of perishable materials such as newspaper, string, food, toilet paper and adhesive tape. Not only would the whole thing be dismantled after the showing, but most of the time the individual components could not be salvaged in order to remake the piece at another time. As Jim Dine said at the time:

I first started at the Reuben and at the Judson and it was all about junk. Finding things and putting them together. . . . I just figured that if you worked on it long enough it worked and if it didn't you threw it away. There was enough trash to make other things work. . . . When my show [at the Reuben] was over I just threw most of it away. That's what almost everyone did that year.³³

These materials gave the Environments a spontaneous, "expressionistic" quality and represent one of the aesthetic branches of Installation art that has continued to develop. A review of An Apple Shrine in the Village Voice describes it as "a modern labyrinth of narrow passageways constructed of chicken wire, ripped cardboard, rags, tarpaper, enormous quantities of torn and crumpled newspapers stuffed into the wire from ceiling to the floor . . ." ³⁴

The "junk" represented more than an ephemeral, everyday material. It also communicated the message that this was a radical new art, non-traditional and non-precious. In an era that celebrated American prosperity and consumerism, there was a critique implicit in the use of the throwaway remains and excesses of that culture. Barbara Rose attributes the junk aesthetic in part to American pragmatism: "The point was not to turn junk into art, but rather to make art out of what was at hand."³⁵ At any rate, the use of junk was seen as an assault on high art and the elite audience that it traditionally served.

Another source for Kaprow's Environments and those of Dine, Oldenburg and Whitman, was the city itself. Both Kaprow and Oldenburg articulated the desire to make an art

that would have continuity with the physical environment outside the gallery. Since the galleries with which they were involved tended to be downtown, on or near the lower east side, this meant bringing in the decrepit and entropic quality of these urban zones. Oldenburg proclaimed in 1961: "I am for the art of old plaster and new enamel. I am for the art of slag and black coal and dead birds. . . . I am for . . . the art of taxicabs. I am for the art of icecream cones dropped on the street. I am for the majestic art of dogturds, rising like cathedrals. I am for the blinking arts, lighting up the night."³⁶ His enthusiasm for the milieu of the city found its way into his work.

The places where Environments were exhibited are part of their history not only for what they contributed to the aesthetic of the works. Without these places, some of them organized by the artists themselves, there would have been no place to show the works. The outlets were created out of necessity, and provided what no other, more established place was offering at that time: an arena in which to experiment. Bruce Altshuler provides a history of the avant-garde through a history of landmark exhibitions.³⁷ Operating under the premise that without these exhibitions, there would essentially not have been a history, he sets a precedent for treating the exhibition as a major tool for advancing art in the twentieth century. In the case of ephemeral art in particular, the exhibition is of enormous

significance. New spaces had to open up that not only would allow the Environments to be seen, but would allow them to be constructed so they could be seen. These spaces are part of the history of the art form.

Kaprow felt very strongly that some of the new art needed new places for exhibition. In Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, he ruminates on the limitations of exhibiting Environments in traditional art settings:

Gallery exhibited Environments almost invariably tend to be untouchable, static display pieces in conformity with the gallery tradition. All the marvelous potentials of transformation and interactivity between art, the public, and nature are out of the question. And even when a little of this is made possible, it is so tentative that the old habits of gallery-spectatorship preclude any vital response on the public's part, limit the work's duration to the standard three-week show, and do not prepare anyone for the idea that nature could ever be involved, much less welcomed.³⁸

The Environments by Kaprow, Dine, Oldenburg and Whitman were shown in alternative galleries including the Reuben Gallery and the Judson gallery in New York. There was a lot of overlap between the activities at these spaces--Kaprow did a performance as part of the Ray-Gun activities organized by Oldenburg and Dine at Judson, for example.

The Judson Gallery was located at 239 Thompson Street, south of Washington Square, and was a small, non-commercial space. It was directed by Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine beginning in 1960. The church had already been exhibiting art before this, including two-dimensional works by Oldenburg and Dine, but more radical things began to happen

there starting in the fall of 1959.³⁹ Although directed by Oldenburg and Dine, Kaprow was also interested in the gallery, doing one Environment there and participating in one evening of performance. In a meeting with church administrators, Kaprow outlined his thoughts about the gallery:

Alan explains what the gallery means to him . . .

The freedom to be free--"historically astonishing"

What he has in mind

"Environments"--intensified interior or exterior--
 kind of intensified interior decoration
 Abstract Expressionism dead--need ways of expression
 growing. Go IN instead of LOOK AT . . .⁴⁰

The minutes from this meeting also contain Kaprow's caution about fire hazards and the need for fire protection equipment: "Fire Hazard . . . must be constantly aware of danger."⁴¹ For a brief period, Judson was the place where Environments and Happenings were taking place. But Dine, Kaprow, Oldenburg, and Robert Whitman eventually left Judson for a number of reasons. Kaprow says that partly it was because the program at Judson became explicitly political, which was a direction in which these particular artists did not want to go:

The church, under the direction of Al Carmines, became more involved with drug counseling and other services, and began to attract artists interested in a specific political statement. For example, Phyllis Yampolsky's Hall of Issues where people could put up statements that would then be discussed. [Hendricks and Toche] organized and sponsored more and more politically active work, sometimes quite aggressive,

and that's one of the reasons why the original group there tended to move on, first of all helped by the more specific aesthetic concerns of the Reuben Gallery and then as one or the other artists moved to other places including uptown, it was a natural transition, might even have occurred if Judson had just simply burned down.⁴²

In contrast to Kaprow, Oldenburg attributes his own leaving to the changing focus at Judson in terms of media-- the art gallery gave way to the Judson Dance theater and music:

It had nothing to do with their political agenda. They have phases where they concentrate on different areas. They concentrated on art, then a little bit later they shifted to music and dance. And then they had a political period. It depended who was in the church. Bud Scott emphasized music and literature. That was no problem with me that they had a political agenda.⁴³

Dine said that one reason he left was the space. The space at Judson was just "a hole in the wall," and other places, like the Reuben Gallery, offered more. In addition, Oldenburg and Dine did not want to continue to spend their time running a gallery. Attendance was another factor. The Judson Gallery did not attract that many visitors. Dine remembers that Rainbow Thoughts, an Environment he built there that consisted of a black room with a blinking lightbulb and a tiny rainbow, received literally no visitors. The Ray-Gun show was the only Judson exhibition with which he and Oldenburg were involved that was well-attended.

The Ray-Gun show consisted of an Environment by Dine called The House, and one by Oldenburg called The Street.

These were on exhibit while they were under construction and continued to be on exhibit from January 30-February 19, 1960. During the course of the exhibition, there were three evenings of performance, some of which took place in the Environments, some of which did not. Dine and Oldenburg participated in the performances, as did Kaprow, Hansen, Dick Higgins, Red Grooms and Robert Whitman. With the exception of Dine and Oldenburg, none of the artists used The House or The Street as backdrops for their performances. Other spaces within the church were used, with the audience moving from room to room. The performances were billed under the collective name of Ray-Gun Spex. In a review of the Ray-Gun Spex in Time Magazine, Kaprow's role in the press as spokesperson is made evident:

One leader of the new movement is Allan Kaprow. . . . Kaprow's painting in the shape of a theater got started by way of giant paste-ups of indiscriminate materials. To bring back the idea of a picture, he hung canvas tatters in front of his paste-ups. Then he moved the tatters forward and installed lights behind them. Suddenly he had a stage, and so he brought on "happenings," something like the incidents children perform for an improvised circus. The idea took hold, and happenings have been put on around the world in the past year.⁴⁴

The Hansa Gallery was another place where Environments were exhibited. One of the original artist-run cooperative galleries to open on East 10th street in the 1950s, it was begun in 1952 and closed in 1959.⁴⁵ Although it had moved uptown to Central Park South in 1954, it still belonged downtown in spirit. Kaprow not only showed there but was

one of the founding members, along with Robert Whitman and George Segal, among others. Although the Hansa Gallery had closed by the time Kaprow began publicly staging Happenings, it was important as an early forum, and he showed his first Environment in its uptown location. After it closed, Anita Reuben opened the Reuben Gallery, specifically to carry on the Hansa Gallery's anti-Abstract Expressionist movement. Kaprow and George Segal were among the Hansa Gallery artists who went on to show at the Reuben. When the Reuben Gallery first opened in the fall of 1959, it was located at 61 4th Avenue. It subsequently moved to 44 East 3rd Street. In both locations, it was a site for exhibitions of Environments and also for Happenings by Kaprow and others. Kaprow's first public Happening, titled 18 Happenings in 6 Parts, was performed there.⁴⁶

Also, Red Grooms founded the City Gallery and later the Delancey Street Museum, where he exhibited the work of Oldenburg, Dine, Lester Johnson and others in the same circle.⁴⁷ None of these spaces were part of the commercial artworld, and this made them more able to show experimental work. Exhibitions and events took place at them that could not have happened anywhere else at the time. As Lawrence Alloway wrote in 1965 regarding the Reuben Gallery, "there was . . . an easy contact between the act of production and the act of presentation, which was very different from the regular marketing or promotional activities of art

dealers."⁴⁸

The Reuben Gallery and the Judson Gallery were ideal for the exhibiting of Environments because they were informal places where the artist could do what he pleased. At the same time there was little consciousness of the possible physical dangers posed by environmental work, even if, in retrospect, there should have been. For example, Kaprow recalls worrying about his Environment An Apple Shrine, which was shown at Judson, being a firetrap. He even recalls spraying the newspapers with flame retardant. But the church officials did not express concern at all.

Richard Bellamy was the director of the Hansa Gallery at the time of its closing, and went on, in 1960, to found the Green Gallery.⁴⁹ In a 1963 interview with Richard Brown Baker, he discussed the importance of the Hansa Gallery and Kaprow's first Environment there:

Baker: Did Allan Kaprow have any thoughts that he could possibly sell that thing in connection with the exhibit? What was going on in his mind?

Bellamy: What was going on in Allan Kaprow's mind? Well okay, no, he had no thought to sell it. Nothing could be sold, nothing was purchasable in the exhibition. It was an environment. No one at that time or even now is prepared to purchase an environment by an artist. That is a work that encompasses the viewer. However I understand that Sidney Janis . . . is contemplating an exhibition of environments to take place in his new gallery space. . . . we would assume that if Mr. Janis were going to do this sort of thing that it would have definite commercial aspects. . . . I still don't think that any collector is prepared to purchase an environment as a work, certainly such a work as Allan Kaprow made then and much later developed into what is now known as Happenings. I do consider that it is important that Allan Kaprow did make this

exhibition at the Hansa Gallery at that time. It has, as you say, historical importance. . . . there are certain judgements to make on Kaprow's work in general and on that exhibition, but I think that the important thing to note is that it did happen at the Hansa Gallery and it is the only place that it could have happened. It was the only existing gallery where an exhibition of that kind could have been put on.⁵⁰

In addition to the spaces discussed above, artists exercised the option to create their own spaces for themselves. Claes Oldenburg's store, for example, can be seen as a self-contained alternative exhibition space. Oldenburg described it as follows: "The store may be thought of as a season-long exhibit, with changing and new material."⁵¹ Barbara Rose wrote of The Store in 1970 that it "represented a dissolution of the museum-gallery situation and seems in many respects a forerunner of the kind of integration of art into the community that artists are demanding today. To take art out of the museum, Oldenburg decided to invent his own museum of the slums--for essentially the Store was conceived as a museum of popular art."⁵² There is some accuracy in Rose's populist interpretation of The Store. However, it should also be noted that The Store was publicized as being done in cooperation with the Green Gallery, and few people entered it off the street; those who came were primarily people who already knew what it was about.

With one exception, none of Kaprow's Environments were originally presented in museums. Kaprow was against museums in principle, for he saw them as responsible for isolating

and separating art from daily life. He had a clearly articulated anti-museum stance. His antagonism towards the museum as an institution did not take the form of trying to change the museum, as it would for later artists. Instead, he bypassed it altogether, thus truly staying away from mainstream sites and commercial practices. Kaprow was a purist. In the heyday of his creation of Environments and Happenings, he found spaces at further and further remove from the established art venues. For example, in 1962 he accepted a commission for a performance by the Walker Art Museum, but the performance was actually staged in the Lehmann mushroom caves in St. Paul. Museum sponsorship was acceptable to Kaprow, but being inside its walls was not. The alternative space could be seen as less cut off from the everyday world than the museum.

Kaprow came close to showing one of his Environments at a major New York museum in 1963, when the Museum of Modern Art organized a circulating exhibition titled Hans Hofmann and his Students. The exhibition included works by fifty artists who had studied with Hofmann. It coincided with a Hans Hofmann retrospective that was shown at the Museum of Modern Art, although the exhibition of his students was not. When William Seitz, who curated the exhibition, invited Kaprow to participate, his only stipulations were that the piece "be something that demonstrates your interpretation of Hofmann's ideas, and is reasonably practical for exhibitors

to present."⁵³ Kaprow's contribution was titled Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann. The "work" was a series of instructions, Kaprow's intention being that the finished product would look different in each of the venues. Built into his theory of Environments was that although each one was specific to the site it occupied, it could be redone in response to another site with no loss of integrity. In its travelling form, the piece consisted of a crate containing twenty-six cardboard placards on which Kaprow had written instructions about building an Environment, and thirty-six blank sheets on which viewer/participants could write. The placards could be removed from the crate and read by the visitors. Visitors could also add texts to blank placards provided by the artist. The push and pull in Kaprow's title is a dig at Hofmann's widely quoted theory that in painting, if there is one shape "pushing," there must be another that is "pulling." The push and pull in Kaprow's piece referred to the physical activity of moving furniture. It would be the first Environment Kaprow had done that was shown in museums rather than in alternative spaces.

Push and Pull is important to the present study because, although only brief attention was paid to it at the time, Kaprow's Environment deliberately challenged the functioning of museums in a way that foreshadowed similar challenges made by artists creating Installations later in

the decade. The odyssey of Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann provides a valuable starting place for discussing the problematical relationship between Installation art and museums. It also highlights some of the problems that arise when museums have to take part in the actual creation of a work of art.

Before the exhibition went on tour, the Museum of Modern Art hosted a special preview of the whole show, including Kaprow's piece, at the Santini warehouse in Long Island City, where the exhibition had been assembled to be packed. William Seitz felt it would be an appropriate venue for Kaprow's Environment since it was an unhistoricized, unaesthetic space, and Kaprow agreed. Kaprow's piece was given top billing in the press release and invitation. Attenders of the warehouse preview included Alfred Barr, Brian O'Doherty and Richard Bellamy, among others. Brian O'Doherty, reviewing the piece for the New York Times after the preview, stated that:

Mr. Kaprow invites the participation of his fellow man. He (or they) can rearrange the rooms, re-create them, deface the walls, feel free to change to more appropriate clothes, relate to the environment in any positive or negative way. After years of ignoring the spectator, art apparently wants to make restitution.

Participation in the Happening was slow. Trained not to touch art, people had trouble breaking the inhibition. . . . Cast back on their own resources, most of the adults resorted to slightly destructive child's play.⁵⁴

Kaprow had constructed the Environment at the warehouse himself, using two separate rooms. The visitors were

invited to rearrange the furniture in the spaces. On the tour, Kaprow would not be involved at all with assembling the piece. Part of the point of the piece was that each exhibitor could do it differently, based on Kaprow's general instructions. The work posed a challenge to traditional exhibition modes on two levels: first, the curators had to participate in putting it together as they saw fit, and secondly, the visitors could participate in the piece itself. Kaprow had sent a letter to all the exhibitors saying "Each exhibitor has the right to set up the Environment-Happening or disregard it. Either he may do it himself or appoint some person to do it for him. . . . somewhere nearby could be displayed photos of the piece as it was arranged in New York City, and also those taken of each new version of it. . . . I am most interested in the handshake between the artist and others. The museum or gallery director can now be instrumental in bringing this about."⁵⁵

The Museum of Modern Art circulated Hans Hofmann and his Students to fifteen venues between May of 1963 and March of 1965. The tour included an extension to meet the demand created by the popularity of the show. Most of the venues were university art galleries, including the Indiana University Museum of Art and the Lowe Art Museum in Miami. None of the venues were in the New York vicinity. In terms of Kaprow's piece, things did not go according to his plan.

Despite his instructions, not one venue constructed an Environment, and in some cases the box of placards was simply exhibited as a piece of sculpture, on a pedestal with other sculptures. Kaprow's piece, rather than picking up momentum as it went along, was treated as an object, nothing more. Regarding the showing of the exhibition in Richmond, Virginia, a newspaper account reported: "Not to be missed is the object called 'Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann--a wooden box with instruments for building an environment'. . . Here a wooden box the size of a small trunk is put on the floor with its lid and padlock open. It is a do-it-yourself work of art in which the spectator is asked to pick up the dozen or so cardboard plaques in the box, to read them and to replace them in the proper order."⁵⁶ The museums apparently could not construct the Environment without Kaprow. There was barely a precedent for the artist coming to build the work in situ. There was even less of one where the members of the museum staff had to fend for themselves in constructing the work. Kaprow wrote of the whole experience: "From reports, I gather that this arrangement [of the Environment-Happening] has not worked out optimally. In an exhibition atmosphere people are not geared to enter into the process of art. Hence, this kind of work is much better off away from the habits and rituals of conventional culture."⁵⁷

The work of Kaprow's American contemporaries proved

more adaptable to those rituals. Oldenburg quickly accepted the embrace of the museum. He was already showing in museums outside of New York and was in a group show of New Acquisitions at the Museum of Modern Art by the end of 1961. He first showed at the Janis Gallery in the 1962 New Realists exhibition, and joined the gallery in 1963. By the end of 1969, he was having a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. Kaprow was simultaneously moving farther afield.

Critical Reception to Environments

In a recent interview with the author, Jim Dine said the following regarding the critical reception of Environments:

One of the things that upset me always about the response [to Environments], and of course one can never determine what the response is going to be or control it really, was that everybody just thought it was so goddamned funny. It was just so much fun. . . . they wouldn't have said that about a painting.⁵⁸

It is true that by and large the critics did not know what to make of the Environments, and so resorted to a kind of tongue-in-cheek philistinism. But even while they were poking fun, they focused on the participatory nature of the work; it was the central critical issue. They did not necessarily like it, but they addressed it. Their response is a useful way of approaching the radical aspects of Environments. When a new art form is created, there must be a powerful social force at work. Environments were a new

form, the use of junk as a material was also new, or at least its revival was new, and the apparent "free-for-all" atmosphere generated by visitors to the Environments was also new. The works were presented in a 1950s context, and must be understood against this backdrop. (The characterization of the period of the "1950s" is generally regarded by historians as having lasted into the early 1960s). While the Environments represented a rebellion against the prevailing doctrine of Abstract Expressionism, they also indicated rebellion at a broader societal level. The condescending tone of many of the reviewers who saw the Environments demonstrates how much these works broke with existing norms.

Historian James Henretta has stated that "in the Post-McCarthy climate of conformity, rebellion in the 1950s was more likely to take artistic than political forms."⁵⁹ There was no explicit political content in the Environments of Kaprow, Oldenburg and Dine. Kaprow recalls that the post-McCarthy era was one in which many artists were afraid to make any explicit political statements. At Rutgers, where Kaprow taught, and where several faculty members had been dismissed during the McCarthy era, Kaprow had been told that he was expected to make no waves.⁶⁰ Of course some artists in this era did make art with specific political content, such as the Tenth Street-based March Gallery Group, whose core members were Boris Lurie, Seymour Krim and

Stanley Fischer. Between 1959 and 1964, these artists made assemblages, installations and collages protesting such issues as the government's nuclear build-up.⁶¹ However, the political implications of Kaprow's Environments were more subtle. They hinged on his use of spectator participation, which was consistent with the spirit of participatory democracy that emerged in the 1950s.

Bret Eynon discusses the roots of the notion of a participatory democracy in her recent article, "Community in Motion: The Free Speech Movement, Civil Rights, and the Roots of the New Left." She describes the emergence in 1955-56 of the civil rights movement and the surge of energy this movement gave into the next decade. Eynon states that "the civil rights movement served as a model for all subsequent movements of the period. . . . anti-war activities, counter-cultural leaders, and feminists further modified these ideas to fit the new issues and developments of the late '60s."⁶² One of the links between all of these is the notion of a participatory democracy, which was articulated in the 1962 Port Huron Statement, but existed in spirit years before it was named. In Eynon's words, "the language and practice of democracy and community made radical activism more comprehensible and attractive to Americans."⁶³

Sally Banes uses the term participatory democracy in Greenwich Village 1963, a study which focuses on the

overlapping groups of artists in Greenwich Village in this period:

The construction of participatory democracy took several forms in Village artistic life. One was the style of the works, which gave spectators a powerful sense of direct involvement. Another was the more or less explicit political content in the art itself. A third was the festival, anthology, or other collective structure for presentation and distribution. A fourth was the series of cooperative, alternative institutions that turned artmaking itself into a community-building process with shared responsibility and the promise of local autonomy. And yet a fifth emerged in the informal friendship networks that percolated through and across the more formal associations, creating both social and artistic bonds, leading to collaborations and interdisciplinary genres, and building audiences.⁶⁴

It is in this context that Environments, not only those that directly invited the spectator to participate, must be understood. This is also the context for the critical response to them. Whether or not Oldenburg and Dine were interested in participation in the way that Allan Kaprow was, this was the aspect of their Environments that struck a nerve. The emphasis that critics placed on participation has a connection to the social and political era in which these works were created--an era in which a democratic notion of participation was in the air, and was perceived as a threat to the established conservative order that still presided. The community-based gallery at Judson, Oldenburg's store, the attempts to merge art with city life, and the experience of participation that Kaprow offered in his Environments are consistent with radical social developments that were occurring at the same time. The fact

that these artists found and directed their own exhibition space is also consistent with this context.

Kaprow would later relate his work to the ideals of the time, saying:

Do you remember the popularization of some of the ingredients of Happenings in those things called be-ins and do-ins? It was a kind of communitarian notion of . . . participation. Everyone would get together a lot more successfully than in Environments and Happenings and . . . they'd form magic circles and sing and chant . . . and I think something of that spirit of participation in a very rudimentary and simple but nevertheless moving way was where the philosophy of Environments and Happenings really emerged--not in the artists' work but in the public sector, and it did in a way that some artists might find uninteresting.⁶⁵

While Kaprow acknowledges that there was an explicit element of democratic ideals in his Environments and Happenings, it is not as explicit in the works of his American contemporaries. This is interesting because, as Kaprow said, "I would say that the notion of interaction was isolated [in the U.S.] and easy to get into as a philosophy of democracy for the Europeans, strangely enough. It should have been here but it wasn't."⁶⁶

As Dine observed, few critics made serious efforts to understand the work. The reviews tended to focus on the reviewer's own participation in--or experience of--the piece. For example, regarding Kaprow's Judson Environment titled An Apple Shrine, reviewed in Art News: "It's a place to be alone. It's like staring at forbidden fruit. Anyway, it's someplace about which feelings rush in where thoughts wouldn't be caught dead."⁶⁷ And of Dine's Rainbow

Thoughts, also at Judson: "It is really a place to go and empty your mind. . . . 'Now what,' you think, or 'so what,' and then words fail, and thoughts also."⁶⁸ The nature of these comments reflects the radical aspects of Environments. A glance at reviews of exhibitions in traditional media in that same issue of Art News reveals the predominance of primarily objective descriptions. In the reviews of Environments, the approach switches to a subjective point of view.

Often the writing itself is done in a stream-of-consciousness way, apparently in response to the spontaneous appearance of the Environments themselves. For example, again regarding An Apple Shrine, one critic wrote: "The haloed shapes recall the baby cry from the cradle protected by the electric eye at the world's fair. The stillness is a ghost town evacuated at that moment before an avalanche."⁶⁹ This is in contrast to the straightforward, matter-of-fact tone that characterizes the reviews of painting, drawing and sculpture in the same issue. This new approach was an acknowledgement that traditional methods for critiquing a work of art were not adequate for discussion of Environments. Few of the reviews tried to grapple with all the radical implications of Environments as a form. One exception was a review of An Apple Shrine in the Village Voice, written by Theodore Tucker, a Massachusetts-based critic who had seen the show in New York. He suggests some

of the things about the Environment in general that are problematic:

Admittedly, Mr. Kaprow's art poses problems. The exhibition is now dismantled, its materials have been carted away by the junkman, and it will not be seen again. If its vocabulary is unfamiliar, it will not remain to be judged at a later, more knowledgeable year. Its life is a present one, and only memory can carry it into the future. . . . There is a distrust and fear of an expression which is short-lived by intention, as though this were subtly calling upon death itself. One cannot comprehend an attitude which bluntly embraces the fleeting. Perishable materials, perishable forms, perishable genius; chance, change--all conspire to damn this work and dissolve our values. Far beyond the "Apple Shrine's" actual content and humanity stands Kaprow's inadvertent quarrel with all the vapid glories, qualities and eternities which we think are History.⁷⁰

This review is unique in its thoughtfulness and willingness to look seriously at the Environment and consider its wider implications, something that most reviewers did not do at this time. Tucker identifies some of the fundamental issues that have made, and continue to make this art form difficult and radical.

Critical response to the Ray-Gun show, which received scant coverage, was mixed. However, Suzanne Kiplinger, writing for the Village Voice, wrote the following prophetic statement:

I honestly feel that this form--that of art enveloping the viewer--might go places. Like many new forms, it seems excessively wild at the moment, but the artists involved are making their guide-posts as they go along and undoubtedly will refine and simplify as they go.⁷¹

Initially there was hostility to the idea of the viewer having to become more active. In a review in Art News of

Kaprow's Environment at the Hansa Gallery in 1958, the reviewer writes: "The spectator enters the exhibition [to quote from Kaprow's statement] 'according to his talents for engagement'; also 'a much greater responsibility is placed on the visitor than he has had before.' If the visitor is not entertained, he is guilty of irresponsibility." ⁷²

However, by the time of the Words exhibition in 1962, the notion of the viewer participating had become somewhat more acceptable, but only somewhat. A review of Words in Art News in 1962 stated that "an Environment resembles a Happening . . . in that in both the public becomes part of the action. The big difference between the two is the time element. An Environment is unconcentrated, a prolonged presentation for the convenience and edification of the public which pays fifty cents a head for the privilege of being part of one."⁷³ The reviewer makes a generalization about what an Environment is, based on Kaprow's piece, and part of this definition is that the public is part of the action, the viewer is a participant. Being part of the Environment was considered both its selling point and its problem. It was sometimes seen as something positive: a democratic attempt to engage the viewer in a way that differed from previous expectations of experiencing art. And it was sometimes seen as threatening or merely irritating.

Some of the strongest negative criticism came when

Environments were first shown in a more established context than the alternative downtown spaces. The Martha Jackson Gallery, located at 32 East 69th Street, was showing artists from the Judson Gallery and the Reuben Gallery by 1960. Although generally the gallery showed avant-garde painting, Martha Jackson was willing, during a brief period, to show radical art forms as well. This was demonstrated by the two exhibitions, New Forms New Media I and II that were held there in 1960. While no Environments were included in these two landmark exhibitions, junk assemblage was presented. Kaprow wrote the catalogue essay for the first of the two shows. In May of 1961 the gallery went even further out on a limb, inviting six artists to create Environments in situ. The resulting exhibition, Environments-Situations-Spaces, was important for many reasons, despite a general lack of enthusiasm in the press. According to Oldenburg, the show was so radical that no one could even see it (register it). The artists who participated were George Brecht, Jim Dine, Walter Gaudnek, Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg and Robert Whitman. Despite its location, the exhibition did not have the effect of validating Environments as an artform, at least from the critical perspective. As one critic wrote:

The "terrible children" invaded Martha Jackson's Gallery last May and June with more of those baffling non-commercial commodities, things you can't use or sell or label even, which nobody could be too clear about why they should be encouraged or endured much less considered the prestige items they obviously are, or else why would Miss Jackson (whose commercial acumen is well known) clutter up her fashionable yard with a

bunch of junky car tires that she permitted Alan Kaprow to put there?⁷⁴

Martha Jackson, on the other hand, felt the exhibition had been a success, as she said in an interview with Paul Cummings in 1969:

The following June we had Environments, Situations, Spaces. We divided the gallery into six sections and we gave a section to each of six artists. It was not as successful as the first show but it was the first show uptown of Environments. And it led to many museum shows afterwards where they did the same thing; they divided the museum up and gave each artist a section. . . . I think it's the last show where a gallery could lead a museum. Now they don't want any gallery to get ahead of them.⁷⁵

The exhibition challenged the gallery as well as its visitors on many levels. Regarding Yard, Kaprow's entry in Environments-Situations-Spaces, Jackson would say to Cummings in retrospect:

Jackson: We were so afraid that some girl would trip on her high heels walking on the tires. I went abroad as usual, and my son was here. And the people next door called the fire department and made a complaint. So we were asked to go to court. My son got hold of a lawyer and went to court and was fined. The lawyer got him off but charged as much as the fine or something . . .

Cummings: What was the reason? Because the tires were a fire hazard or something?

Jackson: No, they're not a fire hazard. But maybe they were an escape hazard . . . maybe they felt that firemen couldn't get in here if there was a fire. Some ordinance. . . . But they didn't know what was happening; they didn't realize it was a show.⁷⁶

The press release issued by the gallery for Environments-Situations-Spaces described the new work as follows:

The exhibition . . . is unique in that it is the

first group show by artists working within the totality of physical space creating environments which demand full and active participation from the viewer. . . .

Each artist [Brecht, Dine, Gaudnek, Kaprow, Oldenburg, Whitman], though highly individual, aims at complete utilization of all facets of environmental space; achieving, thereby, a new and profound form of art expression. Walls, ceilings and floors lose their confining identity, merging into this recreated space. The viewer finds himself within the artistic statement, forcing him to forgo his passive objectivity.⁷⁷

The selling point of the exhibition was the notion of the audience as participant. This was played up as a positive element in the work. By this time, from the critical perspective, this idea was inseparable from the definition of an Environment. Once again, Kaprow functioned as spokesperson: "As Allan Kaprow . . . explained it last week, 'We invite people to cast aside their proper manners and partake wholly of art and life. They must not be afraid to get dirty.'"⁷⁸ In fact the degree of participatory experience available to the viewer varied from piece to piece, as did the degree to which the artists actually constructed Environments.

There is an eye-witness account of Gaudnek's piece that vividly invokes the experience of being in it, demonstrating the importance of the first-person experience as a record.

Brian O'Doherty describes the piece as follows:

And then I stumbled into something worthwhile.

This is a dark little house made up of acutely angled corridors twilit by hidden torches. On the walls are vast targets with bullseyes cut out, so that one can look across and through the interior anatomy of the building. Using this strictly limited means, many delusions are produced. One enters a fragile little cosmos that requires a constant refocussing of the

eyes. Gentle refractions require double and triple takes. And it is all done without mirrors. . . . Walter Gaudnek has something.⁷⁹

All of the artists had been invited to make an Environment, but they did not all do this. George Brecht's entry was a single white wicker chair which could be moved around or sat in. Oldenburg's piece was also not an Environment. In a 1974 interview with Paul Cummings, he discusses the evolution of his piece in the show:

And so the original idea for the Martha Jackson Gallery show was that it was to be a room and that these pieces were to be a sort of total environment. They were supposed to hang so closely together that it would be all like a grotto full of these pieces. . . . And of course Kaprow came in and dumped all these tires in the back yard and everyone got very frightened. So the way it turned out I just hung these things on a wall very close together and made a kind of mural. . . . And then it was as a result of the fact that it hadn't been realized there that I set about redoing it as an environment. Which led to the store that became The Store downtown. And I rented that store in the course of 1961, I think it was June or something. So that was a direct result of the Jackson show.⁸⁰

As far as the few critics who covered the show were concerned, Environments-Situations-Spaces was taken as lightly as if it had been shown at the Judson or Reuben gallery. Art News's Jack Kroll covered the exhibition in just a few sentences. His opening sentence, "'Situations and Environments'" offered the Happenings Boys in some more attempts to create Innocence using the methods of Frankenstein," well sums up his response.⁸¹ Brian O'Doherty, writing for the New York Times, found the exhibition only slightly more substantial: "All of this is

based on a perfectly reasonable premise--that the sculptor can shape the environment to the human scale, and then release us inside it to walk around and add to our experiences." But he expressed disappointment that the artists involved actually appeared to take what they had done seriously. Obviously O'Doherty did not. The one exception he made was for Gaudnek.

It was not until January of 1964 that Environments were again offered by an uptown gallery, with the exhibition Environments by Four New Realists, held at the Sidney Janis gallery. This gallery at the time represented established 57th Street insider status. The artists included were Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, George Segal and James Rosenquist, who were all, by this time, identified as pop artists.

From the critical perspective, the exhibition was considered a failure across the board. It was unanimously disliked--but for a variety of reasons. Some critics who were already hostile to Pop art disliked it on the same grounds as they disliked Pop--that it presented but failed to interpret everyday life. Other critics disliked the exhibition because the works presented in it failed to conform to their definition of an Environment. The exhibition might have been received with less hostility had it been called something else. In fact Carroll Janis recalls that he had originally wanted to title it "Environmental Art," which implied something more general,

but Sidney Janis chose to use "Environments" because it was a catchy term. The gallery was aware that the works in the exhibition were not Environments, and was not trying to enlarge upon the definition by labelling them thus.⁶² However, this is not the spirit in which the works were received.

Gene Swenson found Oldenburg's contribution to the exhibition, Bedroom Ensemble, to be a disaster as an Environment in part because "the gallery compounded the error [of the piece] by chaining off the room to make us look at it rather than letting us sense it."⁶³ In fact it was Oldenburg's decision that the piece be roped off so people could not enter. He felt the whole effect of the piece would be lost if people walked through it. By contrast, Barbara Rose found that "the only successful environment at Janis was Oldenburg's."⁶⁴ In a review for the New York Times, John Canaday found Segal's tableau and Oldenburg's Bedroom Ensemble to be the only "true environments" in the exhibition. Rosenquist's entry invited audience participation in a manner more consistent with Environments shown downtown. But Canaday describes one of Rosenquist's entries as follows: "Something untitled, lying on the floor . . . which is a construction of horizontal Plexiglass panels crossed by wooden slat bridges, which you could probably walk across, plus more light bulbs. As far as I was concerned, these exhibits were crudely executed

affairs devoid of environmental suggestion or any other kind of stimulus." Environment, in Canaday's book, seems to be synonymous with sculpture. Spectator involvement was not a criteria. This is borne out in his description of the George Segal tableau: "At one end of an otherwise black-walled chamber, George Segal has erected a full-scale Plexiglass-and-metal sign, illuminated from behind, with a life-size plaster figure in front of it. . . . The effect is altogether eerie--completely realistic and matter-of-fact in detail, but spectral, sinister and paralyzed in a kind of desperate airlessness. This is an environment indeed."⁸⁵

It is important to reiterate that a clear distinction exists between an Environment and tableaux such as Segal's. Kaprow used the term "Environmental Sculpture" to describe Segal's work, indicating its difference from an Environment. But in Canaday's review, the term "Environment" refers simply to the space occupied by a discrete work. Dore Ashton dismissed the title of the exhibition entirely, saying that "of course [Four Environments] is only a convenient title, for it is impossible to create an environment in an art gallery, which already has an overwhelming environment of its own."⁸⁶

Following the Environments by Four New Realists exhibition, Environments continued occasionally to be presented in galleries around New York City. In April of 1964 Lucas Samaras transferred the contents of a room that

had served as both his living quarters and his studio for fourteen years, into the Green Gallery. The six by thirteen foot room contained his bed, clothing, books and manuscripts and an array of objects such as one might find in a studio. It was offered for sale for \$17,000. Samaras was quoted in a New York Times review as saying "I see [the piece] as assemblage, even sculpture. It is my past, complete--a piece of biography--the realest thing I could do."⁸⁷

Samaras' mirrored rooms were first shown at the Pace Gallery in 1966. In the spring of 1966 Andy Warhol installed his Cow Wallpaper and Silver Clouds at the Leo Castelli Gallery. Yayoi Kusama's Driving Image Environments were shown at the Castellane Gallery in the same year. However, major New York museums still had yet to exhibit Environments.

Conclusion

By the time the exhibition Environments by Four New Realists opened at the Sidney Janis Gallery, there was no longer a need for Oldenburg or Dine to show at off-the-beaten path spaces. The Judson Gallery had moved on to focus on music and dance. The Hansa and Reuben Galleries were closed. Martha Jackson had not followed through on the promise of the three radical exhibitions she had staged in 1960 and 1961. Several of the artists, at an unprecedented early age, had acquired gallery representation from some of the most reputable galleries in New York. Kaprow was

exclusively committed to the Happening, and was doing his Happenings far away from the institutions of the art world. Whitman had moved on to kinetic art and film.

From their first manifestation in the work of Kaprow, Oldenburg, Dine and Whitman, Environments were site-specific, ephemeral and non-commercial. They were exhibited in spaces outside of the network of established galleries and museums. This was more out of necessity than choice for most of the artists. However, the locations gave the work an inherently non-elitist slant, as did the throwaway materials from which they were made. Environments provided viewers with a place to come together and share the experience of viewing. They provided a challenge to accepted exhibition practices. In all these ways, they anticipated the actions of some artists in New York in the 1960s and 1970s.

Notes

1. Haskell, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance.
2. Claes Oldenburg, telephone interview by author, 30 October 1994.
3. Claes Oldenburg, interview with Bruce Glaser, Artforum 4, no. 6 (February 1966): 22.
4. Haskell, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 111.
5. See, for example, Jennifer Licht, Spaces; Charlotta Kotik, Working in Brooklyn: Installations (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1990).
6. Jack Flam, foreword to The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology, ed. Robert Motherwell (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1981), xi-xii.
7. Allan Kaprow, telephone interview by author, 24 August 1994.
8. Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," Art News 57, no. 6 (October 1958): 24-26, 54-55.
9. Joseph Ruzicka, "Jim Dine and Performance," in Studies in Modern Art I: American Art of the 1960s, ed. John Elderfield (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 98.
10. Pamela A. Lehnert, "An American Happening: Allan Kaprow and a Theory of Process Art" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1989), 212.
11. William C. Seitz, The Art of Assemblage (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 90-91.
12. Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, 159.
13. Barbara Rose, Claes Oldenburg (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 33-34.
14. Allan Kaprow, "Experimental Art," Art News 65, no. 1 (March 1966): 78.
15. Allan Kaprow, telephone interview by author, 24 August 1994.
16. Allan Kaprow quoted in Michael Kirby, Happenings (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1965), 46.

17. Allan Kaprow, telephone interview by author, 24 August 1994. Lehnert provides a detailed analysis of Cage's influence on Kaprow.
18. Rose Moose, "Words About Kaprow," in Words (New York: Smolin Gallery, 1963).
19. Allan Kaprow, "About 'Words,'" in Words (New York: New York, 1963).
20. Ibid.
21. "Alan Kaprow's New Environment--Words--Experienced at Smolin Gallery," Press release, 1961. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). Library.
22. "Spring Calendar at the Judson Gallery," January - March 1960. Judson Memorial Church Archive, New York.
23. Haskell, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 26.
24. Jim Dine, telephone interview by author, 11 May 1995.
25. Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, 183-84.
26. This tradition is in fact older, i.e. Oscar Kokoschka's "Murderer, Hope of Women" in 1909, and other Secession and Wiener Werkstatte performances.
27. Kirby, Happenings, 24.
28. Ruzicka, "Jim Dine and Performance," 102.
29. Claes Oldenburg quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, Theater of Mixed Means (New York: RK Editions, 1968), 139.
30. Claes Oldenburg quoted in Rose, Claes Oldenburg, 48.
31. Jim Dine, telephone interview by author, 11 May 1995.
32. Kurt Schwitters quoted in John Elderfield, Kurt Schwitters (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), 12. Kirk Varnedoe also discusses Schwitters' use of throwaway materials in Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 63-66.
33. Jim Dine, Interview by Bruce Hooten, 26 February 1965, transcript, Archives of American Art.
34. Theodore Tucker, "Kaprow's 'Apple Shrine'," Village Voice, 12 January 1961, p. 7.

35. Rose, Claes Oldenburg, 49.
36. Claes Oldenburg. Artists's statement in Environments, Situations, Spaces (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961).
37. Bruce Altshuler, The Avant-Garde Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994).
38. Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, 182.
39. For a discussion of the Judson Gallery, see Barbara Haskell, Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 20-21.
40. Minutes of meeting with Allan Kaprow, November 2, 1959. Judson Memorial Church Archive, New York.
41. Ibid.
42. Allan Kaprow, telephone interview by author, 24 August 1994.
43. Claes Oldenburg, telephone interview by author, 30 October 1994.
44. "Art: 'Up-Beats,'" Time, 14 March 1960, p. 80.
45. For a discussion of the Hansa Gallery, see Joellen Bard: Tenth Street Days: The Coops of the '50s, (New York: Education, Art & Service, Inc., 1977), 8.
46. For a discussion of the Reuben Gallery, see Lawrence Alloway, "The Reuben Gallery: A Chronology," in Eleven from the Reuben Gallery (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1965).
47. For a discussion of the activities at the City Gallery and the Delancey Street Museum, see Judith E. Stein, "Red Grooms: The Early Years (1937-1960)," in Red Grooms: A Retrospective 1956-1984 (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1985), 33-35.
48. Lawrence Alloway, Eleven from the Reuben Gallery (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1965).
49. For a discussion of Richard Bellamy's career at the Hansa Gallery and the Green Gallery, see Amy Goldin, "Requiem for a Gallery," Arts 40, no. 3 (January 1966): 25-29.
50. Richard Bellamy, Interview by Richard Brown Baker, 1963, transcript, Archives of American Art.

51. Claes Oldenburg, Store Days: Documents from The Store, 1961, and Ray Gun Theater, 1962 (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), 16.
52. Rose, Claes Oldenburg, 64.
53. Waldo Rasmussen to Allan Kaprow, 27 February 1963. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). Archive.
54. Brian O'Doherty, "Art: 'Furniture Comedy'," review of Allan Kaprow, Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann, New York Times, 19 April 1963, p. 40.
55. Kaprow, reprinted in Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, 316.
56. Jon D. Longaker, Richmond-Times Dispatch, 16 February 1964, sec. L, p. 4.
57. Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments and Happenings, 316.
58. Jim Dine, telephone interview by author, 11 May 1995.
59. James A. Henretta et al., America's History: Volume 2 Since 1865 (New York: Worth Publishers, 1993), 965.
60. Telephone interview by author, 6 March 1996.
61. The March Gallery Group, also known as the "NO!art" collective, is the subject of an exhibition being planned by the University of Iowa Art Museum. The catalogue to the exhibition will be the first historical discussion of the movement. For a summary of the March Gallery Group's activities, see John Strausbaugh, "Lost Art: Positively, Negatively E. 10th St.," NYPres, 9 February, 1994, p. 12-15.
62. Bret Eynon, "Community in Motion: The Free Speech Movement, Civil Rights, and the Roots of the New Left," Oral History Review 17, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 44.
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64. Sally Banes, Greenwich Village 1963 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 39.
65. Allan Kaprow, telephone interview by author, 24 August 1994.
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CHAPTER II

ENTERING THE "WHITE CUBE": DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GENRE
1968-1970

The history of twentieth-century art may someday appear to have been simply a death struggle with the museum. In that struggle, art being unkillable, the museum was foredoomed.¹--Hugh Kenner

This chapter deals with the first instances of the relationship between museums and Environments in New York. The relationship, more accurately described as a confrontation, began at the end of the 1960s. It occurred partly as a result of pressure from various artists' groups which were forming in the same period. Environments challenged the traditional protocols of museums, particularly in the area of spectator participation. By examining the history of Environments at museums, particularly the Museum of Modern Art in New York, I will show how museum practice initially tried to change to accommodate the demands of the new art, with mixed results. This was a time of great social and political upheaval, and I will investigate the extent to which artists created Environments--works which could not be preserved or collected--as a gesture of protest at a time when the museum's authority was being questioned.

The art of the late 1960s and the 1970s has only just begun to be examined in a social and political context after

decades of predominantly formal criticism. Maurice Berger, Anna Chave and Lucy Lippard are among the writers who have been instrumental in the reconsideration of the art of these years in relation to its broader social and political implications. Berger's book on Robert Morris, Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s, places Morris' work in the context of the artist's anti-war activities.² Anna Chave has revisited the laconic forms of Minimalism in her article "Minimalism: The Rhetoric of Power."³ Considering the number of artists who were involved in social and political protest, and the overwhelming presence of political issues at the time, it is clearly necessary for this reevaluation to take place. Brian O'Doherty has described this era as a time when "art was occurring in a restless social context in which protest and radical formulations were an everyday presence."⁴

Creating art that questioned the system through which it would pass was a gesture of political protest by 1969, in part because the museum was seen by many in the art community as the embodiment of political evil. Specifically, the Museum of Modern Art was under fire because of its perceived connection, via its board members, to the Vietnam war. Because of these linkages, questioning the museum became a way of expressing larger political views. Conversely, protesting Vietnam became a way of protesting the museum. As O'Doherty astutely observed in

1976:

In the sixties and seventies, during the art community's dissent on Vietnam and Cambodia, a new insight took hold: the system through which the work of artists was passed had to be examined. . . . This was radical. Sometimes it's safer to sound off about large political matters than to clean up your own kitchen Several artists of the sixties and seventies, particularly those of the Minimal/Conceptual generation, understood [the politics of art's reception] very well. Their concern involved a curious transposition. Art's self-referential examination became almost overnight, an examination of its social and economic context.⁵

One of the earliest manifestations of the art world's involvement in the peace movement was Mark Di Suvero's construction of a 60-foot high tower in Los Angeles in 1966. Far from any museum presence, works by hundreds of participating artists from all across the country were hung on the tower. The project was led by Di Suvero and Irving Petlin. Artist involvement in anti-war activities increased by 1968, and focused increasingly on museums as a target. Barbara Rose has observed that "like the peace movement generally, protest activities in the art world picked up considerable momentum after the United States entry into Cambodia and the Kent State massacre."⁶

The war was not the only galvanizing force for organizing. As even the briefest chronology of the late 1960s chronicles, these years saw multiple uprisings and conflicts, not only in the United States, but all over the world. Race riots raged in American cities each summer from 1964 to 1968. The assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

King and Robert Kennedy in 1968, and the Gay uprising at the Stonewall Bar in New York in 1969 that led to the Gay liberation movement, all acted to further divide parts of American society and unite others, including the artists' community. Widely publicized activities were organized by the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, the Art Workers' Coalition, and Women Artists in Revolution (W.A.R.), groups which all formed in 1969. With the rise of these groups there was a renewed notion of artists as a political force, something that had not existed in a large sense since the 1930s. This notion represented a redefinition of the arena of art: it now extended into the realm of politics. As Jeanne Siegel voiced in her 1970 interview with Carl Andre: "It seems to be a moment in history when the artist, after twenty-five years of withdrawal, is once again thinking about himself in close relationship to society with the same demands and desires as other human beings."⁷ Collectively, the artists tested their power as a political force. American society was split into "hawks" (supporters of the war and "doves" (opponents of the war). In the artworld, this divisiveness was played out between museums and artists. The artists' community overwhelmingly opposed the war, and that shared opposition created a sense of unity for that community.

Through the end of the 1960s and on into the 1970s, tension grew between artists and museums. This tension was

related both to the specific functions of museums and to a perception of their larger political associations. As Maurice Berger relates, Robert Morris and other artists tested their authority by protests such as the 1970 Art Strike Against Racism, War and Oppression, in which they demanded that New York City's museums close for the day to show solidarity.⁸ Lucy Lippard, in "The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History" provides a good record of the Zeitgeist--how museums were perceived, and the spirit of artists engaged in making work that would stand outside the system that the museums represented.⁹ The question of where the money that supported the museums was coming from (investments in southeast Asia, for example) was raised by the artists. Gregory Battcock was an articulate spokesperson for the position adopted by many artists:

The trustees of the museums direct NBC and CBS, the New York Times and the Associated Press, and that greatest cultural travesty of modern times--The Lincoln Center. They own AT & T, Ford, General Motors, the great multi-billion dollar foundations, Columbia University, Alcoa, Minnesota Mining, United Fruit and AMK, besides sitting on the boards of each others' museums. The implications of these facts are enormous. Do you realize that it is those art-loving, culturally committed trustees of the Metropolitan and Modern museums who are waging the war in Vietnam?¹⁰

The Rockefellers, who were closely associated with the Museum of Modern Art, became a particular focus for the artists' community. The Rockefellers were seen as politically conservative capitalists who supported as well as profited from the war. The funds they contributed to the

Museum of Modern Art, and by extension the institution itself, were perceived by the artists as tainted.

Making art that would stand outside the museum system was a way for artists to express their desire not to cooperate with the Rockefellers and their counterparts at other museums. Installation art was but one of the possible ways of accomplishing the goals shared by many in the artists' community, with performance art, Earth art, video art and Conceptual art also options. All of these forms were non-collectible and non-commodifiable in the traditional sense, and were a way for the artists to fight back. It is important to underscore that when artists made works that by virtue of their ephemeral nature challenged the market system of the art world, at the same time they were protesting the politics of the institutions. As Henry Sayre astutely remarked, "If the Johnson and Nixon White Houses were the overt threat, the academy generally and the New York art establishment (museums and publishers) in particular constituted a cultural system in tacit alliance with and support of both administrations."¹¹ Sayre goes on to say that [objectless art] "became a useful instrument of change, insofar as its absenting itself as an object undermined the economic and aesthetic norms of the art establishment"¹² Installation art is not necessarily objectless. It can be made up of objects, however impermanent those objects might be. But Installation art

does contain the other desired characteristics of ephemerality and site-specificity, and therefore, non-collectibility.

Why The Museum of Modern Art Was Their Target

The Art Strike Against Racism, War and Oppression had called upon all the museums in New York City to close for the day to protest the war in Vietnam. But from the beginning, the Museum of Modern Art was singled out for protest by the Art Workers' Coalition because of its extreme influence and authority. As spokespeople for the Coalition stated, "The reason the AWC chose MOMA as an initial target was not only because it was the establishment of establishments, but because its members were sufficiently concerned with the Museum's functions and its collections to work hard for change . . ." ²³ The pressure put on the museum by the Art Workers' Coalition was not without effect. Bates Lowry, who became director of the museum in 1968, resigned in May of 1969 after less than a year in office. Before his resignation he had promised the Art Workers' Coalition that he would form a Committee on Artists' Relations in which artists could participate. It was speculated in the press that Lowry was asked to step down from his position because he had gone too far in cooperating with the artists. Lowry's successor, John Hightower, did not last long either. His interest in art and society was

seen as incompatible with the museum's aims, and he was asked to resign after a year.

The Art Workers' Coalition made demands specific to the Museum of Modern Art's function as a museum, including the deaccessioning of older works, the need for a wing devoted to the art of African-American artists, and more representation of artists on the Board of Directors. They also attacked the whole notion of a permanent collection, demanding instead a Kunsthalle approach that would give more space to temporary exhibitions. The Coalition did not really have populist aims, because all their demands were to be carried out within the domain of the museum, which by its very nature would remain irrelevant to the majority of the population. However, it was under pressure from the Art Workers' Coalition in 1970 that the Museum of Modern Art, where the admission price at the time was \$1.50, instituted a free day, Monday. Although the free day was subsequently discontinued, it did represent an attempt to make the museum available to a wider segment of the population.

By virtue of its ephemeral and participatory nature, Installation art flourished because it answered some of the concerns artists had at this time. Whereas in 1962 only a handful of artists were making works that could be described as Environments or Installations, by the end of the decade an increasing number of artists were doing some work in variations on this mode. The loss of faith in painting as

the essential embodiment of art was felt throughout the art world in the 1960s and 1970s, with the words "painting is dead" frequently proclaimed. For artists who wished to be engaged in a living issue, to be painting was to be missing out on what was going on. Worse, it symbolized compliance with the system. The need for new forms of art that would resist coaptation was clearly articulated by the Art Workers' Coalition:

In general, the art object is inadequate to the artist as a means of barter for the necessities of life, irrelevant to the people in a world of hunger, war and racial injustice and precious only to the rich who use it to increase their wealth and maintain their position.

To resolve the conflict, artists must develop art that is real for our time, and that is meaningful to those not in on the making of it, that reaches the people and that does not reinforce the horrible sanctity of private property.¹⁴

Installation art fulfilled some of the same conditions as other transient, non-commodifiable forms. However, in addition, it had a unique potential for audience participation. By virtue of the physical experience it often demanded of the viewer, Installation art could also change the atmosphere of a museum if shown there. That atmosphere was described by painter David Lee at the open hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition in April of 1969: "Museums, by opening themselves up to the public, are able to educate non-collectors as to what their personal attitude should be vis-a-vis the private property of the rich. Namely, DO NOT TOUCH. Also, don't smoke and keep moving."¹⁵ Installation art had the

potential to change the relationship between the viewer and the work of art, and thus to change the experience of visiting a museum.

The Institutionalization of Participatory and Ephemeral Art

Robert Rauschenberg's installation titled Soundings, was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in the fall of 1968. Soundings was not, strictly speaking, a site-specific work, having been made by Rauschenberg for an exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, and it did not surround the viewer. However, when installed, it functioned as an installation with a high degree of audience participation. In a darkened room, layers of plexiglas panels were electronically activated by the voice and other sounds made by the viewer upon entering. The museum's press release read: "Rauschenberg's requirement that the viewer participate in the creation of the work of art is a radical departure from the traditional relation between artist and audience. . . . In Soundings, he insists that the viewer become his collaborator; without him the work does not exist."¹⁶ The museum presented the exhibition with viewer participation as its selling point, indicating the value the institution placed on this aspect at the time. Full-scale Environments, in which the viewer participated by literally performing some activity, were not shown at the museum until eleven years after Kaprow's first Environment. In fact,

Environments of any kind came late to this institution, and by the time they came, participation had generally come to mean something less active. In many cases, merely entering into the space of the piece was considered participation, a watered down definition that has persisted to the present day. But the idea of participation was still considered important enough to stress as a selling point.

The entry of Environments into museums in New York coincided with the beginning of the institutionalization of Conceptual art. Along with Process art, there was an overlap between Conceptual art and Environments in terms of their challenge to museum practice. The overlap stemmed from a shared value placed by the artists on ephemerality and thus resistance to preservation and collection. Perhaps most challenging from an institutional perspective was the fact that Conceptual, Process and Installation works could not be seen by curators before they were installed, but were created by the artist, in situ, shortly before the exhibition opened to the public. Because museum practice was shaken up in some of the same ways by Installation Art, Process art and Conceptual art, it is worthwhile to look briefly at some of the pioneering exhibitions of these latter two modes of art-making.

In the spring of 1969, shortly after the arrival of a new curator named Marcia Tucker, the Whitney Museum of American Art presented Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials,

an exhibition of Process Art that included scatter pieces, video and extended time pieces. For the most part, the pieces were constructed within the museum itself. Associate Curator James Monte's introductory words acknowledge this departure from traditional ways of organizing an exhibition:

During its organization, we discovered that the normal curatorial procedures of seeing and then selecting or rejecting works to be included could not be followed. After visiting numerous studios and galleries, as well as viewing slides and photographs, we discovered that the bulk of the exhibition would be comprised of painting and sculpture which we had not seen and would not see until perhaps one week before the opening date of the show. That this method of putting together an exhibition is risky for the artist as well as the Museum goes without saying.¹⁷

The Whitney was lauded by the press for this exhibition. Reviewers praised the institution for sticking its neck out and showing radical art.

A year later, in 1970, the Jewish Museum mounted the exhibition Using Walls, curated by Susan T. Goodman, then assistant curator. Using Walls had an outdoor as well as an indoor component, with the outdoor component spread around the city in the form of painting on the exteriors of buildings. The indoor component consisted of works made by artists directly on the museum's walls. Like the Whitney's Anti-Illusion exhibition, the works were not seen by the museum staff until they were in progress or already complete. The Jewish Museum had established itself in the 1960s as a venue for avant-garde exhibitions, including Primary Structures, the landmark exhibition of Minimal art

in 1966, and early exhibitions of the work of Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and Jim Dine. The institution had a unique position among New York museums, functioning with the freedom and daring of an alternative space, so the entry of ephemeral art into its galleries did not constitute the same kind of conflict between the radical and the Establishment as it did at the Museum of Modern Art or even at the Whitney. Unlike these two museums, the mission of the Jewish Museum was to show the most avant-garde works, so there was no internal resistance to an exhibition like Using Walls. Furthermore, the Jewish Museum had a number of artists, including Joel Shapiro, working as preparators, and was unique in its close working relationship with young artists. Using Walls was an important early instance of artists creating works directly in a museum situation, and the artists in Using Walls were given plenty of leeway in creating their pieces. Lawrence Weiner was allowed to cut away a chunk of wall in one gallery, for example.

1970 was also the year of Information, the landmark exhibition of Conceptual Art at the Museum of Modern Art, curated by Kynaston McShine, a former curator at the Jewish Museum. This show contained a selection of material produced by artists from all over the world, and much of it pertained to the Vietnam War. In contrast to the difficult and critical nature of the material in the exhibition, white bean bag chairs were placed in the galleries, and viewers

could relax in them instead of having to sit on the traditional hard wooden benches (fig. 7). This interest in making visitors comfortable had first been present in the Spaces exhibition of the previous year.

Spaces

The first exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of what can properly be called Installation art was Spaces, held from December 30, 1969 through March 1, 1970. Because this exhibition was specifically dedicated to the exhibition of environments, it warrants close analysis. Conceived and organized by associate curator Jennifer Licht, the exhibition included Installations by five individual artists and one group: Michael Asher, Larry Bell, Dan Flavin, Robert Morris, Pulsa (a group consisting of, at the time, Michael Cain, Patrick Clancy, William Crosby, William Duesing, Paul Fuge, Peter Kindlmann, and David Rumsey), and Franz Erhard Walther. This was the first time that artists were invited by the Museum of Modern Art to create works in situ at the museum rather than creating them in the studio where they could be seen and selected beforehand by a curator. Spaces opened six months after the Whitney had shown Anti-Illusion. One can speculate that the Museum of Modern Art wanted to catch up, as the idea for Spaces was first presented to the staff in May of 1969 and the show was organized with unusual speed. Some of the same artists were included in both

exhibitions. Another reason for doing the exhibition was pressure from artists. From Licht's later comments regarding Spaces, it becomes clear how, from an institutional point of view, allowing artists to build ephemeral works within the walls of the museum was a concession to political pressure. In Licht's words:

. . . this was a period when many pressure groups, representing various constituencies, were active. (The Art Workers' Coalition, which was a powerful lobby, had...already been formed.) Pressure from vocal sources in the art community was probably a significant factor in enabling me to achieve an exhibition that departed from traditional practices at MOMA and was artist-oriented.¹⁸

As Licht wrote in a memo to Walter Bareiss, then Director of Operations: "The exhibition will really be a test of the flexibility of our working system, and will need a strong commitment from everyone to succeed."¹⁹ From the memos that remain, this appears to have been an understatement. The museum staff had to contend with such things as ordering thousands of pairs of paper slippers for visitors to don, and shopping bags in which to carry their shoes. (Eventually the museum gave up on both these niceties and visitors were asked to simply remove their shoes and carry them). Other issues included safety problems posed by visitors having to navigate darkened rooms and general maintenance problems.

In the planning stages, the exhibition was titled "Environments." The eventual choice of the term "Spaces" was related to space exploration--1969 was the year that

United States astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. The cover of the Spaces catalogue shows a dark sky studded with stars and planets.

For the exhibition, the museum went all out in giving free rein to the artists. In terms of restrictions placed on the artists, the catalogue acknowledges only one: Robert Morris' piece consisted of miniature groves of Norway spruce trees planted in diminishing size. In order to maintain a plant-friendly climate, special humidity and temperature conditions had to be maintained. The catalogue notes how "Originally the air was to be imbued with an additional fillip, negative ions, which induce feelings of euphoria, but this aspect could not be realized."²⁰ If there were other restrictions, always a question with commissioned works, no record of them is available. Licht's letters of invitation to the artists specified only "the concept is the employment of a cohesive spatial situation in a single work."²¹ In her letter to Franz Erhard Walther, Licht says: "About 8 artists will be invited to create a work of their choice, each in a room under his control. Is the idea of a work that exists for and uses a specific room or area of interest to you? There will be no stylistic theme or grouping, and the other artists might include, for example, Morris and Flavin with the kind of environmental work they have made for a special room or gallery."²² Thus site-specificity was very important. In fact, it was the

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defining characteristic of the work she envisioned for the show, rather than spectator participation. Interestingly, the Walther piece incorporated the presence of the artist. It was Walther's idea that he and/or his wife be present, and when they were not there, that viewers not be permitted to enter the space (fig. 8). The press release announced that: "Under the supervision of the artist, visitors are invited to participate in the use of his 'instruments for processes'. . . . The artist and his wife will be present at stated hours to assist."²³ The installation had canvas covering the floor, with visitors able to put on, climb into and pick up canvas, felt and leather objects Walther had made for the space, including climbing into canvas bags that had pockets for five people. During the hours when the artist was not present, visitors could only look into the room, but not enter or use anything (fig. 9). Walther had written to Licht before the exhibition opened, that: "It is necessary to show the use of the objects to the public. That could be done for two hours on each day. . . . During the remaining hours the objects are just exposed along with informations and explanations about the use/employment of things. . . . For certain reasons I want to show and explain the function of the things by myself."²⁴ According to a reviewer for The Daily News, people resented being denied access to the room.²⁵ Even when Walther was present, one could not just walk in; in order to avoid having the space

become too crowded, the artist invited people in at his discretion. In this piece, participation and manipulation came very close together.

While the other five works did not rely on the presence of the artist, or specific activities for the spectator/participant, the presence of the viewer and an interaction between the viewer and the piece was certainly intended to be a factor. However, the spectator/participant was treated as more of an outsider than he/she had been at Environments at Judson, for example. The Michael Asher piece had a white carpet, and you could not wear shoes in it. Removing shoes before entering it meant literally leaving the grit of the street behind. Asher's piece was not intended to merge with or seem continuous with the outside environment. It was instead a rarefied atmosphere not to be sullied by the trappings of everyday life that the visitor might track in. As described above, the Walther piece had activities, but only under the strictest supervision, with the artist controlling the action.

When Licht presented her idea for the exhibition to the other members of the Museum of Modern Art staff, she argued that:

Recent manifestations of art move away from the creation of an enduring object which maintains its own presence spatially and physically. The artists concerned are altering or discarding the traditional dichotomy of viewer and static object for an environmental situation, which envelops and enmeshes the viewer in a fuller involvement with actual space and a more mandatory interaction with the art.

Certainly a conscious issue of the current preoccupation with enormous physiographical artworks is the unfeasibility of subjecting this art to the usual processes through which the traditional art object--controllable, containable, portable, preservable and hence marketable-is passed. Thus, much new art is deprived of its cachet of uniqueness and immortality, dispelling a prevalent notion that its intrinsic value was ever dependent on these qualities.

Some of the aims of the recent artists' protests have been directed at disassociating art from the marketing system, and demands were made of museums to accept some direct responsibility. The works for this exhibition will be created specially, and dismantled afterwards. Here we can assume a role that belongs uniquely to the public institution and lies outside the domain of the art dealer.²⁶

As can be seen, she urges the museum to be responsive to several of the radical aspects of the newest art and to accept the challenge to the museum that such work presented. In her final statement, she calls on the museum's desire to be an institution at the service of the public, stressing that whereas a commercial gallery whose existence depends on works that are marketable could not show ephemeral work, the museum can. She idealistically tries to define the museum as outside of the market system, a separation that was being called into question by angry artists' groups at this time.

She also refers to the "mandatory interaction" that accompanies an environmental work. This is finally the aspect of the work that the museum decided to play up in presenting the show to the public. The press release stated that: "Actual space is now being employed as an active ingredient, and the scope of the work of art has expanded to include the viewer." It was a novelty to be able to enter a

work of art: "In this exhibition you don't observe what the artist has done, you experience it. You actually go into the work of art."²⁷ This sentiment is repeated in the catalogue:

In the past, space was merely an attribute of a work of art, rendered by illusionistic conventions in painting or by displacement of volume in sculpture, and the space that separated viewer and object was ignored as just distance. This invisible dimension is now being considered as an active ingredient, not simply to be represented but to be shaped and characterized by the artist, and capable of involving and merging the viewer and art in a situation of greater scope and scale. In effect, one now enters the interior space of the work of art--an area formerly experienced only visually from without, approached, but not encroached upon--and is presented with a set of conditions rather than a finite object. Working within the almost unlimited potential of these enlarged, more spatially complex circumstances, the artist is now free to influence and determine, even govern, the sensations of the viewer. The human presence and perception of the spatial context have become materials of art.²⁸

The power of the artist is stressed here: his or her power to manipulate the viewer and control the way the work is experienced. By contrast, Kaprow had stressed the empowerment of the audience. This is a significant shift in perspective, and one can only speculate whether it came from the museum or the artists. Certainly from an institutional perspective, it is less threatening to present the works in terms of control by the artists than by the hordes of viewers. It is interesting to note that while in an internal document Licht acknowledged that the kind of work in Spaces questions the whole structure of the artworld's marketing system, none of the materials generated by the

museum for public consumption mentions these issues.

In the catalogue, Licht runs through what were by then considered the standard precursors to Environments, including Schwitters' Merzbau and the Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture, thus giving a non-threatening historical pedigree to this new work. She makes an interesting distinction between Kaprow's Environments and the works in the exhibition, saying: "Environments and Happenings largely overcame [the distinction between performer and spectator], but they concentrated on activity within a given situation rather than on characterizing the spatial volume."²⁹ By contrast, one must then assume, there is something purely formal about the works she is presenting. "Characterizing the spatial volume" was certainly a concern to Oldenburg, Dine, Whitman and Kaprow--but the opposition that she is trying to establish is between formal concerns and larger contextual concerns. She aestheticizes the works in Spaces, even though the Walther piece, in particular, concentrated on activity within a given situation as much as any work by Kaprow, if not more so.

Stressing the formal characteristics of the works in Spaces helped fit them into the Museum of Modern Art's particular version of art history. Licht does say in the catalogue that the reason installations have a spotty rather than neat history is that "until social and scientific thought and parallel developments in other arts could create

a context wherein art could be the conditioning of space and environment, and technological resources were available to realize theoretical concepts of space, they outstripped the artists's ability to achieve appropriate form." She follows the line of investigation about space as a formal element in art, rather than looking at any of the broader social implications of this kind of work. Her concluding statement is a-contextualizing in a manner typical of the institution she represents: "Synthesizing the greater intellectual and physical scope demanded by the space age, art may be developing a new humanism as it incorporates man and his actions and reactions" She avoids connecting the emphasis on "man and his actions and reactions" to anything closer to home.

The New Aesthetic

Licht was not altogether incorrect in presenting the Spaces Installations as though they were quite different from those of Kaprow, Oldenburg, Dine and Whitman. For there were indeed fundamental differences between the works included in the exhibition and the earlier Environments. The junk aesthetic and the Expressionistic bent of the earlier works had given way to a cleaner, more refined elegance. It is interesting to see the effect on Installation art of larger spaces, more money, and more elaborate materials--and particularly the advent of video

technology. These were all available to the Spaces artists in amounts fairly unprecedented, as a result of substantial corporate support for the exhibition, and some of the Installations were technically elaborate and quite expensive. This in itself drew attention to the patronage factor, reflecting a spirit of coaptation rather than rebellion.

It is important to dig beneath these superficial differences to identify defining characteristics of the Installation. The earlier junk aesthetic was in part the effect of no funding. What the works in Spaces had in common with the earlier Environments was that the artists treated a space large enough for the viewer to enter, as a single work, rather than as a gallery to be filled with discrete objects. Emphasis was placed on the experience the viewer would have. Like the earlier works, the works included in Spaces were installed directly in the galleries, tailored to the configurations of the spaces they occupied, and were dismantled following the exhibition.

Kaprow, in his 1968 essay, "The Shape of the Art Environment," found differences other than those noted by Licht between the Judson/Reuben Gallery Environments and ones made by artists a decade later. He made the following comparison in response to one of Robert Morris' large felt pieces:

Morris' new work, and that of other artists illustrating his article, was made in a rectangular

studio, to be shown in a rectangular gallery, reproduced in a rectangular magazine, in rectangular photographs. . . . Morris's works, Pollock's, Oldenburg's, etc., function strictly in contrast to, or now and then in conflict with, their enframing spaces. . . . Morris may not have been in New York during the mid-'50s and early '60s to see the Environments and environmental settings for Happenings, made by Dine, myself, Oldenburg and Whitman. These were akin to his present interests, except that they employed a great variety of media. . . . these Environments tended to fill, and often actually did fill, their entire containing areas, nearly obliterating the ruled definition of the rooms. And although the artists may have had other, more pressing concerns than that of separating their activities from subordination to an architectural enclosure, the thought was in the air and the treatment of room surfaces was pretty carefree. The important fact was that almost everything was built into the space it was shown in, not transported from studio to showcase.³⁰

For Kaprow, making the work in the studio and then transporting it was almost akin to cheating.

Critical Response

The critical response to Spaces was mixed. Predictably, it was not taken entirely seriously by some reporters, who described it as if it were a fun-house. As usual in discussing an Environment, the physical experience was singled out: "Before anyone can enter the exhibition, to protect the works he must remove his shoes, don a pair of clumsy paper slippers and then slide along the floors of the show."³¹ However, the issue of spectator participation in Environments was still shown to be of importance, with one reviewer judging works on how much they did or did not contain this element. Writing for Art International, Carter

Ratcliff had the following to say:

Now--these works in the Spaces show are very different. The viewer must enter into them physically. Participation is automatic, denied to no one. The artist can count on a response. His art is in designing an environment where this is the case. His design must be left incomplete. It must, in fact, be a near void or chaos, differentiated or given form only insofar as that form is open--automatically--to anyone who enters. Further, this random entering must--automatically--result as less formlessness. The participant must feel that his entrance means something, has an effect.³²

Ratcliff concludes that: "Of these four exhibits, Pulsa's is the least successful as an environment. Literally speaking, it is an environment, the most extensive and the most attractive. But the viewer doesn't become a participant."³³ It is interesting that this was a criterion for judging the success of an Environment--that the viewer must be a participant in some way. This had continued to be a value associated with Installation, although it no longer referred to specific activities in the Kaprow spirit.

Grace Glueck, reviewing the exhibition for the New York Times, acknowledged the new role that the museum was playing:

In effect, the show, whose installations are temporary, adds to the museum's traditional pursuits of collecting, curating and exhibiting, the somewhat radical function as [sic] aesthetic laboratory. And Mrs. Licht, aware that museums and their interest in the "dead" past are increasingly called into question by younger artists, affirms that one of the show's primary purposes is to find out if a museum can be used as a situation for "live" experiments. . . . "I decided to ask for proposals that would make unaccustomed demands on our staff and resources. So, in effect, we

became responsible not only for exhibiting the artists' works, but for executing them."³⁴

This last quote from Licht about the demanding role of the curator when organizing an exhibition of Installation art shows that things had changed since the days of the Hans Hofmann and his Students exhibition tour. Bruce Altshuler discusses "the rise of the curator as creator" in succinct terms that are useful here:

While there had been many earlier attempts to subvert the traditional exhibition format, these efforts were made by the artists themselves--the Early Dada Spring of Ernest and Baargeld, Duchamp's 1938 Paris installation and his web of string in New York four years later . . . Oldenburg's Store. In the late sixties such alternative exhibition forms proliferated, but major innovations also would be generated by exhibition organizers. Like the work displayed, their exhibitions sought to undercut the standard way of framing art for the public, the manner and mode of presentation becoming part of the content presented.³⁵

Despite the radical nature of the Spaces exhibition, and the Museum of Modern Art's attempts to accommodate artists' demands, James Turrell declined the invitation to participate in the exhibition on principle, because of what museums represented; and Dan Flavin, who received donations of materials for his piece from General Electric, was criticized by the Art Workers' Coalition for this concession, and urged to drop out of the exhibition. Collaboration with the museum was clearly not automatic or necessarily enviable at this time. Gregory Battcock, writing about the exhibition for Arts magazine, picked up on this issue, although he exonerated the artists and blamed

the museum. His article, titled "The Politics of Space," stressed the morally questionable coupling of corporate funds and the Museum of Modern Art:

It's too bad that nobody noticed that many of the contributors to the show (or their parent companies) engage in research and production activities that, either directly or indirectly, have benefited the Department of Defense and American genocide in Vietnam

. . . .
The artists get their materials where they can. Why not? There is no connection that can be philosophically demonstrated between the art works themselves and the war. However there is just one connection . . . The Museum sets itself up as a guardian and contributor to culture. . . . And what is the museum doing about its involvement with art? It didn't even bother to check up on the firms they solicited equipment from. They have helped the corporate mentalities to ease their burden of guilt and, having said their five Hail Marys, their conscience.³⁶

Despite these responses, the Spaces exhibition was important for the museum. As Licht stated in retrospect: "Spaces . . . received a good deal of corporate financial support, it attracted a lot of press attention, it had a decent audience, and it reduced some of the pressure from the artistic community. By those standards it would be counted a success."³⁷

Given the fact that there was not a lot of viewer participation available in the Spaces works, one might wonder why it was this particular aspect that was played up by the museum. Robert Storr, who became curator of contemporary art at the Museum of Modern Art in 1990, had this to say about the Spaces exhibition and the emphasis that was placed on viewer participation:

So little attention is paid to how visitors experience art in museums that the few occasions where you have something that is "interactive," you make the most of it. [Spaces] was done in and around the time of relevance and outreach, and basically was the last, that is prior to recently, the last episode of trying to make modern art a populist phenomenon. So I think the ideological context of that is this other factor, and how directly [Licht] or [the museum] thought about the connection, I nonetheless think that it exists in that framework.³⁸

Surely there was an attempt to make the museum feel more relaxed and approachable. The guards were given special instructions to allow people to sit or lie on the floor, and to stay in any of the rooms as long as they wished. For many visitors, the experience of lying barefoot on the floor of the Museum of Modern Art probably did go a long way towards making the place seem more accessible. There was a particular status to the art museum in the United States at the end of the 1960s, and it explains some of the activities at the Museum of Modern Art. Art was to be for everyone, and the museum, as a public institution, would make that possible. Arthur Danto points out that in general "the sixties was a period of intense museum construction in the United States. In the early years of the decade new museums were opening practically every week."³⁹ Danto goes on to describe the museum as a new form of civic pride, like having a local orchestra. There was a desire to make culture more democratic; art was to be accessible to everyone. Not even the Museum of Modern Art, long regarded as a bastion of elitism, was immune to the times, and the

Spaces exhibition must be seen in this context. It was this populist aspect of the museum Licht drew on when she pitched her show to the museum staff on the basis of what the museum could do as a public institution.

Licht would later describe the fundamental leap of faith that doing an exhibition of Installation art entailed. Her remarks, which partially echo those made by James Monte in the catalogue introduction to Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials, summarize the ways in which Installation art first challenged and then altered, at least temporarily, museum practice:

The Museum was a bureaucracy: scores of people were drawn into the process of planning a major exhibition, and many of them knew little about contemporary art. Part of the curatorial devoir is to persuade any number of departments or committees that an idea has validity. Usually this persuasion is based primarily on the presentation of visual material, i.e. photographs of works that will comprise the exhibition.

In this case, of course, I did not necessarily know long beforehand exactly what each participant intended to do: indeed, nor did the participant himself always know! At many stages of the planning process, therefore, I was asking people to suspend familiar means of judgement. This naturally provoked philosophical difficulties because the balance of power was changed: authority was rescinded from the institution and devolved instead on the artist.⁴⁰

Although the changes Licht describes may have been true as far as Spaces went, they did not represent a permanent change in the way the institution operated. For many years Spaces remained something of an isolated occurrence, despite its success from the museum's point of view. Its most concrete legacy was the Projects series, established in

1971. Proposed by Licht, the Projects series was a direct outgrowth of Spaces, continuing the notion of the museum as aesthetic laboratory. With the inauguration of this series, there would always be a space dedicated to new, experimental work in the museum. As Licht would say later: "Certainly Spaces helped open the Museum doors for new forms of art, and it furthered freedom of access to artists. Programmes such as Projects, where small galleries were given over to site-specific work . . . followed."⁴¹ The first Projects series ran from 1971 until 1982. Proportionally, the vast majority of exhibitions of contemporary art held at the museum during these years were Projects exhibitions. These shows were not by any means all Installations, but some were, and it was the main forum within the museum for a long time where anything Installation-like was presented. The Projects series guaranteed that the museum would always have something contemporary on view, regardless of what else might be on exhibition in the rest of the galleries. In the 1970s there were often two or even more Projects on view simultaneously, in different parts of the museum.

The Projects series was inaugurated with a work by Keith Sonnier, significantly an Installation that contained a strong element of spectator participation. Sonnier's Installation consisted of a sound and light environment where images of the viewers were projected from one room to another. The press release presented the exhibition in what

was already becoming familiar language: "In involving the spectator as performer, the changing situation becomes completely different than that of the usual activity in a museum of just looking at objects. . . . The piece is activated through the participation of the visiting public and tries to engage the spectator on a more basic level than just visual perception."⁴² The language used here is very similar to that in the press release for Rauschenberg's Soundings and also for Spaces. This type of exhibition had become a mini-genre in itself.

Direct viewer participation in terms of activities does not appear again in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art until a 1976 Project show by William T. Wiley, which was not, strictly speaking, an environment. The project, which ran from April 9 through May 16, 1976, was designed to encourage activity by the viewer: "While appreciating the need for restrictions, Wiley says he has always understood the urge to touch in museums." Museum visitors "were invited to play a guitar, throw the I-Ching, and look through the notebook Wiley kept while creating the piece."⁴³ Viewers were also invited to draw with pens on a large plywood heart on the wall, and pastels were supposedly made available for visitors to draw directly on the wall. The artist was not present.

By the time the Museum of Modern Art began showing Installation art in 1969, Installation art was already

separate from performance art. The museum never became a forum for performance art. The furthest they went was the institution, in 1974, of a video projects series--"a new program of video pieces by artists whose work involves the performance of live actions.""

The Fallout

For the most part, the museums did not follow through on the promise of the exhibitions of the late 1960s. Although the Museum of Modern Art went on from Spaces to Information to the Projects series, more than twenty years would pass before the museum again allowed artists to use the museum on a large scale as an "aesthetic laboratory." The Whitney would continue to try to accommodate the new art, but ultimately Marcia Tucker left to found The New Museum, precisely to be free of the confines of the traditional institutional context. In the space of a year, site-specific, ephemeral works into which the viewer could enter had slipped inside some of the most hallowed museum doors. Initially the museums may have considered these exhibitions successful on certain levels. However, the problems from the museum perspective began to make themselves known about a year later.

One of the first signs that all was not well was Robert Morris' ill-fated exhibition at the Tate gallery in London in 1971, where visitors were encouraged by the artist to

remove their shoes and jump and climb on the structures he had provided. The Tate Gallery shut the exhibition down after only five days claiming concern for the safety of the viewers.⁴⁵ Because museums were liable in terms of potential lawsuits, and more easily frightened by the potential for disorderly conduct by visitors, participatory environments had to be curtailed. The kind of chaos described in eyewitness accounts of the Morris show are not very different from those describing events such as the preview of Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann, where people also apparently went out of control. The difference was one of exhibition context. What was amusing in a warehouse was less so in a museum.

Not only were the safety and efficacy of participatory environments called into question by museums in the early seventies. Questions about whether certain types of work belonged in a museum for philosophical reasons were also being raised by the same institutions that had initially opened their doors to many of them. This point was brought up by Sir Norman Reid in 1971, following the closing of the Morris exhibition at the Tate, of which Reid was director at the time:

. . . an increasing amount of art is being made outside the familiar format of easel painting and studio sculpture and we have to ask ourselves whether the idea of a museum in a traditional sense is compatible with the new activities, spectacles, happenings, earth sculpture and the like which leave no record other than on tape or film. Many artists have declared that they are not interested in the survival of their work and

almost with deliberation choose materials which are impermanent. (Incidentally, it may well be regarded as a duty of the permanent collection to acquire such works if only because the works so protected and cared for may be the only examples of their kind which survive.)⁴⁶

The experiments were not seen by the museums as successful, and as a result, the museums pulled back. In doing so, they felt it necessary to justify the retreat along philosophical lines. Thoughts similar to Reid's were expressed three years later by William Rubin, then director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art. In a 1974 interview with Lawrence Alloway for Artforum, Rubin made some statements that are worth quoting from at length:

Perhaps looking back, 10, 15, 30 years from now, it will appear that this modernist tradition really did come to an end within the last few years, as some critics suggest. If so, historians a century from now--whatever name they will give the period we now call modern--will see it beginning shortly after the middle of the 19th century and ending in the 1960s. I'm not ruling this out; it may be the case, though I don't think so. Perhaps the dividing line will be seen as between those works which essentially continue an easel painting concept that grew up associated with bourgeois, democratic life and was involved with the development of private collections as well as the museum concept--between this and, let us say, Earthworks, Conceptual works and related endeavors, which want another environment (or should want it) and, perhaps, another public.

One of the things I find surprising, if understandable, is how often artists who create things which really don't want a museum environment--indeed, are alien to it--nevertheless want them exhibited at a museum. And we do exhibit them. But I never have the feeling that this is the most comfortable environment for them. And, of course, it's not a feasible environment for some of them. We have, for example, just recently bought Robert Smithson's film of the Spiral Jetty, because we want to have some record of it

and feel that this is a way in which the Museum can participate, in which the people in the Museum can see this work. But it is a far cry, I'm sure, from experiencing the real thing. . . . Certainly such huge sculptures--Minimal or otherwise--and Conceptual diagrams or printed statements are often not very comfortable in [museums]. To be sure, MOMA collects them and we exhibit them because it's part of our reportorial purpose. But I think if you were installing these materials you would realize that the works themselves are almost crying out for some different kind of ambience. And this, because their implications really are different. It's not a matter of style; the challenges they pose are challenges of a different order and involve a change in the modes of communication. . . . As I said, the museum concept is not infinitely expandable.⁴⁷

Later in the interview Alloway questions Rubin's dramatic proclamation about the death of the modernist tradition, calling attention to the fact that the work under discussion tends to be large and thus difficult to store. This, according to Alloway, is the real problem for museums vis à vis the new art forms. However, if the museum concept seemed finite to Rubin in its ability to expand enough to accommodate the new forms, the art market by contrast proved itself quite adaptable. And this, more than anything else, guaranteed that the museum too would eventually find a way to accommodate the new forms. Nearly twenty years later, it would.

Participation Redefined

With the exception of the Walther piece, whatever spectator participation could happen in the works in Spaces was supposed to happen spontaneously; there were no

prescribed activities, and no activities available save entering and being in the space. Kaprow, for one, did not accept that the mere fact of being in an environment constitutes participation. In his 1974 essay "Video Art," he discusses the shortcomings of spectator participation when it is supposed to happen spontaneously. This is a crucial point because already in 1974 Kaprow was recognizing that there was such a thing as inactive participation, which would become the norm for Installation art in the next two decades:

The problem came about because the artists felt free to carefully program the physical surroundings, while they held off giving their subjects a program appropriate to those surroundings. This may have been a misplaced fear of manipulating people, even though the room obviously was designed to elicit responses and that can be construed as a manipulation. . . . In general, this is the fate of participatory art when it is shown in an exhibition context. Both artist and viewer unconsciously expect it to be, and act like, a picture-discrete and kept at a distance. When the viewer is urged to become part of the art without further help or preparation, he or she feels put upon and becomes a stereotype.⁴⁸

Environments to Installations

The shift of the term "Environments" to the term "Spaces" (which did not have a life past Licht's exhibition, and arguably referred more to contemporary space exploration than to the works themselves), and then to Installation was a gradual one, and reflects more than the institutionalization of the genre. Kaprow's views on the subject of this shift in terminology are important, since it

was he who set down the original definition and coined the term Environment. Basically, in his opinion, Installation is a museum term that implies that "you've got a space which is one thing and then you're going to install something into that space which is another thing and it ends up like what happens in a window display. The sense of it is very different. [In Environments] definitions of the border were erased and blurred as much as possible."⁴⁹

Despite the opening of doors to Installation art at the Museum of Modern Art, the Jewish Museum and the Whitney Museum at the end of the 1960s, there continued to be a need for alternative spaces, and the desire to alter the established structure of the art world remained a central one on the agenda of many artists. Some artists, like Hans Haacke and Robert Morris, felt that the challenge to the institution had to come from artists subverting the system from within. But the opportunities to do this were relatively few, and museums became less enthusiastic about providing free rein. In 1971, when Hans Haacke's pieces about New York real estate developers were rejected for exhibition in his one-person show at the Guggenheim, Elizabeth Baker, then editor of Art News, wrote the following editorial:

Now that artists are frequently approaching museums as either forums or sites, pieces are often tailored to an occasion or place, and made just before the show. Some sort of specific knowledge of artists' intentions

obviously must be grasped long in advance, and a curator-turned-impresario must keep in close touch with developments. This is only fair to both sides, since it is obvious that this is a problematic as well as fruitful symbiosis, given the inherent conservatism of museums, and the inherent radicalism of many artists. Aware of this, many artists should, and doubtless will, seek alternatives to formal museum presentations.⁵⁰

The way in which this last prophecy was fulfilled, and how the search for and discovery of alternatives progressed, will be elaborated in the following chapter.

Notes

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CHAPTER III

THE MARGIN AS A CENTER: INSTALLATIONS 1967-1979

Introduction

As we have seen, at the end of the 1960s, various types of Environments and Installations were exhibited at major New York museums. The motivation behind exhibiting these works was varied, and the success of these endeavors was debatable from an institutional point of view. The works involved were done at a time of antagonism between many contemporary artists and museums, and this was manifested in the creation of works that challenged the very spaces they occupied. Despite various efforts by museums at the end of the decade, the relationship between museums and artists did not significantly improve. In fact, the viability of artist-institution collaboration proved to be limited. This was true for environments as well as for other types of ephemeral, site-specific work. Environments had particular appeal to museums scrambling to appear more accessible to the public as the times demanded. The promise of participation in a work of art was offered as a way for the visitor to feel included rather than excluded. Museums were especially conscious at this time of their role as public institutions; democratic ideals were pushed to the forefront, and this was reflected by the museums' desire to open their doors to Installations, and to the slipper-shod

public that followed suit.

From this situation a number of problems developed. From the museum perspective, not knowing what was actually going to be shown before an exhibition opened was a major problem, and one that persisted with Installation art no matter how many preliminary plans were drawn up. Further problems stemmed from the failure of museums to reach a larger segment of the population no matter how much they invited participation, and from the limitations of art in general to address social issues and effect social or political change. As Linda Nochlin remarked in 1971, the limitations of culture-as-democracy had become evident:

Surely the most vexing problem that faces those who see cultural dissemination, rather than the destruction of culture, as the goal of radical democracy, is the yawning gap which still exists, despite museum programs and articles in the popular media, between art and the public, especially the less-educated and poorer element of the public. Does anything that happens in the world of art really matter to most people?¹

This and related issues would continue to follow Installation art into the 1970s.

Although major museums had shown Installation art by 1969, museum exhibitions of Installations were sporadic in the following years. Despite generally positive critical reviews, Installation art as a genre remained on the margin.

But during the early 1970s there was a burst of Installation-type activity in alternative spaces. Whereas

there had previously been only a handful of artists working with large-scale Installation, suddenly there were many more. And simultaneously, more places emerged for this work to be shown. As this happened, the definition of Installation art was expanded, as were accompanying concepts such as site-specificity and spectator participation. In this chapter I will investigate the range of Installations that developed between 1969 and 1976. I will discuss specific works in relation to the places where they were exhibited. I will also examine some of the reasons for the proliferation of Installations at this particular time, especially in relation to the social and political pressures of the period.

For the most part, the specific political convictions of many of the artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s did not have the sort of direct visual counterpart in their work that one might expect, given the intensity of the times. Lucy Lippard, in a 1987 essay, recalls the sense she had had twenty years earlier of "an aesthetic radicalism in the air that might parallel or give form to the political radicalism of the times."² However, these parallels did not erupt into widespread instances of explicitly political art. It was one thing to issue statements and attend demonstrations. It was quite another to openly infuse art with those same convictions. As Lippard herself stated later:

Despite the politically charged atmosphere of the late '60s and the sense of hope paradoxically underlying the deathlike surfaces of late Minimalism and the esthetic denials of much conceptual art, few avant-garde artists found direct ways to reflect their politics in their art. Political naiveté, fear of activism, careerism, lack of support, and a basic incomprehension of how the World really works finally led not to change but back to the artworld, from which bastion artists can remain safely "critical" of society without having to worry about being heard.³

But if a specific socio-political agenda did not permeate the works of many artists, a general sense of consciousness that society was dividing and unravelling, did.

Robert Pincus-Witten, another eye-witness of the period, made the following observation: "The radical politics born of disaffection for Vietnam and Nixon's adventurism took the Black Power Movement, the Women's Movement, and Gay Liberation as paradigms of radical form-making and discovery that lie at the heart of Conceptualism. This is different from an illustrative art-making that seeks to promote its political content through iconography."⁴ As an alternative to the narrative iconography or open propaganda found in socially-engaged art of the part, artists developed new forms in which to express their positions. The simple fact of looking for and inventing new forms implies a radical, tradition-breaking stance.

Installation as a Political Tool: The Twelve Evenings of Manipulations

The growth of Installation art was related to the

political climate of the times, which emphasized active involvement over passivity. One piece of evidence to support this reading of Installation art was a series of events held at Judson Memorial Church in 1967. In October of that year, Judson staged a series of twelve events under the collective title, "Twelve Evenings of Manipulations." The series was deliberately scheduled to coincide with the March on Washington against the Vietnam war. While the original Judson artists had long since moved on, the gallery had continued to be involved with the community and to show art. Some of the original Judson artists were invited back to participate in the show, and Allan Kaprow agreed to include his piece, Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann. (Claes Oldenburg, however, declined the invitation to participate.) Of the twelve events in the Manipulations series, several of them were environments. In other words, it was the form of choice when creating something meant to be political. This was because environments broke down "elitist" barriers between the visitor and the work of art; they seemed more democratic because they invited participation. Many of the works included elements of spectator involvement. The idea of being a social or political activist stretched to include being an active participant in a work of art. In notes made after the event, organizer Jon Hendricks states how the works in the series were politically relevant because they

presented an antidote to social and political passivity:

Ortiz was relevant. So were all the others-- Schneemann's rubble; Bici's ice; Kaprow's room ripped apart; Picard's simple morality play; Goldstein's spliced state of the nation; Geoff's painted-over painting of sky and Toche's blinding lights and Kate Millett's caged people and Steve Rose's enclosed man and Al Hansen's beast man spat upon, and the twelve events ended with Paik cutting his arms with a razor blade while Charlotte Moorman lay on her back playing a cello. The events [the twelve evenings of manipulations] are relevant. It is important that they happened. They are relevant to a state of mind that says I don't give a shit, it doesn't concern me, I'm removed, I don't want to get involved.

Hendricks refers to the artists who participated as "deconstructionists," and he makes it clear that creating works of art that would stand outside the commodity system was consistent with their political goals:

[The events] are relevant too to a condition of art that says pure/considered/constructed/classic. The deconstructionists are an opposition; they are a romantic movement. They are messy and aren't very polite. It would be kind of hard to show them at Castelli's this year. Not much to buy, either. Maybe they are anti-American.⁵

Some of the Installations in this series invited actual destruction, eliminating any sense of the art work being a precious or enduring commodity. For example, Carolee Schneemann's contribution to the series was titled Divisions and Rubble. In the program notes she described her piece as follows: "Basic image An environment which people will have to destroy to enter it, to move in it; means of action altering action/means of perception altering perception. An exposed process."⁶ She also describes the outcome of the piece: Carol Grosberg, then director of Angry Arts Against

the War in Vietnam, entered and then destroyed the environment, leading the way for other visitors to participate in a similar vein. There was no performance by Schneemann herself. With the exception of some of the works in the Twelve Evenings of Manipulations, I have not found Installations dealing explicitly with the Vietnam War that were made during the time period under discussion, although there were some in other forms, including tableaux.⁷ However, Vietnam was only one focus of the times. Installations responded to problems on the home front as well, and proliferated.

In the years between 1968 and 1977, Installation art emerged in a new way. It is important to note that the Environments of Oldenburg, Dine and Kaprow did not represent the road taken by the next wave of artists committed to doing Installations. Despite the fact that some of the "junk" Environments had been shown on their own, as self-sufficient exhibitions, they were remembered by and large in terms of their relationship to Happenings, as sets for Happenings. By the late 1960s, those already seemed long ago, with the artists involved having themselves moved on to other things. The new installations emerged from a Minimalist-Conceptualist context, and most bore little formal resemblance to junk Environments. But they had other things in common with their predecessors. They too tried to

break down the traditional barrier between the spectator and the work of art, and, in new ways, the barrier between art and life. In addition, in these new Installations, the characteristics of the real space of a work were acknowledged as integral to how it functioned as a work of art, and this issue moved to the forefront. Some of these works were done within the walls of various museums--mostly small museums, outside of New York (with a few exceptions done under the auspices of the Museum of Modern Art's Projects series). A very few were done in commercial galleries. But, like their predecessors, most were done in alternative spaces.

Museum Installations

The Installations that were shown in major art museums during this period often contained an explicit institutional critique. Artists took the position that although they were exhibiting within the museum, they were doing so in order to effect change from within, subversively. Maurice Berger makes the point that museums changed (as much as they did) partly because some of the artists most critical of the institutions were willing to exhibit in them.⁸ But once inside the museum's doors, the most radical works could be subject to a tame interpretation by the institution, which would affect the way they were understood by the public. Berger observes correctly that with Robert Morris' piece in

Spaces:

Licht chose to ignore the institutional and ecological implications of Morris' environment. Its rejection of the 'inert matter of art' challenges the museum's social hermeticism: The environment was disturbing to many visitors who envisioned in it an inevitable and desolate future. The allusions to landscape painting and states of euphoria were ironic inversions of the work's ultimate appeal to ecological responsibility: Could political and cultural indifference to the consequences of wastefulness and over production result in a world so barren of life-sustaining resources that such resources must be synthesized in order to survive?"

Hans Haacke is also well-known for questioning the system through which he is exhibiting and his MOMA POLL, which was shown in the Information exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970, is a prime example of this. Visitors were asked to vote on the question: "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not yet denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?" Two ballot boxes were provided. Approximately twelve percent of the visitors to the exhibition voted, with a majority indicating an affirmative answer. Given the long-standing involvement between the Rockefeller family and the Museum of Modern Art, this question created a clear link between the museum and the current political situation. Viewers could become active participants by deciding to cast a vote. Despite the fact that works like Haacke's implicitly criticized the institution, the museum tried to accommodate the critique and to make visitors comfortable.

The question of the behavior of spectators came to the

foreground in several of these exhibitions--which can be seen as "structures for behavior." In fact, Structures for Behavior, which was the title of an exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto in 1978, is also useful as a general descriptive term for some of the Installation work done in the 1970s. The Toronto exhibition coincided with the International Sculpture Conference, "S/10," which was held in Toronto that year. Curated by Roald Nasgaard, the exhibition included works by George Trakas, Robert Morris, Richard Serra and David Rabinowitch. The catalogue essay, written by Nasgaard, addressed the issues of participation elicited by these works:

The eye by itself is insufficient to understand [the commissioned works on view] because it cannot always encompass them, and the spectator is made aware of broader requirements of behavior in order to raise the works from their inertness. . . . In an unprecedented way, the works seem to demand to be physically traversed, to be walked around, through, or over.¹⁰

In the previous chapter we saw how the participatory aspect of Installation art was presented by the Museum of Modern Art as a way of making the works in Spaces seem more accessible to the public. However, participation in an Installation could also be used by an artist to make a work seem less accessible or even hostile. As has been demonstrated throughout this study, there are many different ways for an artist to acknowledge the presence of spectators in an Installation. One way is by controlling their every move. This does not always result (nor is it intended to)

in a situation that is comfortable for the viewer. According to a report of the S/10 conference, one panelist "complained that pieces by Robert Morris and George Trakas . . . forced spectators to experience the work in particular ways--by walking through corridors in the Morris or mounting precarious steps in the Trakas. The degree to which the environmental artist controls the viewer's behavior is, she said, 'seldom discussed.'"¹¹ Already in Kaprow's *Environments*, there was a subtle aspect of viewer control even as the viewer was invited by the artist to become a participant. In some of the work of Robert Morris and of Bruce Nauman, to name just two later artists, the line between participation by and manipulation of the viewer is finally crossed.

Beginning in 1967, Bruce Nauman created a number of corridor pieces that required the viewer to enter into and traverse a narrow space. These works were participatory in an individual, behaviorist way that engaged the spectator in a role controlled by the absent artist, who nonetheless was present in a sense through the control he exerted. Nauman addressed this issue explicitly in a statement regarding a corridor he had done for the Anti-Illusion/Procedures and Materials exhibition at the Whitney in 1969:

If I can make a situation where someone else has to do what I would do, that is satisfactory. Quite a lot of these pieces have to do with creating a very strict kind of environment or situation so that even if the performer doesn't know anything about me or the work that goes into the piece, he will still be able to do

something similar to what I would do.¹²

The effect on the spectator was often uneasiness. As Peter Schjeldahl later wrote of Nauman's work:

Nauman ran into definite trouble with New York audiences when he started showing austere, "behaviorist" environments--a corridor so narrow it could be passed through only sideways, a suspended "room" whose walls stopped at mid-shin level--that induced physical self-consciousness and mild sensory deprivation. Nervous urbanites (including me) found such work conducive less to mind expansion than to anxiety attack.¹³

By virtue of the physical limitations placed on the viewer/participant, Nauman's corridors had an authoritarian quality. This controlling quality was present in the works of other artists of the period as well, as is demonstrated in part by the proliferation of labyrinth-based works made between 1966 and 1976. The popularity of the labyrinth form was recognized in 1967 at an exhibition at Finch College in New York, and again eight years later in an article titled "The Modern Maze," written by Ronald J. Onorato and published by Art International.

Robert Morris created labyrinths in the 1970s that were consciously designed to seem coercive and authoritarian. Berger explains them as the product of Morris' interest in exploring and critiquing society's repression of the individual.¹⁴ This interest led Morris to replicate that repression, thereby drawing our attention to it. For example, the labyrinth Morris constructed for the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 1974 was difficult to

navigate, and people actually had trouble finding their way out of it (fig. 10). Onorato vividly describes the experience of being in this piece:

. . . the viewer is tempted to proceed through a small slit in an otherwise plain gray wall. The extreme narrowness of the passage in the Morris Labyrinth forced the viewer up against the curving masonite walls so that only an uncomfortable walk through the work was possible. Since the actual pattern of the maze could only be discerned from an elevated position, the gray mass which filled the room . . . was designed to entrap and surround its audience within eight foot walls. As a brilliant distillation of the most negative labyrinthine characteristics, the massive maze seemed intent on disorienting and blinding the viewer-- subtracting from instead of heightening his sensory perceptions.¹⁵

A labyrinth did not have to be this controlling, but it had the potential to be so. Alice Aycock, who studied with Robert Morris at Hunter College, said that her 1972 Maze was intended to "create a moment of absolute panic" for the viewer.¹⁶ Inspired by a reproduction she had seen of an Egyptian maze-like prison, her six-foot high, thirty-two feet wide construction accomplished just that. In contrast to the mazes of Morris and Aycock, Patrick Ireland constructed a labyrinth that was designed specifically to be clearly escapable. Lucy Lippard gives an account of this piece: "For a labyrinth show at Finch College in 1967, [Ireland] . . . contradicted the form's inherent mystery by making his piece very simple, easy to read, and in addition, so low that if you walked through it you had a clear overview at all times."¹⁷

Morris' and Nauman's pieces provided individual, not

group experiences. They involved physical participation by the viewer, but it was the individual viewer--or rather participant--one at a time, in a controlled set of circumstances. It was not the same as turning a particular space into a place where people might feel free to move around in ways decided by themselves. (An important exception in Morris' work was the aforementioned 1971 exhibition of his work at the Tate Gallery.) Nauman's corridors and Morris' labyrinths were not site-specific Installations. They were for the most part free-standing works that could be moved from place to place.

Environments Outside of Museums

Most of the Installation work that emerged in the early 1970s was done outside of museums, in so-called alternative spaces. The two phenomena--Installations and alternative spaces--emerged simultaneously. As Patrick Ireland has observed:

The installation idea began again as far as I know in alternative spaces. . . . There were a variety of needs whereby the chaste, sacrosanct walls, the ceiling, the floor, could not be attacked. . . . And there was a tremendous surge out of the gallery that had to do with the confines of the gallery and the lack of permissions within it. And the gallery as a commercial site was rejected in a variety of ways and that led to the installation idea that we know. And I think it paralleled the growth of unofficial institutions.¹⁸

Alternatives were sought and alternatives were found. The years immediately following 1969 were very active in terms

of the finding and establishing new contexts for new work. In her catalogue essay for The New Museum's 1981 exhibition, Alternatives in Retrospect: An Historical Overview, 1969-1975, Mary Delahoyd uses words that could also have served as a description of the Judson, Reuben and Hansa Gallery era, but now the alternative space phenomenon was on a larger scale:

The community grew ever stronger as it began actively to seek its own audience on its own territory. . . . primarily it was the artists themselves who joined forces: they located the raw spaces, they cleaned and renovated them; they planned the programs; they raised the money--all from private sources and never enough--to keep these places going.¹⁹

The development of these spaces points to an implicit agreement of sorts between some creators of radical art and museums: neither thought that the two belonged together. Of course, few artists, given the choice, resisted museum acceptance. To quote Robert Storr, many artists who initially claimed that their work was anti-museum, "accepted the clammy embrace of the institution rather quickly."²⁰ However, the history of Installation art in the early 1970s continued to be in large part a history of new exhibition locales, and the alternative, marginal spaces were the places where Installation art flourished.

Most of the alternative spaces that opened in the early 1970s were in SoHo, where a few commercial galleries had also begun to establish themselves. Despite the rebellious gesture of breaking away from their uptown colleagues and

moving downtown, there was a clear distinction between the work these new galleries showed and the work being done at the non-commercial, alternative spaces. The shows mounted by galleries in SoHo may have been "alternative" relative to those shown on 57th Street, but they were still centered around selling art. For example, Paula Cooper had moved her gallery downtown specifically to get away from the uptown established art world. Her inaugural show at the gallery's Prince Street location was an exhibition to aid the Student's Initiative for an End to the Vietnam War. Held in 1968, it marked the beginning of the SoHo gallery scene. The exhibition did not contain any works that can be described as Installations, primarily because it was a benefit exhibition to raise money. Therefore the works had to be saleable. Not only were there no Installations; there was no ephemeral work at all, and this continued to be true of Cooper's shows. However radical her intentions may have been, she was ultimately still running a commercial gallery. Virtually nothing was exhibited there in the late 1960s and through the 1970s that could not be transported and sold. This is an important point, because it highlights why there was a need for an entirely new kind of exhibition space, even in SoHo.

Phil Patton charts the growth of alternative spaces in the late 1960s and early 1970s in his 1977 article on the rise of alternative spaces. He explains their emergence as

follows:

Partly in reaction to the boom of the '60s, art took on certain anti-objective and even anti-commercial qualities, deliberately eschewing (it often seemed) the public that had greeted the various flamboyant '60s styles with such enthusiasm. In the '70s, art was becoming increasingly difficult to define in terms of traditional classifications of painting and sculpture. . . . Many people in the art world began to feel that the new type of art required new sorts of organization for its presentation.²¹

A partial list of the spaces that opened in New York in the early 1970s includes 112 Greene Street, 1971; The Institute for Art and Urban Resources in 1972; the Clocktower and Artists' Space in 1973; P.S. 1 in 1976. The alternative spaces eventually became established in their own right, losing some of their radical status in the process. As Patton describes, "For all their improvisational character, however, many of these alternative spaces have by now become so firmly a part of the art scene that numerous artists have successfully pursued careers in them alone. If present trajectories of prestige continue, it may soon be as important for a young artist to have a show at a place like P.S. 1 as to become associated with a reputable gallery."²² It was quite prescient of Patton to have written these words as early as 1977, only a few years after these places had opened. But initially, they were under-recognized, and clearly perceived to be on the margin, as were most of the artists exhibiting at them.

Alternative spaces were outside of the marketplace and,

because they did not have permanent collections, they seemed free of the weight of art history as well. They could also provide a physical alternative to the pristine conditions of a museum or gallery space. Kaprow, Oldenburg and Dine had found the rundown downtown spaces in which their work was shown to be a contributing rather than detracting factor. Likewise, this new generation of artists found something of value in raw, unfinished spaces like 112 Greene Street and P.S. 1. The works created in these places and others like them responded to the quirks and character of the spaces in which they were exhibited. Indeed, the works seemed to go with the spaces. In response to the opening of P.S. 1, which was an old school building, a reviewer commented on the appropriateness of the space in relation to the work shown there: "One can hardly imagine surroundings more potentially hostile to art, but as the Clocktower and 112 Greene Street (which, by comparison, look like MOMA and the Louvre) have proven time and again, this need not be the case," Nancy Foote wrote in Artforum.²³

Some of the reasons for the appeal of these spaces have been articulated most clearly by the artists working in them. Alice Aycock would recall about 112 Greene Street that:

The 112 space was not holy. It was a place that artists could call their own -- a real alternative. Each artist set up hours, actually moved in, and worked in a really free way. Trakas cut a hole in the floor. It was a completely different way of making sculpture. You didn't even think about it, you just responded to

the place.²⁴

In 1976 when Alanna Heiss (who had previously founded the Clocktower) opened P.S. 1 on Long Island City, the inaugural exhibition was titled Rooms (P.S. 1). The guiding principle was site-specificity, and seventy-eight artists participated. Many created room-sized works into which the viewer could enter. In Heiss' brief statement in the catalogue to this exhibition, she says:

Rooms (P.S.1) represents an attempt to deal with a problem. Most museums and galleries are designed to show masterpieces; objects made and planned elsewhere for exhibition in relatively neutral spaces. But many artists today do not make self-contained masterpieces; do not want to and do not try to. Nor, are they for the most part interested in neutral spaces. Rather, their work includes the space it's in; embraces it, uses it. Viewing space becomes not frame but material. And that makes it hard to exhibit. . . .

Art changes. The ways of exhibiting must change too. P.S. 1 through its inaugural exhibition and its current program continues to explore those possibilities.²⁵

For the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, Heiss asked the artists who participated in the inaugural exhibition to comment on either their own work or on another work in the exhibition. Several artists commented on the space and the freedom it provided. For example, Marcia Hafif said "For me, personally the opportunity to work in a space which was so deviant from the usual white-walled gallery or studio was a liberating and fertile experience."²⁶ Alan Saret, who had previously done Installations at 112 Greene Street had this comment:

Let there be a new order on earth and another way

of being for artists. Here at last a new kind of mark-away from the standard commercial procedure which strangles the art and artist it promises to support--far from the typical museum working with similar impact and this mark is already nicely felt, well drawn, successful. Let us create other kinds of entities to go alongside this one to make contrast and variety for a new order.²⁷

Stefan Eins, another participant, further commented on what made this new space desirable:

Interest in massproduction and in finding an audience beyond the existing artscene
 Interest in kitsch and cheap items.
 Awareness about the elitist tradition in the history of the avantgarde
 Previous attempts toward a similar goal (fluxus, Oldenburg) were not really successful. Financial backing needed and welcome.²⁸

Site-specific installations flourished at several of the alternative exhibition spaces that opened up in the early 1970s, particularly at 112 Greene Street, which was founded by Jeffrey Lew in 1970. The works at 112 Greene Street were characterized by their relationship to the space itself, which was often used by artists as an integral part of their work. Many of the works at 112 Greene Street were created on-site, with the artists making active use of the rough, unfinished floors and walls. When viewer participation was involved, as in the work of Patrick Ireland, to name only one, the participation was not authoritarian or directly manipulative; rather it was free-form, and consisted of a reciprocal relationship between the spectator and the work in the space. The spectator was free

to interact with the piece and the space as he or she chose.

There were numerous artists doing work at 112 Greene Street, many associated with the Anarchitecture Group (which included Lew, Suzanne Harris, Richard Landry, Richard Nonas, Susan Weil, Jean Dupuy, Tina Girouard, Laurie Andersen and Gordon Matta-Clark). In the first several years of 112 Greene Street's existence, Gordon Matta-Clark was the pivotal figure there. This was due to a combination of the work he did and his ability to draw a community of people around him. One of his first works at 112 Greene Street consisted of a hole he dug in the basement that he wanted to be deep enough to expose the foundation of the building. Eventually he planted a tree in this hole, which survived under infra-red lights for three months. In Open House, 1972 (also known as Drag on or Dumpster), Matta-Clark installed partitions and doors in an old industrial container outside 112 Greene Street. This became the site for numerous performances. People activated the space by walking through it or actually performing in it. He created only one other constructed space, and that was an untitled installation in 1975, done for an exhibition organized by Alanna Heiss at the Clocktower titled Artists Make Toys. Most of his environmental works were not done on site at 112 Greene Street or at any other alternative spaces. His unique form of Installation, which involved cutting away

parts of buildings, began with his own living space, and soon moved on to abandoned buildings around New York. He showed fragmented relics from the buildings at 112 Greene Street and did other things within that space, but mostly he worked away from even the margin of the art world. This was part of a conscious program, as reflected in his 1977 statement that:

The whole question of gallery space and the exhibition convention is a profound dilemma for me. I don't like the way most art needs to be looked at in galleries any more than the way empty halls make people look or high-rise city plazas create life-less environments. And even though my work has always stressed an involvement with spaces outside the studio-gallery context, I have put objects and documentation on display in gallery spaces. All too often there is a price to pay due to exhibition conditions: my kind of work pays more than most just because the installation materials end up making a confusing reference to what was not there. But for me, what was outside the display became more and more the essential experience.²⁹

One is reminded here of Robert Smithson's contemporaneous sites and non-sites, which, like Matta-Clark's work, involved transferring material from a site outside the museum or gallery into that space. The materials brought indoors referred to work done by the artists at the actual site.

Matta-Clark is what might be called an Installation artist's artist. There is arguably no Installation less portable, none more ephemeral and site-specific nor farther outside the art market, than his cutaways in buildings slated for demolition. He was working with existing

architecture--spaces on a human scale, and his work altered and called attention to these spaces. Matta-Clark did not bring any materials into the space of these cutaways; instead he removed some of what was there. Whether or not spectators visited his works, the spectator's presence was implied because Matta-Clark most often used domestic architecture as his exhibition context. And if desired, the spaces certainly could be entered and walked around. It is easy to imagine how jarring the experience of standing in Splitting: Four Corners, a single-family house that he cut almost in half in 1974, would be (fig. 11). This unsettling effect is confirmed by eye-witness accounts. Peter Schjeldahl wrote of the cutaways that: "Matta-Clark's chain-sawed environments make meaning by intensifying physical self-consciousness to ecstatic or terrifying effect. They are symbols of a life in art conducted outside the upholstered prisons of commerce and institutions, an uncontained existence requiring moment-to-moment location checks: Where am I? Furthermore: What am I and what am I doing?"²⁰

There was an implicit social agenda to Matta-Clark's work which eventually became more explicit. In a 1977 interview, Matta-Clark discussed the social issues generated by his work:

By undoing a building there are many aspects of the social conditions against which I am gesturing: first to open a state of enclosure which had been preconditioned not only by physical necessity but by

the industry that profligates suburban and urban boxes as a context for insuring a passive, isolated consumer--a virtually captive audience. The fact that some of the buildings I have dealt with are in Black ghettos reinforces some of this thinking, although I would not make a total distinction between the imprisonment of the poor and the remarkably subtle self-containerization of higher socio-economic neighborhoods.³¹

At the end of his abbreviated life, Matta-Clark was getting involved with the community on New York's Lower East Side. He had conceived of a plan to create a resource center and youth program that would salvage buildings and materials from the neighborhood. He articulated what seemed to be an underlying mood not only in his work but in the work of other artists doing Installation art on the margin during the 1970s:

I have chosen not isolation from the social conditions, but to deal directly with social conditions, whether by physical implication, as in most of my building works, or through more direct community involvement, which is how I want to see the work develop in the future. I think that differences in context is my primary concern--and a major separation from Earth art. In fact, it is the attention paid to specific, occupied areas of the community.³²

Matta-Clark was heading from margin to center by the end of his short career, and one can only speculate on the direction he would have taken in his work had he lived.³³ Initially he had sought out marginal spaces in which to work, including buildings around New York and other environs that were slated for demolition. However, as Brian Hatton points out, towards the end of his life Matta-Clark's works become increasingly involved with museums, or, as Hatton

puts it, "aimed at museums": "Office Baroque almost became the germ of a new art museum in Antwerp, and Circus (Caribbean Orange) was commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago as a temporary piece in a neighboring building due for demolition. The latest drawings propose incisions into the facade of Philip Johnson's New York MOMA, which was scheduled for removal to allow expansion."³⁴ Circus was a cutaway piece done in a townhouse that was going to be incorporated into the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. It was handled with full museum attention, complete with tours for visitors, and museum guards. However, the piece was demolished when renovation of the townhouse began. The museum would later refer to this work as an "extallation."³⁵

Robert Pincus-Witten discusses the scene around Matta-Clark and 112 Greene Street in his essay for the travelling retrospective of Matta-Clark's work that was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1985. That a posthumous travelling show would be possible, considering that the artist was known for his site-specific work done by his own hand in abandoned buildings slated for demolition, is already something of a conundrum. However, Matta-Clark did photograph his works, and this documentation was shown as a body of work. Pincus-Witten discusses the various overlapping communities of artists working at this time, separating out what he labels the "Formalist" and

"Informalist" camps, terms that are useful in a broad sense. In the latter group he included Robert Smithson, Mel Bochner, Richard Serra, Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre, among others. In the former, he included Gordon Matta-Clark and other members of the Anarchitecture Group:

In simple terms the Minimalist-Conceptualist continuum then--if such it was--diverged between a Formalist body of artists heavily supported in the international gallery system, and an Informalist group attracted by disembodied vehicles of expression and open to mixed technologies and alternative modes such as dance. These artists saw themselves as akin to the disenfranchised and activist politics of the day. . . . The Informalists were marked by a nonchalant attitude reflected in common parlance and period expression: "Laid back," "drop out," "hippie commune," "flower child," "psychedelic."³⁶

As Pincus-Witten also says, "we must always remember that for Matta-Clark's generation, Minimalism and Conceptualism were perceived as modes of systemic cultural analysis and utopian social reform."³⁷

Another "Informalist" associated with the early years at 112 Greene Street, as well as with the Anarchitecture Group is George Trakas. Trakas worked at 112 Greene Street in its first years, creating Installations that took both the space and the spectator into consideration. Trakas has done both indoor and outdoor pieces, in addition to ones that span both. The Piece that Went Through the Floor and The Piece that Went Through the Window, were two important works done by the artist at 112 Greene Street in 1970. The Piece that Went Through the Window had components that began indoors and continued out the window into the street (fig.

4). This was a literal way of expressing the artist's interest in continuity between his work and the world outside the exhibition space. The Piece That Went Through the Floor spanned two floors of 112 Greene Street. A hole cut in the floor allowed both floors to be seen simultaneously, exposing more information about the building than was generally available, as well as providing a certain amount of bodily risk for the viewer. Cutting the hole and leaving it for the viewer also drew attention to the non-rarified character of the space: it was permissible to make a big hole in it. The following year, in 1971, Trakas had two works included in the Guggenheim exhibition, Ten Young Artists: The Theodoron Awards. Not surprisingly, Trakas did not cut any holes into the Guggenheim Museum floor, or into any other part of the museum. Nor did either of the pieces, Locomotive and Shack, have components that continued outdoors. They were self-contained pieces that could be shown in other spaces. 112 Greene Street allowed the artist freedoms that were impossible to replicate in a museum context.

The Piece that Went Through the Window and The Piece that went Through the Floor were both deliberately scaled to human proportions. Hugh Davies, who interviewed the artist in 1980, says of Trakas, "[his] body-scaled, handcrafted structures are stage sets or playgrounds which are incomplete without the spectator's presence, indeed their

active participation."³⁸ It is worth noting that Trakas was involved with the Judson dance scene in the late 1960s. His interest in choreography carried over into his Installation work, in which the movements and possibilities for the positioning of the spectator are given careful consideration. But his background in dance was only one factor, as Trakas himself has stated: "In looking at a lot of work in the sixties, I found myself disturbed by the fact that I could arbitrarily start looking at a work from any point of view. In my work I wanted to confront the spectators directly and draw them in physically to discover space with their bodies."³⁹ In many ways Trakas' work exemplifies the most pertinent issues surrounding this genre in the 1970s.

Brian O'Doherty (who exhibits his art under the name Patrick Ireland) came somewhat late to creating Installations, showing his first one at 112 Greene Street in 1973. O'Doherty is an important figure for this study in several respects. As art critic for the New York Times from 1961 to 1964, he had seen and experienced first-hand the Environments of Kaprow, Dine, Oldenburg and their contemporaries. Later, in 1969, he became the second director of the Visual Arts Program at the National Endowment for the Arts, succeeding Henry Geldzahler. In this capacity, he supported the growth of alternative exhibition spaces and the work shown in them. He encouraged

Jeffrey Lew to apply for NEA grant money for 112 Greene Street. And it was in part because the Endowment required certain documentation that 112 Greene Street began to keep more detailed records of its exhibition program. In addition to his other roles, O'Doherty was the editor of Art in America from 1971 to early 1974. Because of his dual identity as artist and critic, his perspective has a particular authority. On Installation art he has said: "My criterion for an Installation was what do you do with the space. . . . What cues did you take from it? How did you manipulate, alter, reconfigure, redesign it for another category or variety of experience?"⁴⁰ His own work is guided by these questions.

Ireland's first Installation was titled Rope Drawing #1, and it consisted of a floor-to-ceiling grid made of rope, in which the grid divided the space of 112 Greene Street into two sections. His second rope drawing, at the Betty Parsons Gallery a year later, consisted of strings looped loosely from one side of a wall to the other, above the viewers' heads. He not only worked with the space, anchoring the ropes directly onto the wall, but created an environment of sorts in which the individual could control his or her perception of the piece. The experience of seeing this work was described by a reviewer as follows:

In the anteroom of the gallery a rope sculpture, resembling the ribcage of a dinosaur, almost engulfs the space and creates an environment. . . . The various angles from which the ribs are viewed fascinate the

beholder, mixing shadows on the walls with crossing lines of the physical piece. Consequently this aesthetic sculpture engages the viewer in a perceptual dialogue.⁴¹

Ireland placed, and continues to place, a great deal of emphasis on the viewer as a participant. He has expressed the importance of this issue, saying: "[My] work thus has a different conception of the viewer, not as an eye, nor a brain, nor a bundle of reflexes moving a corpus around, but one that offers a person to make his own space, to live in his own space."⁴²

The ability of Ireland's work to elicit this sort of response from the viewer was borne out even when the work was in a museum context, rather than an alternative space. Regarding One Drawing in Two Rooms (fig. 12), a rope drawing Installation he did at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1975, Ireland reported that "months later, the work was still there but with additions. Kids with books, kids without books, some with happy unfocused eyes, adults, came in and hung out--sitting around the walls, talking, reading, doing nothing. The space had become a place."⁴³

As discussed previously, many artists responded differently when creating Installations in museums than they did when creating them in alternative spaces. Michael Asher is an important figure in this regard. While primarily a West-Coast artist, Asher had participated in both the Spaces exhibition and the Whitney's Anti-Illusion: Procedures and Materials exhibition. In Spaces, Asher had responded to the

sealed-off quality of the institution by creating a pristine room whose walls, ceiling and floor were covered in acoustical tile, rendering the space completely soundproof. In 1976 he did an Installation at the Clocktower in New York which responded to the freer spirit of the place. He white-washed the somewhat decrepit walls, and actually removed all the doors, windows and related fixtures of the three-story space. In contrast to his work in Spaces, street sounds, smells, and weather conditions were all invited into the emptied building for the three-week run of the exhibition. One reviewer described how "The whole exhibition space seemed to breathe like city folk visiting the mountains for the first time--inhaling ecstatically and exhaling reluctantly,"⁴⁴ It was a piece that could not have been done at anything but an alternative space. As Nancy Foote commented in her review of the work: "Asher is admitting the things that the conventional gallery takes pains to seal off. The outside, with all its real-life pollution, comes pouring in--Pandora's box reversed. Somehow this invasion poses little threat to the Clocktower, which has never made any claims to pristine isolation."⁴⁵

Not all the Installations from this time were so connected to a specific site. This was the case with Mary Miss. Miss' indoor works from the mid-1970s were not site-specific, although her outdoor pieces were. Sapping, 1975 and Untitled, 1976 were both "structures for behavior" in

the sense that they could be entered or climbed upon. They are also both portable, and could be shown in more than one context. Sapping was included in Rooms (P.S.1) and the exhibition Nine Young Artists: The Theodoron Awards at the Guggenheim Museum in 1977, and Untitled was done as a Projects exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1976. Barbara Baracks describes the experience of these pieces. Regarding Sapping, Baracks wrote: "One of her baldest satires on optic laws is Sapping, 1975--a plywood corridor each of whose three succeeding sections is abruptly narrower and higher. It's harder to saunter into that corridor than into your average cul-de-sac, and once inside the optics invite the intruder to step (hastily) outside." Regarding Untitled, she wrote: "The entire structure was sturdily built and accessible to entry. But the dramatically shortened perspective brought on by those serial objects brought physically closer made the surround claustrophobic after a few moments' stay."⁶ Howardena Pindell described Sapping in the Rooms (P.S.1) catalogue, saying: "One feels, walking around and into Sapping, as if one has been edged into a symbolic dimension as Gulliver or a Lilliputian. Sapping--a nonpictorial installation has subliminal references to high walls, fences, steps, water (dull aluminum flooring) and earth (raw cut wood 'walls')."⁷ The sensations described by Baracks and Pindell are not evident from photographs of the pieces, pointing again to

the importance of the eye-witness account for understanding this kind of work. Miss exhibited mostly outside of New York City for many years. This route was another alternative to the New York museums and galleries. New audiences, away from New York, had their own appeal.

The Installation works done at the alternative spaces were radical from a formal point of view, and they were socially radical as well, in part due to the margin status of the places in which they were created and shown. The works were often directed towards other artists, who, especially at the outset, formed the major audience for the new alternative spaces. The emphasis on the work of art that would exist outside the commodity system was consistent with the idealism of the times. In 1976, in a symposium led by Marcia Tucker, Charles Simmonds asked Patrick Ireland to describe a work of art that could not be sold. Ireland answered:

If it's an installation for a specific place. When the collector moves, he can't take it with him. So it has a limited life, tied to a place. If he has trouble with that, I ask how long do you expect to live? This business of art lasting a long time is a puzzling idea.⁴⁸

Ireland's words reflect ideas that had been in the air in the previous decade as well. But in the years after 1976, things began to change. One could argue that the "sixties" ends in the mid-1970s. By then, there was a growing awareness of a major shift, as radical culture increasingly

became subsumed by mass culture. An awareness of this development was expressed by artists in the Rooms (P.S.1) catalogue. There were some comments on the lateness of P.S. 1 as an enterprise (most of the alternative spaces had opened a crucial few years earlier), and of the difference between the 1960s and the 1970s. Douglas Davis, for one, remarked:

P.S. 1 was of course an important occasion. It had a sense of the past about it as well as the present. The party, the band, the dancing had a 60's feeling and thus cheered up those who miss all of that in the current time. Most of the work had however, another resonance. It was quieter than that, more introspective. I'm not so sure that it was socialist. There is a socialist feeling at P.S. 1: it all depends on which way the feeling runs, whether toward more of the past or more of the present. P.S. 1 is pregnant with questions.⁴⁹

Vito Acconci was more cynical, questioning the relevance of P.S. 1 in general, and the Rooms exhibition in particular:

Why did we all jump to be in this show? Afraid to be left out just in case "something was happening here"? Did we feel we'd better keep up a pretense of community? . . . Were we trying to find an "alternative space," or just trying to keep all the alternatives in the family? (Let's take over the alternatives before they go too far--a real alternative space, after all, would break down our defenses: with the solution--or dissolution -- of distribution and marketing problems, we'd have no excuses, we'd have nothing else to do but reconsider the kind of work we were doing, we'd be forced to place reasons and consequences in terms of a whole world.)⁵⁰

Acconci points to the awkward status of "alternative spaces" in relation to the rest of the artworld. He implies that if an alternative space became too successful, it would no longer be able to define itself in opposition to more

established spaces. This is, in fact, what has occurred to a certain extent. As some of the alternative spaces became more established, the work shown in them suffered a corresponding loss of radical character.

Already in the late 1970s there was a strong sense that many radical elements from the late 1960s and the 1970s were being recycled as mainstream commodities. This point was articulated very well by Peter Halley in 1987:

In the visual arts, the era of the early '70s believed itself to be a great flowering of post-capitalist culture. It believed that the commodity and its mind-set would be replaced by performance and by site-specific works. The artist would perform in real time, enacting an example of nonalienated work. The artist would play out the role of the free-subject, creating a model that would be emulated elsewhere in society. But the '70s represented not the flowering of a new consciousness, but rather the last incandescent expression of the old idealism of autonomy. After this, no time would be real, no labor would be living, no cultural expression would be outside the commodity-system.⁵¹

Halley is referring to a process of commercialization of the "cutting edge" expression that had begun at least as early as Woodstock and became clearly apparent in 1982 with the introduction of MTV. Quite simply, people had discovered that they could make money by packaging alternative culture. The development of culture-as-commodity has been described in a popular history as follows:

Even as political activism and rebellion waned, their spirit was absorbed and marketed by the consumer culture. The crowds at Woodstock and other rock festivals revealed the size of the youth market, and corporate entrepreneurs rushed to cash in on it. The alternative values of the 1960s soon filtered into the dominant culture. The Village Voice and

Rolling Stone outgrew their beginnings as underground publications and became respected voices of American journalism. Symbols of cultural defiance were coopted and homogenized by the mass culture. The ragged "bell bottoms" of the 1960s became the expensive designer jeans of the 1970s.⁵²

An analogous metamorphosis was beginning to get underway in Installation art by the end of the 1970s.

Museums Grapple with "Temporary" Art

By 1979, after a decade of on-again, off-again showing of Installation art, the issue of museums exhibiting Installation art finally came to the forefront. Perhaps there was a gradual awakening to the fact that this genre, as yet still unnamed, was not going to go away. Perhaps it was the realization that this was the next big thing that could be popularized. At the annual meeting of the College Art Association in 1979, there was a session titled "Temporary Art Projects in the Museum Context," organized by Howard N. Fox, then assistant curator of painting and sculpture at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.. There was a panel of speakers, including artists Alice Aycock, Patrick Ireland and John Willenbecher. Fox then published a summary of the session in Museum News, in which he outlined the difficulties of showing temporary Installations in museums. In his summary, he asked the question of why museums might want to show this work, given its clash with traditional museum functions of preservation and collection, and he answered by saying that historically,

in the twentieth century, ephemeral works have been known to precede more permanent ones. To back this up, Fox cites Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, which all began with hostile and temporary acts and eventually evolved into more museum-friendly modes of expression. Therefore he felt that it was possible that contemporary Installation work too would lead to something more permanent, and might thus be historically significant. Apparently Fox viewed Installation art as a temporary step. It would suffice until artists regained their senses and began to make other forms of art, but it did not necessarily have intrinsic value. Fox's article also summarized the practical problems of showing Installation art in museums, including the ambiguity of the curator's role and the risk to the institution of having works created in situ. While Fox offered some concrete ways of trying to resolve these issues, they remain unresolved today.⁵³

Also in 1979, Hilton Kramer wrote an article for the New York Times titled "Temporary Art in the Museum," in response to Wall Painting, a group exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago similar in concept to the Using Walls exhibition held at the Jewish Museum nine years earlier. Like Fox, Kramer was concerned with how temporary work could fit into a museum's traditional mission, asking:

What happens to the contemporary art museum when the art it is most intent upon showing us seems, because of its transitory or theatrical nature, to have entered a post-museum phase of development? . . . By long-

established habit, we turn to museums for a sense of what expert opinion has judged to be of permanent esthetic value, and yet it is the very essence of the new situation for museums of contemporary art to subvert this expectation and offer us instead an experience of the impermanent--to become, in effect, museums of temporary art . . .⁵⁴

He concludes by saying that "In commissioning such work the museum radically alters its nature, acting as a impresario for 'acts,' the quality of which it has no way of judging before they are 'performed' on the premises."⁵⁵ Kramer points out that although the works in the Chicago exhibition were painted directly on walls, for the most part they were on temporary walls erected for the exhibition--a way of accommodating site-specificity as well as the museum's needs. The use of temporary walls for site-specific work imparts a created a different sense than if work is made directly on a museum's existing walls.

The problems of showing Installation art at museums at the end of the 1970s ranged from practical concerns, such as those pointed out by Fox, to the broader issue of what a museum's basic mission was. Both Fox's College Art Association panel and Kramer's article, along with the exhibition which prompted the latter, indicate how this formerly marginal work was beginning to move towards the center of general concerns about contemporary art. Museums were beginning to look for ways to accommodate the new art, and gradually, over the next decade, Installation Art would move away from the margins and be reborn as a mainstream

museum form.

Notes

1. Linda Nochlin, "Museums and Radicals: A History of Emergencies," Art in America 59, no. 4 (July-August 1971): 35. This article also provides a valuable history of the antagonism between artists and museums, and museums and their public.
2. Lucy R. Lippard, "Notes on the Independence Movement," in 1967: At the Crossroads, ed. Janet Kardon (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), 23.
3. Lucy R. Lippard, "Intersections" in Flyktpunkter/Vanishing Points, eds. Olle Granath and Margareta Helleberg (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1984), 29.
4. Robert Pincus-Witten, "Gordon Matta-Clark: Art in the Interrogative," in Mary Jane Jacob, Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985), 14.
5. Jon Hendricks, "Some Notes, December 11, 1967," Judson Memorial Church Archive, New York.
6. Carolee Schneemann, "Divisions and Rubble," in Twelve Evenings of Manipulation, 1967, Judson Memorial Church Archive, New York.
7. For example, Duane Hansen's Viet Nam Scene, 1969 and Ed Kienholz' two anti-war tableaux from 1968.
8. Berger, Labyrinths, 120. "In the end, and as a result of pressure from such organizations as the Art Workers' Coalition and the willingness of artists like Morris, Haacke, and Buren to exhibit in the museum, curators began to respond to the idea of reorienting the museum."
9. Maurice Berger, "The Politics of Experience: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1988), 186.
10. Roald Nasgaard quoted in Phyllis Tuchman, "Sculptors Mass in Toronto," Art in America 66, no. 5 (September-October 1978): 23.
11. Tuchman, "Sculptors Mass in Toronto," 15-16.
12. Bruce Nauman interviewed by Avalanche 2 (Winter 1971): 26-27.
13. Peter Schjeldahl, "Only Connect," Village Voice, 20-26 January 1982, p. 72.
14. Berger, Labyrinths, 129-140.

15. Ronald J. Onorato, "The Modern Maze," Art International 20, no. 4-5 (April-May 1976): 23.
16. Alice Aycock quoted in H.H. Arnason, History of Modern Art, 3d ed., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall and New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986, p. 582.
17. Lucy R. Lippard, Patrick Ireland: Drawings 1965-1985 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986), 20.
18. Patrick Ireland, interview by author, 30 January 1995, tape recording, New York City.
19. Mary Delahoyd, "Seven Alternative Spaces: A Chronicle 1969-1975," in Jacki Apple, Alternatives in Retrospect: An Historical Overview 1969-1975 (New York: The New Museum, 1981), 9.
20. Robert Storr, interview by author, 7 October 1994, tape recording, New York City.
21. Phil Patton, "Other Voices, Other Rooms: The Rise of the Alternative Art Space," Art in America 65, no. 4 (July-August 1977): 80.
22. Ibid., 80.
23. Nancy Foote, "The Apotheosis of the Crummy Space," Artforum 15, no. 2 (October 1976): 129.
24. Alice Aycock interviewed by Joan Simon, quoted in Jacob, Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective, 33.
25. Alanna Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1) (New York: Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc., 1976).
26. Marcia Hafif quoted in Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1), 24.
27. Alan Saret quoted in Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1), 119.
28. Stephen Eins quoted in Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1), 120.
29. Gordon Matta-Clark interviewed by Donald Wall in Donald Wall, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections," Arts 50, no. 9 (May 1976): 76.
30. Peter Schjeldahl, "Home Wrecker: The Art of Breaking and Entering," 7 Days, 1 June 1988, p. 50.
31. Matta-Clark quoted in Wall, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections," 76.
32. Ibid., 77.

33. Gordon Matta-Clark died of pancreatic cancer in New York in 1978.
34. Brian Hatton, "Anarchitect," Art Monthly 169 (September 1993): 15.
35. "Art Fills Chicago Armory in 'Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory,'" Press release, Fall 1992, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 2.
36. Pincus-Witten, "Gordon Matta-Clark: Art in the Interrogative," 14.
37. Ibid., 11.
38. Hugh M. Davies, "George Trakas," in Hugh M. Davies and Sally E. Yard, George Trakas Log Mass: Mass Culture (Amherst: University Gallery, University of Massachusetts, 1980), 1.
39. George Trakas interviewed by Hugh M. Davies and Sally E. Yard in Davies and Yard, George Trakas Log Mass: Mass Culture, 55.
40. Ibid.
41. Roberta Olson, review of Patrick Ireland exhibition at Betty Parsons, Arts 48, no. 6 (January 1974): 59-60.
42. Patrick Ireland quoted in Dorothy Walker, "Patrick Ireland," in Patrick Ireland: Purgatory (Dublin: Trinity College, The Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1985).
43. Patrick Ireland, "Sightlines," in Patrick Ireland: Purgatory.
44. Peter Frank, "Michael Asher," Art News 75, no. 7 (September 1976): 123.
45. Nancy Foote, "Michael Asher, The Clocktower," Artforum 14, no. 10 (June 1976): 64.
46. Barbara Baracks, "Mary Miss," Artforum 15, no. 5 (January 1977): 58.
47. Howardena Pindell quoted in Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1), 124.
48. Patrick Ireland, "Project: A Symposium," in Projects for PCA, ed. Janet Kardon (Philadelphia: Philadelphia College of Art, 1976), 22.
49. Douglas Davis quoted in Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1), 119.
50. Vito Acconci quoted in Heiss, Rooms (P.S. 1), 127.

51. Peter Halley, "Notes on Abstraction," Arts 61, no. 10 (June/Summer 1987): 37.
52. Henretta et al., America's History: Volume 2 Since 1865, 966.
53. Howard N. Fox, "The Thorny Issues of Temporary Art," Museum News 57, no. 6 (July/August 1979): 42-50.
54. Hilton Kramer, "Temporary Art in the Museum," New York Times, 1 April 1979, sec. 2, p. 1.
55. Ibid., 33.

CHAPTER IV
TO THE CENTER: INSTALLATIONS 1980-1993

After the burst of Installation activity in the mid-1970s, there was a period of a few years where it seemed to die down again. Important figures including Robert Smithson, Suzanne Harris and Gordon Matta-Clark had died early and tragically, leaving a void in their communities. Painting reemerged strongly in the 1980s, and with the "return" of painting came an art market boom. This coincided with the economic boom of the 1980s, and a widespread phenomenon during the Reagan years that is best described as the "culture of greed." The general climate was not one in which Installation art as it stood at the end of the 1970s could easily flourish, although it never completely ceased.

In the late 1980s Installation activity began to increase again, but this time it was under the patronage of major museums, in New York as well as in other major cities. Installation art also came to dominate major international exhibitions. Perhaps most indicative of Installation art's changing status was the selection of Jenny Holzer to represent the United States at the Venice Biennale in 1990. Holzer transformed the United States pavilion into several full-scale Installations. Installation art also figured largely in the 1991-92 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh

and Documenta 9 in Kassel, Germany in 1992.

Critics had begun to remark that Installation art was on the rise again in the middle of the decade. In a 1984 article in Arts magazine, Dan Cameron offered a number of possible explanations for its resurgence:

The art of installation, which seemed to be resting in semi-permanent hibernation since its heyday of the mid-1970s, is back with a vengeance. Provoked in part by a tacit acknowledgement of the increased commodity status of fine art, and inspired at times by sincerely populist aims, these new installations are not the random proliferations of fragments and materials that installation came to signify a decade ago. . . . It is simply that more artists are seeing the limitless potential of installations in terms of absolute control as opposed to absolute abandon.¹

The Installations that form the subject of his article, by Mierle Ukeles, Francesc Torres, TODT, and Louise Lawler/Allan McCullum, were all done at commercial galleries. While becoming increasingly visible, the genre had still not yet become a museum stand-by.

Four years later, Michael Brenson, art critic for the New York Times, observed the increasing prevalence of the genre: "With the speed and glitz of the art world, the need for the installation as a self-contained work of art, in which visitors can be totally immersed, is not likely to diminish."² These words were written in response to Elements, an exhibition of Installations by five artists that was held in the winter of 1988 at two of the Whitney Museum satellites: at Philip Morris and at Equitable--hardly alternative spaces, but not quite museums either.

As Brenson had predicted, Installation art did not diminish. In fact, by the end of the 1980s it had moved to the center of the art world, and its status became that of an accepted genre that was not only accommodated, but actually sought after, by major museums. Installation art was available for the commissioning. In 1992, Holland Cotter wrote:

What accounts for [Installation art's] return to popularity now? . . . Perhaps its aura of being outside, even beyond, the milieu of the salable object makes it attractive to an art world whose mercantile machinery is embarrassingly stalled. Perhaps its elastic nature and its capacity to bridge formal categories suit an art world grown increasingly political over the past few years, where artists seek ever more dynamic ways to amplify their sociopolitical stances. Perhaps it reflects a need on the part of some artists to reclaim a metaphoric density submerged by much of the theory-based work of the past ten years.³

For many reasons, exhibiting Installation art became commonplace for major art institutions by the beginning of the 1990s. The hurdles that initially made Installation art too radical to assimilate were gradually overcome, in part because museum practice changed in some ways, and in part because Installation art changed.

By 1992, Roberta Smith observed that Installation art "is present in unprecedented quantities in museums, the very places it was supposed to render obsolete."⁴ The irony and implications of this will be addressed in this chapter. It is an issue that goes virtually unmentioned by the institutions who have contributed to the phenomenon.

Institutionalization has had a significant effect on Installation art. Not surprisingly, once Installations became the domain of mainstream museums, they lost some of their radical character. This did not deter artists from wanting their Installations shown in museums. Installation art is a showcase form that needs a public space in order to exist, and museums are the most validating of the public spaces. As Ilya Kabakov said in an interview with the author, "the alternative spaces (Documenta) are not the highest level of art . . . as museums are, and placement of installations into museum sacred space makes installation also sacred [sic]."⁵

In order to examine Installation art's move to "the highest level of art," I will look at the context, content and critical reception of four museum exhibitions in the early 1990s. Because of the widespread instances of such exhibitions by this time, the venues for those I will be discussing are not limited to New York City. I will examine Dislocations, organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (October 16, 1991 - January 7, 1992); the 51st Carnegie International in Pittsburgh (October 19, 1991 - February 16, 1992); Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory, organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (September 13, 1992 - January 23, 1993); and From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists, organized by the Jewish Museum, New York (June 13, 1993 - January 14, 1994). I will also

examine the work in these exhibitions in terms of the iconographic and formal conventions of Installation art that have emerged.

Conventions of Installation Art

One indication of the widespread instances of Installation art in highly visible places is the fact that critics began to attempt to identify conventions of the genre, both with regards to form and content. However, proof of this genre's continued elusiveness is found in the fact that no one identifies the same list of "conventions." Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry include just four categories in their recent book on Installation art: use of media technology, Earth Projects, museumification process, and responding to the history of a particular site.⁶ Nancy Princenthal has also identified four conventions: theatricality; a claustrophobic sense of intimacy; the use of advanced media technologies; and obsessive composite pieces (accumulations). However, she ultimately finds Installation art linked more by ideology--cultural and social critique--than by form.⁷ Adam Gopnik voiced a similar thought, finding Installation art "unified more by a common ideology than by a common set of forms--unified more by what it is trying to accomplish than by the way it looks." According to Gopnik, artists are trying through Installation art "to score topical points and raise

consciousness about particular issues."⁸ The ideology mentioned by both Gopnik and Princenthal is a reference to the widespread inclusion of political subject matter in Installation art. Perhaps because of Installation art's relative lack of history, it has proven itself to be a medium in which artists with a specific message to convey feel comfortable working.

Roberta Smith, in a scathing review of Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory, titled "Installation Art: A Bit of the Spoiled Brat," also identifies a number of formal conventions. Her list of what she refers to as the clichés of contemporary Installation art include "Delusions of High Tech," in which "A lot of artists are spending too much time with sophisticated equipment in darkened rooms,"; "The Shock of the Real," in which "Installation art can imitate life to unusual degrees, often by simply commandeering it"; "The Shock of the Old," in which "eroded materials and objects redolent of natural decay or human use" are overemphasized; "Going for the Jugular," in which "inherently heart-rending topics" are sensationalized in three-dimensional space; and "When More is Just More," referring to works which display a large accumulation of just one thing.⁹

In looking at the work included in the four exhibitions listed above, one finds examples of nearly all the conventions mentioned here, and more.

Dislocations

Dislocations was the first exhibition curated for the Museum of Modern Art by Robert Storr, who had been appointed curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture in 1990. It was the first group exhibition of Installation art at the Museum of Modern Art since the Spaces exhibition in 1969. Between 1969 and 1991 there were Projects that could be described as Environments or Installations, but no full-scale exhibitions of Installation art such as this one, which not only took over an entire floor of the museum's temporary exhibition space as well as the area normally reserved for contemporary art from the permanent collection, but even invaded the space dedicated to the permanent collection of European art on the second floor. The exhibition consisted of Installations by seven artists-- Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman and Adrian Piper--representing a mix of gender, race and nationality. This mix was itself a response to the criticism that was still deservedly aimed at the museum--that it continued to be a bastion for white male artists--and may represent an institutional agenda that Storr was expected to fulfill.

Because of the relatively small number of works in the exhibition, and the importance of the show, it is worthwhile to begin by describing what was there. The Nauman piece, titled Anthro/Socio, consisted of a large, darkened room

with giant video screens and monitors against the walls (fig. 13). On the screens loomed close-up images of the head of a man who was incessantly mouthing the words Feed me/Eat me Help me/Hurt me Anthropology/sociology. The heads were alarmingly large and bald. Accompanying recordings of the words, mixed to sound almost like Gregorian chants, reverberated throughout the room. The sounds did not correspond to the lip movements of the heads, creating a disjunctive experience.

Leaving the Nauman room to head towards Kabakov's Installation, the viewer entered a narrow passageway that led to an even narrower bridge. From this delicate perch, Kabakov provided the viewer with a scene that was intended to represent the destruction of a community center. Dozens of tiny white figures were strewn all over the floor, along with overturned furniture and paintings leaning against the walls. The figures could be viewed with the naked eye, but Kabakov had also provided a single pair of binoculars that was fixed to the bridge. There was a text panel on the bridge describing the fictional events that had led to this scene of destruction. There was a natural crowd control element in the narrowness of the bridge and the placement of the text panel and binoculars.

After leaving this space, there was a room containing Bourgeois' Twosome, which consisted of two enormous horizontally-oriented oil drums that fit one inside the

other. The cylinders were set up so that one moved in and out of the other in a slow mechanical motion. Glowing red light emanated from the cylinders. One was not moved to touch the work as there was a sense that one could easily catch one's fingers in the movement.

Upstairs on the third floor, Adrian Piper had constructed What It's Like/What it Is, a bright white, terraced arena topped with a narrow band of mirror. The work addressed the pain of racist stereotyping. In the center of the room was a four-sided video monitor on which an African American man slowly, and with great dignity repeated phrases including "I'm not stupid . . . I'm not lazy . . ." The spectator could sit on one of the shiny white ledges, and see him or herself reflected in the mirror, while watching the face in the video.

Next door to the Piper piece was Chris Burden's The Other Vietnam Memorial, a gigantic copper book standing upright and open all around like a rolodex. The heavy pages, which could be slowly turned by the viewer, were etched with three million computer-generated names representing Vietnamese killed during the Vietnam War. The piece was meant to serve as the other side of the story told by Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C..

The last Installation on the third floor was David Hammons' Public Enemy (fig. 14). The room was cluttered with various elements; the artist had covered every surface

except the floor-to-ceiling window that is a permanent part of the gallery space. Balloons hung from the ceiling, real autumn leaves crunched underfoot, elegant wallpaper lined the walls. The sound of a helicopter reverberated overhead. The room contained a giant photo blow-up of the statue of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback, flanked by Native American and African figures, that stands in front of New York's Museum of Natural History. The photo blow-up was surrounded by sandbags on which were mounted guns and sticks of dynamite that were aimed at the image. Police barricades held the viewer back from the whole arrangement.

Sophie Calle's piece, Ghosts, involved removing five works from the permanent collection and replacing them with comments made about them from memory by various museum personnel. The texts of these comments were screened onto the wall in the same dimensions as the missing paintings.

The effect on the third floor was of three completely separate exhibitions, because the rooms were laid out along a corridor and did not function as passageways from one to the next. Downstairs, where the Nauman, Kabakov and Bourgeois pieces were installed, this autonomy was more difficult to achieve, particularly because sound from the Nauman Installation penetrated the two others. The museum created dark passageways in between the three works and although this helped each to maintain its own atmosphere, it also obliterated any sense of the structure of the museum

space.

Some of the reasons why the museum may have given Storr the go-ahead to do an exhibition of Installation art can be found in the materials generated for public consumption. The press release for Dislocations noted that the works "have been created especially for this exhibition."¹⁰ This is one of the reasons why museums show Installation art: to demonstrate that there is an active relationship between the institution and the art community. If an artist has made a work especially for the museum, cooperation between the two parties is implied. The catalogue for Dislocations included photographs of each of the artists at work installing his or her piece in the museum, to reinforce the connection between the artists and the museum. Presumably that connection speaks to the continued relevance of the museum overall. Not only does Installation art imply a closer relationship to the institution; it also theoretically creates a closer connection to the viewer. As critic and curator Benjamin Weil notes, with Installation art, "the development of the artist's body of work is revealed to the viewer in its totality, from the conception of the project to its realization; the result is a much closer relationship between artist and audience."¹¹ This too is desirable from a museum's point of view, as it may make the viewer feel more privy to the activity in the museum, and thus, more empathetic to the institution and more likely to return.

Although all the works in Dislocations were created especially for the exhibition, they were not all ephemeral. Burden's and Bourgeois' pieces, in particular, were discrete objects, bordering on sculpture. Nonetheless, the ephemeral nature of the works was stressed by Rona Roob, the museum archivist, in her column in MOMA, the members' quarterly of the Museum of Modern Art. Roob traces the history of ephemeral art at the Museum of Modern Art beginning with Spaces. She then mentions the Sol LeWitt exhibition in 1978 and the Projects series, explaining how these works were ultimately dismantled. She also includes mention of Jean Tinguely's Homage to New York, the machine that destroyed itself in the museum's garden in 1960, and she emphasizes the idea of works created especially for exhibition.¹²

The fact that the works in Dislocations were produced and shown in the context of the Museum of Modern Art affected their outcome in several ways. In general, museums, as patrons of Installation art, inevitably influence the outcome of the works in some way. They provide budgets for materials, allowing the potential for high technology and more polished presentations. Because of the prestige attached to showing at a major museum, commercial galleries who represent the artists are often willing to contribute additional funds. Obviously artists need not necessarily take advantage of all that is offered. Kabakov, for example, uses refuse and throwaway materials

regardless of where his Installations are being presented. But the resources the museum makes available can potentially affect the direction in which an artist chooses to go. David Hammons, for one, had never before had such a high budget to work with as he did when he participated in Dislocations. Hammons is known for his use of discarded materials that resonate with raw human experience, such as emptied "Night Train" whiskey bottles, beer caps, chicken bones or hair clippings. One of his early ideas for his piece in Dislocations had been to leave his space empty save for a slice of white bread in the middle of the room. But ultimately he chose instead to spend his allotted funds, using more costly materials than he normally did. Although the museum stated in a hand-out brochure that Hammons' "Public Enemy . . . transformed a white-walled Museum space, filling it with the sights, sounds and smells of the street,"¹³ the piece was considered by several critics to be inconsistent with Hammons' other work. For example, Holland Cotter described it as "nowhere near as richly textured as certain other installations Hammons has done."¹⁴ Arthur Danto found Public Enemy "sullen and artistically inert."¹⁵

A similar phenomenon occurred in the career of Jenny Holzer, who, like Hammons, began by making low-budget work that she showed on the street. By 1989, she had a large and extensive Installation at the Guggenheim. While this

Installation was well-received overall, her Installations at the Venice Biennale the following year were not. They were criticized for being technically over-blown, and subsequently less than effective.

Museums can undercut the effectiveness of Installations done within their walls on several levels. Installations often look expensive because they are large and elaborate. Construction may be involved, or complex lighting or sound systems. It is difficult to remain unaware that somewhere behind the Installation lurks a funding source. At the same time the artist is often pursuing a socially critical agenda, which clashes with the collusion implied by the acceptance of corporate, private or governmental funds. Back in 1969 Dan Flavin had been criticized by the Art Workers' Coalition for accepting corporate funding for his piece in Spaces. However, now that Installation art with overtly countercultural messages has blossomed in museums on a larger scale, this incongruity is brought into sharper relief.

The historical context of the museum can also have a neutralizing effect on the works. There was a good reason why the alternative spaces, freed from the weight of permanent collections and thus, to a degree, from art history, had such appeal for artists making Installations. Holland Cotter wrote of Dislocations:

. . . one wondered how much the MOMA venue itself contributed to an absence of vitality. Had the

museum's recent history of procrustean academism (all those equations! Primitivism-Modernism, Picasso-Braque, High-Low, etc.) seeped into the works? Or is it just in the nature of museums to absorb art that is potentially troublesome and reduce it to yet another meta-experience on the path between, say, Dufy on the second floor and Kiefer on the third? Not one of these installations was messy or conflicted or crazy or exquisite or hideous or transcendent--any of the things, in other words, that could have given the artists' deeply felt messages a more visceral impact.¹⁶

Indeed the Museum of Modern Art's particular version of art history can have an overwhelming presence. Immortalized by Alfred Barr, especially in the famous design for the dust cover of the 1936 catalogue for Cubism and Abstract Art (fig. 15), it is a fairly narrow canon centered on formalist "high modernism." Robert Storr, in the Dislocations catalogue, attempts to enlarge that history. The lineage for Installation art that he provides cites "Futurist performance and environments, Dada cabaret, Merz-rooms, Surrealist gallery installations, and their offshoots." While Jennifer Licht had cited these same precedents twenty years earlier in the Spaces catalogue, Storr explicitly argues for considering them part of Modernism. Rather than treating all of these as "an awkward precursor, annoying sideshow or decadent aftermath" of High Modernism, he advocates opening up the narrow boundaries of Modernism to encompass these things as well.¹⁷ This is a fairly radical stance for the Museum of Modern Art.

1992 was a big year for major museum exhibitions of Installation art, but of all the shows, Dislocations

received by far the most press coverage, partly because it was held at the Museum of Modern Art and also because Storr's recent appointment had received a lot of attention and placed him under scrutiny. Critics approached the exhibition from many different angles. The significance of the exhibition within the museum's history was remarked upon by David Deitcher: "Dislocations is the first serious attempt in two decades to establish MoMA's credibility as a venue for contemporary art."¹⁸ (Here Deitcher is referring to the 1970 Information exhibition, and not to Spaces.)

Some of the criticism focused on the political content of the Installations. There had not been an explicit curatorial agenda in this regard, in fact the artists had been given carte blanche when creating their works, but even so, the result was an unusually political exhibition for the museum. The fact that the Museum of Modern Art was showing political art provoked a stronger critical reaction than the fact that the museum was showing Installation art. By the early 1990s, the content of much Installation art paralleled that of works in other media, being openly concerned with political and social issues. Some of the criticism launched at Dislocations was general criticism of contemporary political art.

For example, Adam Gopnik, in The New Yorker, criticized the works in Dislocations for appearing to have an exclusively political agenda, with no concern for

aesthetics. Gopnik was not the only critic who found little aesthetic value in the works in Dislocations. Roberta Smith's review of the exhibition was titled "At the Modern, Works Unafraid to Ignore Beauty."¹⁹ Hilton Kramer, a notoriously conservative critic, found all the works in the show "equally devoid of visual appeal." He goes on to say:

It is Mr. Storr's conviction, I gather, that these political tests are the only standards that are to be applied to the art of the 90's, and it is his further conviction that what is to be given priority in the art of the 90's is the ability of its creators to make us feel bad. In both respects, Dislocations may be said to be a rousing success. It is only as art that it fails to give us anything worth looking at.²⁰

It is interesting, given Installation art's genesis, that Adam Gopnik sums it up as a form that is removed from experience and not integrated with life:

Installation art seems . . . less worldly than almost any art movement that has come before--more opaque to the uninstructed viewer, and more distant from the rhythms of lived experience. These works may claim the world, but most of them certainly don't feel like the world. Instead, they have a rote, self-satisfied peppiness and slickness. What one senses just beneath the contentious surface of the new installations is the complacency of the privileged.²¹

The sense of privilege Gopnik refers to stems in part from the position of the works inside the walls of the most prestigious museums. Because Installations are more or less tailored to the site, the viewer is made aware of the invitational aspect of Installation art. Its relatively grandiose scale contributes to a sense of the artists being privileged in two senses: by getting special treatment from the museum (there were individual Installations in

Dislocations that were allotted more space than is the entire Projects gallery); and in being somewhat above the grim "social realities" they deal with. Indeed, the immense authority of the institutions tends to diminish the socially critical stance expressed by the artist. As Danto said regarding Hammons' Public Enemy: "It is easy to understand the impulse to bring a vision such as [Hammons'] within the museum space, which I fear defeated it. . . . Had such a work been created in a public space, around a real monument, it might have been inspiring and even dislocative."²²

Other comments by critics focused on the still troubling definition of Installation art as a genre. Participation and site-specificity were still held up by critics as essential defining qualities, and the works were judged on the basis of how well or how poorly they incorporated them. Gopnik complains that some of the works in Dislocations "can be summed up in a sentence or two, and looking at them isn't very different than reading about them."²³ Holland Cotter's review also reflected on the question of what constitutes an Installation. Of Burden's piece, he wrote "the question occurs as to what made The Other Vietnam Memorial an installation at all. It did nothing particular with the space it occupied, nor, apart from being readable in the round, did it attempt to engage the audience physically--the very things for which the installation mode was invented."²⁴ Cotter's remark

demonstrates how Installations are still defined by ideal criteria that include site-specificity and viewer participation. A work lacking in these elements is not considered an Installation.

Interestingly, the word "participation" does not enter into either the press release or Storr's catalogue essay. In an interview with this author, Storr stated that participation is the essential characteristic of Installation art, but he did not spell it out in so many words in the exhibition materials.²⁵ Instead, he used the words "individual beholder." There is a subtle difference between the two terms. Participation means to take active and equal part in something, usually in connection with others. The individual beholder functions more as a protagonist, as Storr describes it: "Each [installation] requires the individual beholder to reconsider their identity in light of a given situation and the freedom or restriction of movement--hence perspectives--imposed upon them within it."²⁶

Arthur Danto, reviewing the exhibition for The Nation, discusses the idea that the works in Dislocations were meant to have some sort of individual transformative effect on the viewer. In this regard, he felt that many of the works failed. However, he makes a very interesting observation regarding his own reaction to the Nauman piece, describing the sensation of being conscious of sharing the experience

in an active way with other visitors in the space:

The closest to a transformative experience was occasioned for me by Bruce Nauman's Anthro/Socio, though part of its impact was due to certain accidents of when I viewed it. There were just a few shadowy visitors in the darkened gallery, with a few more crossing the largely empty space. . . . Could the fact that I was one of a handful, each of us in fact paying attention, an enhancement of the experience?²⁷

Danto felt that the piece had a very powerful effect "especially when experienced in a near empty gallery where one sees other visitors silhouetted, singly or in pairs, against the chanting heads."²⁸

Carnegie International

The Carnegie International exhibition occurs every three years at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, and has been in existence in varying formats since 1896, one year after the museum was founded. It is a large-scale international contemporary exhibition that, unlike Documenta or the Venice Biennale, takes place in a museum with a permanent collection. The Carnegie Museum of Art is part of a complex which includes a Natural History museum, a Science Center, a Library and a Music Hall. Forty-three artists, from all over the world, participated in the 51st International exhibition which opened in October of 1991. Not only were spaces within all the branches of the Carnegie utilized, but other spaces around Pittsburgh were used as well, including the Mattress Factory, an alternative space founded in 1982. Many of the works in the exhibition were

commissioned as Installations, and the press release contains the standard phrase: "The works, many of which will be created exclusively for the International. . . ."29

The exhibition was curated by Mark Francis and Lynne Cooke, and unlike Dislocations, it had a thematic focus. The guiding principle, as stated by Francis in the catalogue, was "the reality of the museum, rather than a notion of the ideal or imaginary museum."³⁰ Francis and Cooke encouraged artists to use the physical space of the museum, although many used it more abstractly, focusing on the idea of the Museum in their Installations. Francis and Cooke note the interest of many contemporary artists in institutional modes of collecting, systems of display, and methods of organizing and disseminating information. In the catalogue, the curators state:

Now, at the beginning of the nineties . . . a swing seems to have occurred back to the museum as a preferred site of activity. At its best this renewed attention does not entail a rejection of the kinds of critiques of the museum that burgeoned in the late sixties and early seventies, but, rather, implies that the museum, notwithstanding its ideological characteristics, might still be preferable to much else as a space for imaginative, contemplative, and critical experiences.³¹

The various artists engaged the museum in different ways. Allan McCullum's Lost Objects consisted of painted concrete casts of 750 dinosaur bones from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. This accumulation was displayed on a raised platform in an indoor neo-classic sculpture court of the art museum. Reviewer Harry Schwalb found that

McCullum's piece "contrasted high regard for reproductions with the art world's fixation on the unique object."³² His reading is consistent with the artist's, as expressed in his statement in the catalogue.³³ In addition, the status of the art museum as an anachronistic dinosaur is implied by McCullum's work, and the division between a natural history museum and an art museum is blurred.

Off-site, in the basement of the Mattress Factory, Christian Boltanski created an archive of artists who had participated in the Carnegie International from 1896 to the present. The corridor was lined from floor to ceiling on both sides with small cardboard boxes on shelves. Each box had the name of an artist on it. Boltanski left some labels blank, for participants in future Carnegie International exhibitions. Although in reality the boxes were empty, they still left one to ponder what small artifact could be left from each artist. The work addressed the role of the museum as a repository for accumulations of archival information. It also addressed the way that even the most contemporary art, such as that shown in the International, takes its place in the continuum of the museum's own history, once it is shown there.

It is an interesting twist in the ongoing history of Installation art that the museum commissioned Installations about the museum. David Deitcher makes the insightful observation that "at a time of dwindling enthusiasm for

contemporary art, especially for its socially engaged manifestations, installation work can help to reconstruct the museum's prestige." He also discusses the neutralizing effect of the museum context, saying of Michael Asher's piece in the exhibition (which consisted of initials of the names of corporations that have been testing hazardous art materials, attached to radiators and other fixtures in the museum) that it "can only blend into the nearly total retreat to the museum and its culture that this exhibition more than reflects; it actually promotes." Deitcher criticizes the works in the show overall for their aesthetic preoccupation, and for their lack of engagement with facts of contemporary life, including the AIDS crisis, unemployment and homelessness.³⁴ By contrast, Adam Gopnik found fault with this exhibition for some of the same reasons he disliked Dislocations, namely what he perceived as the choice of a political agenda over aesthetics in many of the Installations.³⁵

Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory

This exhibition was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. The occasion of the exhibition was the long-term rental by the museum of a site that had previously housed the Chicago Avenue National Guard Armory. Before tearing down the armory, which was slated for demolition to accommodate the museum's new structure, it was

decided to have an exhibition there--an invitational exhibition in which artists were asked to respond to the particular space. As Kevin E. Consey, the museum's director stated in the catalogue:

Instead of an initial interest in a particular artist or specific art historical theme that persuasively ties together artists, we began with a singular space--actually spaces--and decided to explore ideas inherent in those spaces. . . .

It is in this spirit that we present "Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory," in celebration of the museum's twenty-fifth anniversary and its forthcoming new facility. It is appropriate that we celebrate this upcoming transformation of the armory site by the new museum with an exhibition focusing on the environmental power of art.³⁶

The exhibition included works by eighteen artists or artists' groups, seven of whom made new works especially for the exhibition. The other artists contributed pre-existing installations that were reinstalled at the museum. The information sheet that was generated by the museum's public relations department noted which works were "newly commissioned for Art at The Armory," indicating that the museum placed a special value on this. The press release placed the exhibition within the context of the museum's history, saying:

Throughout its history, the MCA has invited innovative artists to exhibit and create works of great imagination--such as Christo's first building wrap in 1969 or Gordon Matta-Clark's "extallation" in 1978, when the artist sawed through MCA walls and floors prior to a major museum renovation. Like Matta-Clark's "extallation," the Armory "installations" mark a momentous period of transition in the MCA's history.³⁷

A catalogue essay by Anne Rorimer provided a recent

history of Installation art based on works created in Chicago, many of them at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Clearly, Art at the Armory was intended to be the next chapter in the museum's history of showing radical and avant-garde art.

The works in the exhibition addressed three themes: identity, politics, and the environment. Some of these themes overlapped with issues related to the history of the site. For example, Elizabeth Newman's Histories of Human Flesh was situated in the attic of the Armory and used evocative objects and materials to address the childlike aspect of the young men who passed through the armory as soldiers. The collaborative Haha's piece, Rumor, was situated in the former visitors' quarters of the Armory. Roberta Smith described it as follows: "Haha has made the quietest and subtlest use of the site, furnishing the Armory's former V.I.P. apartment with drab Salvation Army furniture and visibly wiring and plugging it for demolition. The resulting environment is unusually site-specific, a depressingly anonymous space that touches on the building's past and its future. . . ."38 Vernon Fisher's Pac. War Diary was installed in a former classroom in the Armory. His piece consisted of blurred photographs of World War II battles fought on the Pacific, juxtaposed with large-scale drawings of the underwater life of the ocean. The images of marine life were drawn directly on the walls, which had been

blackened to resemble giant blackboards. There were rows of chairs in which viewers could sit, classroom style.

Of all the exhibitions under discussion, Art at the Armory went the furthest in claiming that the works included were participatory. Curator Beryl J. Wright summoned the rhetoric of participation in full force in both the press release and the catalogue. In the former she stated: "For the audience, installations provide an art experience that is physically participatory and extended in duration, and this more fully engaging than simply looking at a work of art."³⁹ It is clear from this statement that participation is being offered as a selling point because it ideally offers a more direct experience for the viewer. However, the gap between the reality and the ideal can be quite wide. In the catalogue, describing Doug Hall's The Terrible Uncertainty of the Thing Described, Wright wrote "Installations often separate themselves from conventional accumulation and display techniques through the element of active viewer participation. [Hall's piece] elicits involuntary viewer participation because of the overwhelming physiological response it provokes. Experiencing the tremendous power of nature via technology and contemplating its real power in the aftermath of the lightning display are central to the installation."⁴⁰ Roberta Smith's eye-witness report on this piece provides a strong contrast to Wright's description: "There must be a name for a spectacle,

apart from amusement park rides and certain horror movies, that reduces the spectator to speechless fear--but it may not be art."⁴¹ By definition, one does not participate in a spectacle. Smith categorizes this piece as an example of "The Shock of the Real"-- Installations which derive all their punch from imitating life to unusual degrees. She places Elizabeth Newman's Histories of Human Flesh, which incorporated plastic bags filled with breast milk, in this same category. Hall's and Newman's works as described do appear to have relied heavily on shock value. However, they can also be considered as examples of the flexibility of materials that is part of the appeal of Installation art for many artists, which allows them to introduce vivid "real-life" elements and autobiographical overtones into their art. In addition, elements such as breast milk and fabricated lightning are consistent with what has historically been the temporal nature of Installation art. And this temporality--imitating as it does the entropic condition of actual experience-- introduces an individualistic element into the abstract construction.

The exhibition contained another work that was specifically billed as participatory. Lynn Hershmann's Deep Contact invited viewers to respond to various cues on a video screen that allowed them to see different soft-porn scenarios. Catalogue author Nadine Wasserman described the experience of video installation in general, saying: "the

separation of audience and event is replaced by the realm of participation; the fact that customarily the visitor enters a three-dimensional space introduces direct experience into a complex electronic age."⁴² It is highly debatable whether simply entering a room constitutes participation. It is true that in Hershmann's piece the viewer was able to select what he or she wanted to see, but while this is interactive, it is arguably no more so than changing channels on a television set. Watching television is many things, but participatory is not one of them.

Roberta Smith's overall response was:

The show is . . . a kind of disaster. A deadly funhouse atmosphere builds from floor to floor, as you encounter artworks, often under conditions of darkness, involving quantities of video equipment or wrecked cars, mica, hay or knotted forms that suggest burned bodies. They're all here. . . . The installations are intended to address three done-to-death themes--identity, politics, and the environment--and to relate to the building's history.⁴³

The national art magazines provided scant coverage of this exhibition. Artforum criticized it for not holding together, saying essentially that the exhibition hovered between a survey of Installation art and real attempts to deal with the context of an old military building. The reviewer found the eight Installations that were commissioned especially for the exhibition to be more successful than the ten that were recreations of previously existing ones.⁴⁴ This indicates that Installation art does not lend itself well to being recreated, although that now

happens with increasing frequency. The most successful Installations are still those that are done one time, in response to a particular set of circumstances.

Museums, of course, have played a role in encouraging the recreation of Installations. Museums often attempt to defray exhibition costs by travelling exhibitions to other institutions, with the participating institutions splitting many of the expenses. This is much more difficult with Installation art, for obvious reasons, but it does not prevent museums from proceeding anyway, even if something gets lost in the translation.

From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists

Each of the afore-mentioned exhibitions had a noteworthy place within its institution's history, and the same is true of From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists. As described at the outset of this study, From the Inside Out inaugurated a new space in a renovated and expanded facility. It was one of four exhibitions that were presented when the Jewish museum reopened its doors on June 13, 1993. The three other exhibitions included a permanent exhibition on Jewish history and culture; an exhibition about the history of the museum; and an exhibition of recent collecting practices of the museum. The catalogue of From the Inside Out included a chronology of contemporary art exhibitions at the museum from the time of its inception in

the 1940s through the 1990s, in order to show the long-standing commitment of the museum to contemporary art.

From the Inside Out included works by Eleanor Antin, Christian Boltanski, Clegg and Guttmann, Moshe Gershuni, Ilya Kabakov, Nancy Spero, Barbara Steinman and Lawrence Weiner. All but the Gershuni and Steinman pieces were new works commissioned for the exhibition. There were two reasons for this. One was because making new works would involve the artists directly and give an exclusivity to the works. The other was more practical. The museum wanted to include internationally recognized artists, but they also wanted the works to have a specifically Jewish content. All of the artists in the exhibition were Jewish, but not all of them had previously done work with Jewish content. New works had to be made by most of the artists in order for them to be in the show.

The press release stressed the participation and the status of the artists: "From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists, an important exhibition of works by major international artists, will open to the public. . . . The works--many of which are being created specifically for the exhibition--address questions of personal identity, as well as those which yield answers of a broader, more universal nature."⁴⁵ No emphasis was placed in either the press release, or in the catalogue essay by senior curator Susan T. Goodman, on Installation art as a genre.

Installation art was mentioned only in passing, as part of a list of the genres employed by the artists. By this time, the particular characteristics of Installation art, as opposed to painting or sculpture, apparently did not require explication. There was also resistance on the part of Joan Rosenbaum, the museum's director, to play up the Installation aspect of the exhibition, because of the trendiness and over-saturated presence of Installation art at the time.

Unlike the three exhibitions discussed above, there was no existing space for the artists to visit and respond to, as the gallery slated for the show was still under construction when the artists came the museum to plan their works. The floorplan of the exhibition was generated by the space needs of the artists, which had to be carefully balanced in order to satisfy everyone. The final effect was one of crowded quarters. Some of the artists had specifically requested spaces that would be more isolated. But in the end, with the exception of the Kabakov piece, each room was also a passageway to the next work, and the self-contained quality of the Installations suffered because of this. Although the works could not be conceived in response to an existing physical space, they did respond to the context of the Jewish Museum as an institution. In some way the works had to reflect on, criticize, celebrate, or in other ways comment on, Jewishness. The artists were asked

to take the idea of this particular museum into account in some way.

Eleanor Antin created Vilna Nights, a tableau of a ruined Jewish ghetto that incorporated film. The piece was constructed in California, shipped to New York and reconstructed. Boltanski made the previously-mentioned Museum of the Bar Mitzvah. Clegg and Guttmann created a photographic reconstruction of a section of the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the museum's parent organization. Moshe Gershuni contributed paintings and sculpture with Hebrew lettering and phrases. Kabakov created an Installation titled Mother and Son that focused on his mother's life in Russia. Nancy Spero screened text that related to aspects of Jewish women in history directly onto the wall. Barbara Steinman included Signs and another piece called Of a Place Solitary. Of a Sound Mute, which was concerned with concentration camp victims. Lawrence Weiner painted Hebrew and English words into a corner of the gallery, using the metaphor of materials that explode when combined to address the anachronism of Jewish dietary laws.

Spectator participation was not a strong factor in the works in the exhibition. Only the Kabakov piece, Mother and Son, had an active element of participation, and it was highly controlled (fig. 2). Only six people were allowed in the room at one time, and to insure this a special guard was hired to stand near the entrance of the space. The room was

almost completely dark; the only light source was a painted-over lightbulb hanging from the ceiling. Visitors were required to use a flashlight when entering the space. Only six flashlights were provided, so people had to wait for someone to come out before they could get a flashlight and go in. Once inside, the viewer had to duck under the strings of refuse and Russian and English texts strung all across the room. The flashlight could be used to illuminate works on the walls as well, at the viewer's own discretion. In that respect, the viewer controlled his or her own perception of the piece. (Viewers entering Kabakov's Installation at the Carnegie International the previous year were also handed flashlights; it was a device the artist had employed before).

Critical response to the exhibition focused on the reopening of the museum as a whole. The art press did not review From the Inside Out separately; it was discussed within the context of the reopening of the museum in general. The museum was somewhat successful in its mission to redefine itself through the exhibition. Kay Larson, writing for New York magazine, said:

In the sixties, the Jewish Museum put on some legendarily important exhibitions including "Primary Structures," the first public identification of Minimalism. In the seventies it turned its attention back to religion. Now the museum seems to be signaling an interest once again in the great American landscape where artists live and work. . . . Now that the Jewish Museum has 4,000 years of history on view upstairs, perhaps it feels freer to expand its mission again.⁴⁶

The lateness of doing an exhibition of Installation art was brought up by Roberta Smith in the New York Times. After giving generally positive response to the newly opened museum as a whole, she had this to say about From the Inside Out: "The less said about 'Inside Out' the better. Installed on the museum's ground floor, it is a cramped and well-behaved show of installation art that mostly points out the academization, or domestication of the genre."⁴⁷

These four exhibitions demonstrate the different qualities that have made Installation art appealing to museums. They also demonstrate the ways in which museums have dealt with some of the issues--both aesthetic and social--that Installation art raises, and show some of the ways that Installation art has been affected by its status as a museum genre. An important aspect of showing Installations at museums that is not visible to the viewing public is the collaborative relationship between the artist and the curator, a relationship that temporarily redefines the role of the curator. The genesis of the Boltanski piece in the Jewish Museum exhibition deserves particular explication in this regard.

As mentioned in the introduction, the materials in Boltanski's Museum of the Bar Mitzvah were amassed by the curators, and not the artist. Enlisting the help of the curators did more than physically shape the piece;

Boltanski's passive role allowed the museum to significantly redirect the project. In talking with Boltanski initially, it was clear that his conception of the American bar mitzvah was of a conspicuous display of wealth, an embarrassment of riches. The museum felt uncomfortable about this, and without consulting the artist, carefully chose more modest images, including black and white photographs of an orthodox bar mitzvah. They felt that Boltanski was overlooking the serious scholarly work that went into the bar mitzvah, and so chose photographs that emphasized this aspect. Instead of including pictures only of the receptions and parties following the bar mitzvah, as Boltanski had originally stipulated, the curators also chose photographs of the bar mitzvah child alone, reading texts at a podium. Boltanski wanted to include a display case of typical bar mitzvah gifts--he suggested large expensive items, such as computers. The museum staff instead selected more modest items such as fountain pens. Since the museum was reluctant to ask people unaffiliated with the museum to put their photographs and objects under scrutiny, the result was a piece consisting of photographs and objects belonging to the Jewish Museum's staff and their friends. Boltanski voiced no objection to (indeed did not comment on) the museum's selections, and this curator came away wondering whether enlisting the participation of the museum had been a conscious ploy by the artist to see how the Jewish Museum

would present the bar mitzvah. In the press release and catalogue, the curatorial participation was not mentioned. Instead, these materials stated that the artist had amassed all the objects. In fact, the piece would have been quite different if he had chosen the images and objects, and part of the point was that he left it up to the museum to present an image of the American bar mitzvah. But the museum would not have wanted to promote the idea that they were involved on the creative level. This would have opened up the thorny notion of commissioned works and the influence of their patrons, instead of stressing the freedom the museum provided to its artists.

Curators have varying degrees of discomfort with the active role they often play in presenting Installations.

Robert Storr represents one possible point of view:

No, I'm not uncomfortable with [the role] at all . . . I don't think there is any reason to think that curators...should be sort of clinically at a remove from the creativity of the artist. I think that's just the wrong way to think about it. I think curators in doing installation . . . occupy a situation which is not entirely dissimilar from what a literary editor does with a writer. I'm speaking of somebody who really responds both to the practicalities of writing a text, (or figuring out where the fire door goes), but also who in a sense interprets the situation to the artist in such a way that if the artist is trying to do something and not being successful you tell them . . . there is a problem. So you're like a first reader, an engaged first reader. I think that's a fine relationship.⁴⁸

Another way to think about it, however, is that by providing the initial budget and asking artists to respond to a particular site or theme, the museum is gaining a

measure of control over the works. This further reduces the radical nature of the art, because the curator can nip in the bud something that might seem to go too far. For example, museums can restrict viewer participation, becoming so concerned about safety that they will compromise the artist's original conception. Charlotta Kotik recalls that when an artist wanted to have visitors experience his Installation on the Vietnam war in a wheelchair, the museum first said no, then insisted that the chair be fixed to a track.⁴⁹

Despite the proliferation of Installations at museums, curators still report resistance from the channels of approval. Apparently showing art that is created in situ, without a chance to see and potentially reject it before the opening is still a radical proposition. It has become commonplace for museums to have exhibitions where the pieces are not created until the time of the exhibition, but doing so is still a leap of faith, and in that respect the notion of the museum as laboratory has continued, and Installation art has changed museum process. At the same time, the ineffectiveness of many museum Installations speaks to the difficulty of bringing a radical art form inside. Installation art has suffered as it underwent the process of "domestication," and it remains to be seen where it will go from here.

Notes

1. Dan Cameron, "Four Installations: Francesc Torres, Mierle Ukeles, Louise Lawler/Allan McCullum and Todt," 66-67.
2. Michael Brenson, "A Transient Art Form with Staying Power," New York Times, 10 January 1988, p. 36.
3. Holland Cotter, "Dislocating the Modern," Art in America 80, no. 1 (January 1992): 100.
4. Roberta Smith, "Installation Art, a Bit of the Spoiled Brat," New York Times, 3 January 1993, p. 31.
5. Ilya Kabakov to author, June 1993. Kabakov's broken English has been retained in my text.
6. de Oliveira et. al, Installation Art.
7. Nancy Princenthal, "Rooms with a View," Sculpture 9, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 26-31.
8. Adam Gopnik, "Empty Frames," The New Yorker, 25 November 1991, p. 110.
9. Smith, "Installation Art: A Bit of the Spoiled Brat."
10. "Dislocations," Press release, September 1991, Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). Library.
11. Benjamin Weil, "Remarks on Installations and Time Dimensions," Flashart 25, no. 162 (January-February 1992): 105.
12. Rona Roob, "From the Archives: Ephemeral Art," MOMA 9 (Fall 1991): 23.
13. "Dislocations," hand-out produced by the Education Department, Museum of Modern Art. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.). Library.
14. Cotter, "Dislocating the Modern," 104.
15. Arthur C. Danto, "Dislocatory Art," The Nation, 6 (January 1992): 32.
16. Cotter, "Dislocating the Modern," 106.
17. Robert Storr, Dislocations (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 19.
18. David Deitcher, "Art on the Installation Plan: MoMA and the Carnegie," Artforum 30, no. 5 (January 1992): 80.

19. Roberta Smith, "At the Modern, Works Unafraid to Ignore Beauty," New York Times, 18 October 1991, sec. c, p. 1.
20. Hilton Kramer, "MoMA Mia, You Call This Art?," New York Observer, 4 November 1991, p. 1.
21. Gopnik, "Empty Frames," p. 120.
22. Danto, "Dislocatory Art," 32.
23. Ibid., 116.
24. Cotter, "Dislocating the Modern," 103.
25. Robert Storr, interview by author, 7 October 1994, tape recording, New York City.
26. Storr, Dislocations, 20.
27. Danto, "Dislocatory Art," 31.
28. Ibid.
29. "Carnegie Museum of Art Announces Plans for Carnegie International Exhibition," Press release, 23 January 1991, Carnegie Museum of Art.
30. Mark Francis, "State of Change: An Introduction," in Lynne Cooke and Mark Francis, eds., Carnegie International 1991, vol. I and II (Pittsburgh: The Carnegie Museum of Art, and New York: Rizzoli, 1991): 19.
31. Francis and Cooke, "Preface," Carnegie International 1991, p. 14.
32. Harry Schwab, "Carnegie International," Art News 91, no. 1 (January 1992): 135.
33. Allan McCullum quoted in Francis and Cooke, Carnegie International, vol. I, p. 100.
34. Deitcher, "Art on the Installation Plan," 83-84.
35. Gopnik, "Empty Frames," 110-120.
36. Kevin E. Consey, foreword to Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory, org. by Beryl J. Wright, with essays by Robert Bruegmann and Anne Rorimer and contributions by Stacy Boris and Nadine Wasserman (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 7.

37. "Art Fills Chicago Armory in 'Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory'" Press release, 10 September 1992, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

38. Smith, "Installation Art, a Bit of the Spoiled Brat."

39. "Art Fills Chicago Armory," Press release.

40. Beryl J. Wright, "Artifact and Art: The Armory as Exhibition Site," in Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory, 51.

41. Smith, "Installation Art, a Bit of the Spoiled Brat."

42. Nadine Wasserman, Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory, p. 81

43. Smith, "Installation art, a Bit of the Spoiled Brat."

44. James Yood, "Art at the Armory: Occupied Territory," Artforum 31, no. 4 (December 1992): 98.

45. "Major International Artists to be Represented in Opening Contemporary Exhibition at the Jewish Museum," Press release, The Jewish Museum, New York.

46. Kay Larson, "The Ties That Bind," New York, 12 July 1993, p. 63.

47. Roberta Smith, "Jewish Museum as Sum of Its Past," New York Times, 11 June 1993, sec. C, p. 21.

48. Robert Storr interview by author, 7 October 1994, tape recording, New York City.

49. Charlotta Kotik, interview by author, 23 July 1994, tape recording, Brooklyn, New York.

Conclusion

Beginning with the work and words of Allan Kaprow in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Environments, and subsequently, Installation art have been defined in large part by the radical issues of spectator participation, site-specificity, and a lack of commodity status. As I have demonstrated, some of the emphasis placed on these issues has come from the artists involved, and some of it from critics and curators. Over the last three decades, the significance of these terms has shifted constantly but the issues have continued to be associated with the genre to the present day. By the early 1990s, with the birth of Installation art as a museum form and, as will be discussed below, its potentiality as a commodity, participation and site-specificity had lost most of their original meaning. A new understanding of these concepts in relation to the reality of the works they describe is necessary.

One of the many historically notable changes that occurred in the last decade is that Installations gained commodity status. This change challenges the originally ephemeral nature of the genre, and has been a major contributing force to its institutional acceptance. Charlotta Kotik, curator of the Brooklyn Museum's Grand Lobby Projects, a series devoted to site-specific

installation that was begun in 1984, had this to say on the subject of commodification:

I think that one has to approach it not only from the point of view of the museum but from cultural history and [economics]. Installations were to challenge established practices of the art market and the art work as a commodity, but this culture, our culture and our economy commodifies immediately everything, practically everything. . . . Nothing in this culture can remain on the outside . . . the museums start to be interested, board[s] of directors start to be interested, collectors start to be interested and it becomes part of the culture Of course it violates, but give me the artist who would not sell his installation.¹

Artists are selling their Installations and museums are buying them. The Museum of Modern Art is actively engaged in collecting Installations (they have recently acquired one by James Turrell and one by Ilya Kabakov). Some museums that are not buying them would if they could. For example, according to Kotik, the Brooklyn Museum would collect Installations if they had the money. In addition, Jewish Museum curators say that they would if they had sufficient storage space. Although critics are inclined to attribute the resurgence of Installation art in the 1990s to a renewed interest on the part of artists in creating works that cannot be commodified, the works are nonetheless being sold. They are collected and preserved with only the limitations of museum storage facilities and acquisition budgets limiting this process.

It is not only Installation art that has proven to be collectible after all. Other forms of "non-collectible" art

have as well, including Process art and Conceptual art. By 1974, the Museum of Modern Art had already acquired one of Sol LeWitt's wall drawings, Straight Lines in 4 Directions Superimposed, 1969, a work consisting entirely of instructions for a drawing to be drawn directly on the wall with an 8H or a 9H pencil. In 1979 the museum acquired Richard Serra's scatter piece, Cutting Device: Base Plate Measure, 1969, and in 1984, one of Robert Morris' threadwaste pieces, Untitled, 1968, a scatter piece of variable dimensions consisting of felt, asphalt, mirrors, wood, copper tubing, steel cable and lead. The Musée National de l'Art Moderne now owns Hans Haacke's Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971, one of three works exposing connections between Guggenheim board members and Manhattan real estate holdings, which were rejected by Thomas Messer for exhibition in Haacke's one-person show at the Guggenheim in 1971, and which caused the show's curator, Edward Fry, to be fired.

Perhaps the most historically improbable of all such acquisitions is the "collecting" of sited Earth works. Walter de Maria's Lightning Field, 1974-1977, a vast network of lightning rods near Quemado, New Mexico, is listed in catalogues as being in the collection of the Dia Art Foundation, which maintains a bed-and-breakfast at the site. And in 1985 the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles

"acquired" Michael Heizer's 1,500 foot earthwork, Double Negative, 1969-1970, which exists in the Nevada desert (fig. 16). This was the first permanently sited earthwork to enter the collection of a museum. The words of the museum's director would have been inconceivable ten years before:

. . . with the acquisition of Double Negative in 1985, MOCA became not the caretaker for a desert plot, but a pioneer in the reassessment of how art is collected. Evidenced through this acquisition is the fact that museums can extend the boundaries of the institution--and the arena in which art may be experienced--beyond its four walls and into the real world. Art need not be defined by that which can be presented in a museum setting; a museum collection need not restrict itself only to that which can remain in its galleries. Unlike commissioned museum installations, which exist only as long as the exhibition continues, Double Negative cannot be disbanded or even temporarily removed. In this sense the work is truly monumental not merely due to its size, but because of its physical presence in the desert landscape.²

If one were to go by this statement, ultimately long-standing Earth art is less radical than ephemeral indoor Installation art. Never mind that it cannot be reached without driving eighty miles into the desert: it is permanent, and at least from the Museum of Contemporary Art's point of view, this is clearly still valued.

The reason that much contemporary Installation art can be collected is that it is no longer ephemeral. Much of it can be reconstructed, not only at the original site, but elsewhere as well. Site-specificity, which for the artists associated with 112 Greene Street or P.S. 1 had meant doing a work just once, in response to a particular and unique set of conditions, now can mean remaking a piece to fit more

than one space. This has seemed like too much of a compromise to some critics. Roberta Smith, for one, commented that:

. . . in many ways the art of installation . . . has turned out to be surprisingly portable and repeatable. For example, the installation that Ilya Kabakov created for "Dislocations" at the Museum of Modern Art last fall was similar to one he orchestrated for the Carnegie International a month later.

Indeed, for many installation artists the white box of the gallery is just a bigger canvas on which to paint the same image again and again.³

Her criticism suggests that what is currently succeeding as Installation art is in fact a watered-down version.

Even Kaprow has recently reconstructed several of his Environments. He sees no contradiction in this, claiming that that freedom was built into his idea of Environments from the start. For an exhibition at the Fondazione Mudima in Milan in 1991, Kaprow reconstructed seven of his original Environments. These were done quite differently than they had been originally, but were dated with both the original date and 1991. Yard, originally the pile of old tires in the courtyard of the Martha Jackson Gallery, was reborn as a tire-less Fiat, surrounded by tires neatly arranged in rows on shelves. Apple Shrine was no longer made up of chicken wire stuffed full of crumpled newspapers, but was instead a labyrinth of oil drums and suspended fluorescent lights. Even Push and Pull reappeared, this time reincarnated as a wire cage filled with debris. The "reconstructed" Environments bore little resemblance to the originals, and

could really be considered new works. But when asked in an interview if he had considered creating any new Happenings or Environments for the exhibition, Kaprow answered:

No, not for an exhibition. That's like asking a crocodile to be a mouse. I couldn't take any kind of happening or environment and put it into [the Fondazione Mudima]. It would be a contradiction. They weren't meant for that kind of space. That would be a reframing of art.⁴

But of course a reframing of art is exactly what has taken place. In a review of the Milan exhibition, Meyer Raphael Rubenstein gives Kaprow the benefit of the doubt, saying: "Perhaps one of the things he is trying to make clear is that the visual qualities of his works were never of primary importance."⁵ Jeff Kelley is also sympathetic, writing that:

Much of the poignancy of Kaprow's reworkings lies in their capacity to mark the passage of time as well as to suggest the gap between the archival seriousness of art history (as it documents original works of art) and the permissive playfulness of an artist who starts with memory but makes things up, reinventing, as it were, his past.⁶

It should be noted that in most of the photographs distributed for the Fondazione Mudima exhibition, there were spectators in the works, implying the participatory spirit of the pieces. That much, at least, has not changed for Kaprow. However, there were limited possibilities for real participation. The updated version of Yard did include some tires on the ground with which viewers could interact. However, Push and Pull could not be rearranged by the visitors, nor could they add their own contributions to the

remake of Words.

As has been demonstrated in this study, participation in contemporary Installation art is clearly still a primary issue, either because of its presence or because of a lack of it. Contemporary Installations do not, on the whole, have an obvious participatory nature, and in many ways they provide an experience close to that of works in more traditional media. Kaprow has remarked on this, saying: "Obviously [Installation Art's] form, in the sense of being multi-medial, is different than the consistent media of sculpture or painting, but other than that, the mode of review is the same. You glide silently by, you nod or whisper to your friend . . ."⁷

At the same time, it is not incorrect to refer to the experience of contemporary Installation art as participatory, as long as one clearly defines the sense in which the word is being used. Arthur Danto offers a contemporary notion of participation in the catalogue to From the Inside Out, saying that Installation art "is in the first instance participatory rather than contemplative and subversive rather than gratificatory. Entering the installation, one is meant to emerge somewhat altered by the experience." He goes on to say that "the content is less to be mastered than earned by participation, as the visitor lives through the experience of the installation and in this way grasps its meaning."⁸ The kind of passive

participation described by Danto fits in well with the protocols of museum visitation. Active participation did not work at mainstream institutions. Participation now is less about breaking down hierarchies and nurturing democratic ideals (in Spaces everyone ended up in the same footwear, whether they had come in sneakers or designer shoes--a unifying, leveling experience), and more about having a private dialogue with the work. One can also have a private dialogue with works in other media. What differentiates Installation art is that other people are simultaneously sharing the experience in an active way, as Danto had described with the Nauman piece in Dislocations. Oliveira, Petry and Oxley have expressed the idea too that "the spectator becomes an integral part of the work by virtue of the duration of a common experience."⁹ It is possible that for every Installation, there is an optimal number of people who should occupy it at the same time for this shared effect to occur. Ilya Kabakov seems to have an intuitive sense of this, restricting the number of people who can enter one of his Installations at once.

My own experience of Adrian Piper's What It's Like/What It Is, No. 3 was strongly affected by the presence of a particular number of other viewers. Once I had sat down on one of the ledges and realized what was on the video monitor, I became self-conscious about getting up. I sat there wondering whether, if I got up too soon, everyone else

in the room would find me politically incorrect. This feeling stemmed from the layout of the space, with the monitors in the middle of a stadium-like rectangular space, which, when it was not too crowded, allowed everyone to watch everyone else--which they did, as much, if not more than they watched the video. By contrast, on the night of the opening, when it was very crowded, people ignored each other, freely reapplying their make-up in the band of mirror that ran around the room.

The idea of participation is still often summoned by public relations departments when an attempt at audience outreach is being made. But Installation art is not necessarily easily accessible. Its scale and environmental quality alone are not enough to guarantee that it will reach the level where the average person can grasp it or participate in it. Those employing the term "viewer participation" need to take this into account, or it will become truly meaningless rhetoric.

Museums have picked up on the language of viewer participation far more than have critics. A glance through reviews of one-person, gallery exhibitions of Installation art published in Art in America from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s is revealing in terms of the changing nature of Installation art and its accompanying criticism. A detached formalism tends to dominate the reviews. Reviewers focus on the objects in the Installation rather than on the

experience of being there. Even when the reviewer does focus on the direct experience, the pronoun used is "one," not "I." Only in rare cases is the first person used.

When Environments were first shown, critics by and large approached them differently from the way they approached paintings or sculpture. Despite the rather conservative climate of the time, it was apparently acceptable in 1959, 1960 and 1961 to put one's own voice into a review of an Environment--probably because this unusual approach was a way of acknowledging the newness of the work. The problem with the stream-of-consciousness approach taken by reviewers of the early Environments is that it was (and still is) nearly impossible to glean from them what was actually physically present in the space. For example, to return to Valerie Petersen's review of Kaprow's Apple Shrine in 1961, the most descriptive part of the text reads:

Allan Kaprow's [Judson] environment is called An Apple Shrine. And, it well might, could or would be a grotto shrine, or a city zoo or a three-way mirror or etc., there is no limit to the imagination's imaginings or the latitude allowed for same by Kaprow. His labyrinth is cluttered with remnants of our daily offal--the daily periodical, it surrounds with language and imposed pretention. The mountain trail, or subway hole or birth canal or etc. leads to an actual retreat, illumined with silence almost holy, or farce hysterical. The altar, or stage, or cage is divided by the magic three--the sea, the earth and the sky, or the root, the flower and the etc., the shape, the blood and the light bulb; the relics, the actors or the monkeys are many perfect, waxen images of blushing apples.¹⁰

One would actually have had to see the piece, or a

photograph of it in order to know that it had walls of chicken wire stuffed with newspaper, straw and tar paper, or that there was a three-tiered altar at the center that was filled with artificial apples.

By contrast, an excerpt from a recent review in Art in America of an Installation by May Sun at Capp Street project in San Francisco reads as follows:

A small adjoining room was set up rather like a shrine. Around this space, books having to do with Sun Yat-Sen's revolution hung from ropes that were attached to knives driven into the wall. In the center of the room a table and chairs were set up, and a game board and boxes of playing pieces (whose meaning was never explained) were neatly placed on the table. Against one wall could be found a scroll bearing photos of Sun Yat-Sen and his comrades, along with excerpts from his writings. Candles and incense burned beneath the scroll, lending the arrangement an altarlike effect.¹¹

Although this review does provide plenty of descriptive information, it too poses problems. Nowhere in the review does the author, Gay Morris, address the experience of being in the Installation. It is not clear, for example, whether the viewer can read the books that hang from the ropes, sit at the table, play the games. Do the burning candles obscure the reading of the scroll, or is reading possible? By providing only the physical details, the author neglects to address the possibilities for action by the viewer. This type of critical approach to contemporary Installation is widespread, although there are exceptions.

Probably the more impersonal voice used today to some extent reflects the acceptance of Installation art as a

genre. Time has rendered it less unfamiliar, and so it can be approached in a manner more consistent with the manner in which other media are discussed. It is also possible that reviewers are responding to something in the nature of the work, finding it more conducive to describing static physical properties because the works are in fact less participatory. A third possibility is that Installation art is still radical, and a proper critical vocabulary has not yet gone into common usage.

Looking for conventions is one way in which critics can narrow a field to the point where it can be more easily grasped. But attempts at creating categories and classifying types of Installation art have not been especially illuminating to date. What is needed is a more general approach that could be used for any Installation, regardless of its form. Ideally a critical approach to a work of Installation art would integrate the subjective and the objective points of view, including enough descriptive material to help the reader visualize the physical properties of the piece while at the same time describing the possibilities for action. An Installation is, strictly speaking, neither a thing nor an event, but something in-between, and must be described that way. Roberta Smith comes close to providing a good model in her review of Art at the Armory, but by avoiding any description of the potential for viewer participation, she leaves out important

information. Eye-witness accounts are still an important tool in understanding Installation art, and the subjective voice should still be considered a valid approach. While not everyone would have the same response, such a description might help the viewer by at least raising the possibilities inherent in a personal response.

Back in 1960, Allan Kaprow transferred some of the success or failure of the art-viewing experience onto the viewer. In contemporary Installation art as well, the viewer is left to find his or her own way. In a recent interview with Ilya Kabakov, Robert Storr recalled that:

When I organized "Dislocations" at MOMA in 1991, some people said that there should have been explanatory placards at the entrance to each installation so that people would know how to look at them. My assumption was that the whole point of encountering installation work is to enter a space where you don't know where you are and you have to learn how to imaginatively put it together. That's something that once had to be done with modern painting. But now the surprise of modern painting has been made official, whereas the surprise of installation art has not.¹²

That element of surprise is something to be valued and preserved. But since Installations at major museums have a wider and more general audience than they do at any other type of venue, they seem fated to become as commodified, explained, and conventionalized as other once-radical kinds of modern art.

Notes

1. Charlotta Kotik, interview by author, 23 July 1994, tape recording, Brooklyn New York.
2. Richard Koshalek and Kerry Brougher, foreword to Michael Heizer: Double Negative - Sculpture in the Land, with essay by Mark C. Taylor, Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and Rizzoli, New York, 1991), 11.
3. Smith, "Installation Art: A Bit of the Spoiled Brat.,"
4. Allan Kaprow quoted in Helena Kontova and Giancarlo Politi, "Allan Kaprow Happens To Be An Artist," Flashart 25, no. 162 (January-February 1992): 95.
5. Meyer Raphael Rubenstein, "Allan Kaprow at Fondazione Mudima," Art in America 80, no. 4 (April 1992): 171.
6. Jeff Kelley, "Reinventing his Past," Art in America 82, no. 6 (June 1994): 81.
7. Allan Kaprow, telephone interview by author, 24 August, 1994.
8. Danto, "Postmodern Art and Concrete Selves," p. 20.
9. Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Petry, Michael Oxley, "On Installation," Art & Design 8, no. 516: 11.
10. V[alerie] P[etersen], review of Kaprow's An Apple Shrine, 12.
11. Gay Morris, "May Sun at Capp Street Project," Art in America 79, no. 1 (November 1991): 159.
12. "An Interview with Ilya Kabakov by Robert Storr," Art in America 83, no. 1 (January 1995): 125.

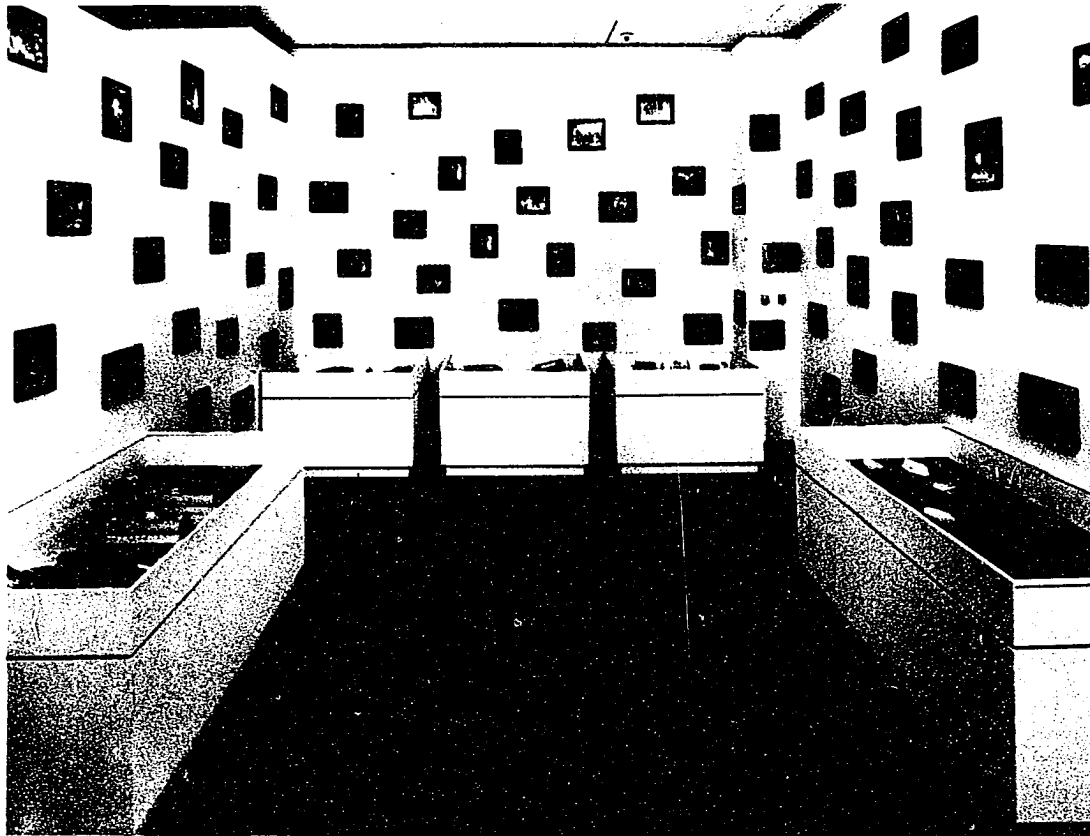


Fig. 1. Christian Boltanski, Museum of the Bar Mitzvah, The Jewish Museum, New York. June 13, 1993 through January 14, 1994. Mixed-media Installation. Photograph by Patricia Layman Bazelon



Fig. 2. Ilya Kabakov, Mother and Son. The Jewish Museum, New York. June 13, 1993 through January 14, 1994. Mixed-media Installation. Photograph by Patricia Layman Bazelon

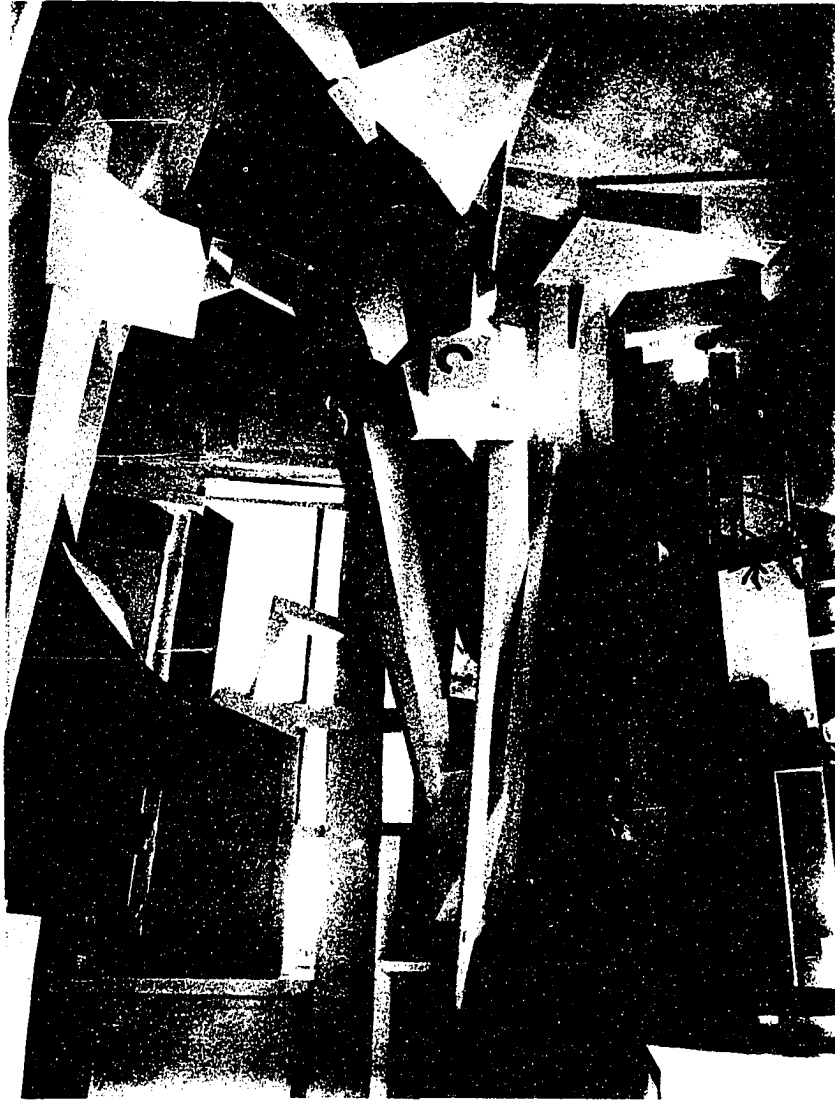


Fig. 3. Kurt Schwitters, Hannover Merzbau: View with blaues Fenster (Blue Window), photographed c. 1930

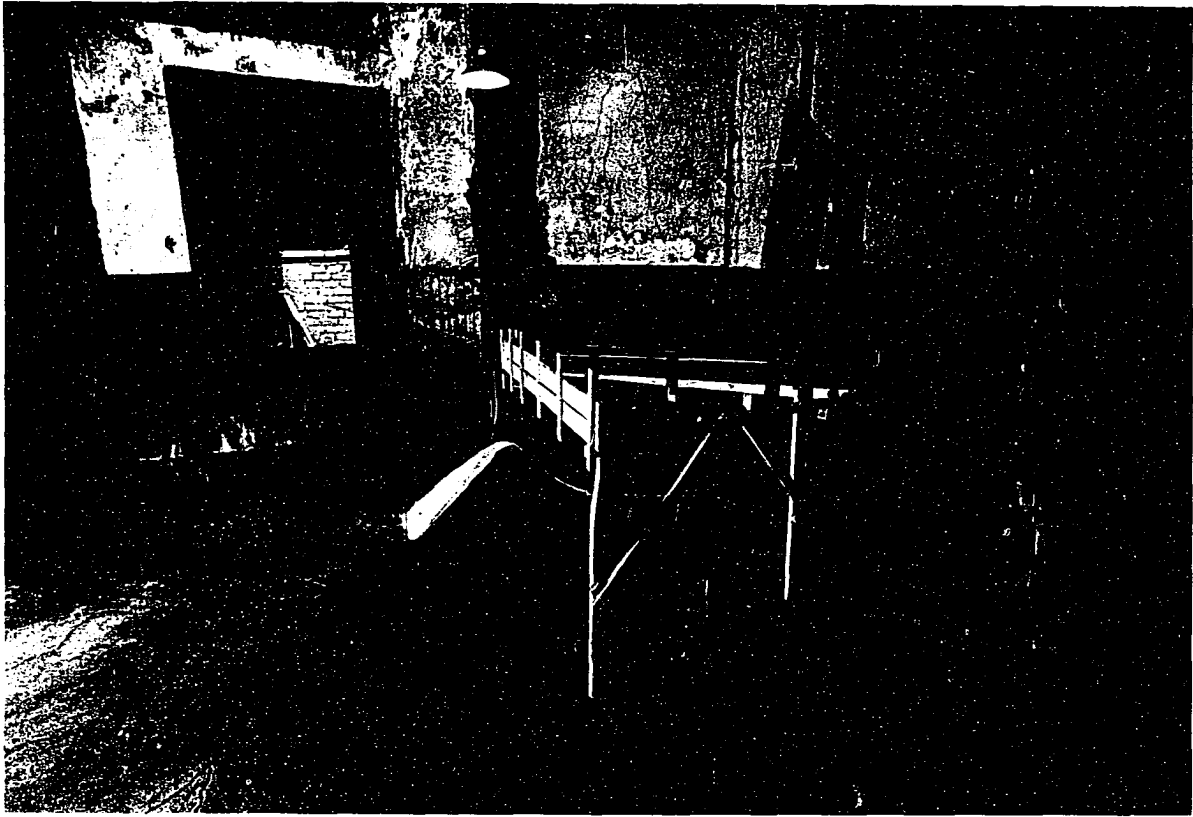


Fig. 4. George Trakas, The Piece that went through the Window, 112 Greene Street, New York, September 1970. Wood, wire, tempered glass, sawdust. 56 x 201 x 64 in. Photograph by Richard Landry.

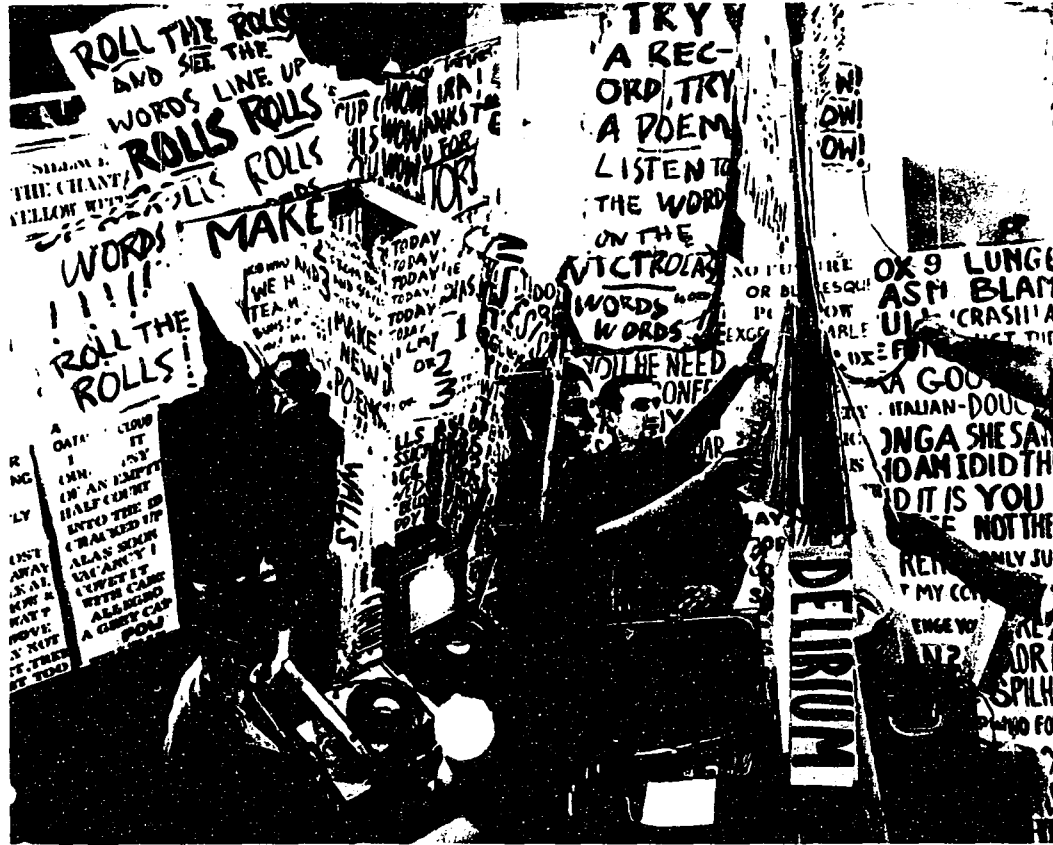


Fig. 5. Allan Kaprow, *Words*, Smolin Gallery, New York, September 1962. Rearrangeable Environment with lights and sounds. Photograph by Robert R. McElroy



Fig. 6. Claes Oldenburg in The Store, New York, December 1, 1961 through January 31, 1962.

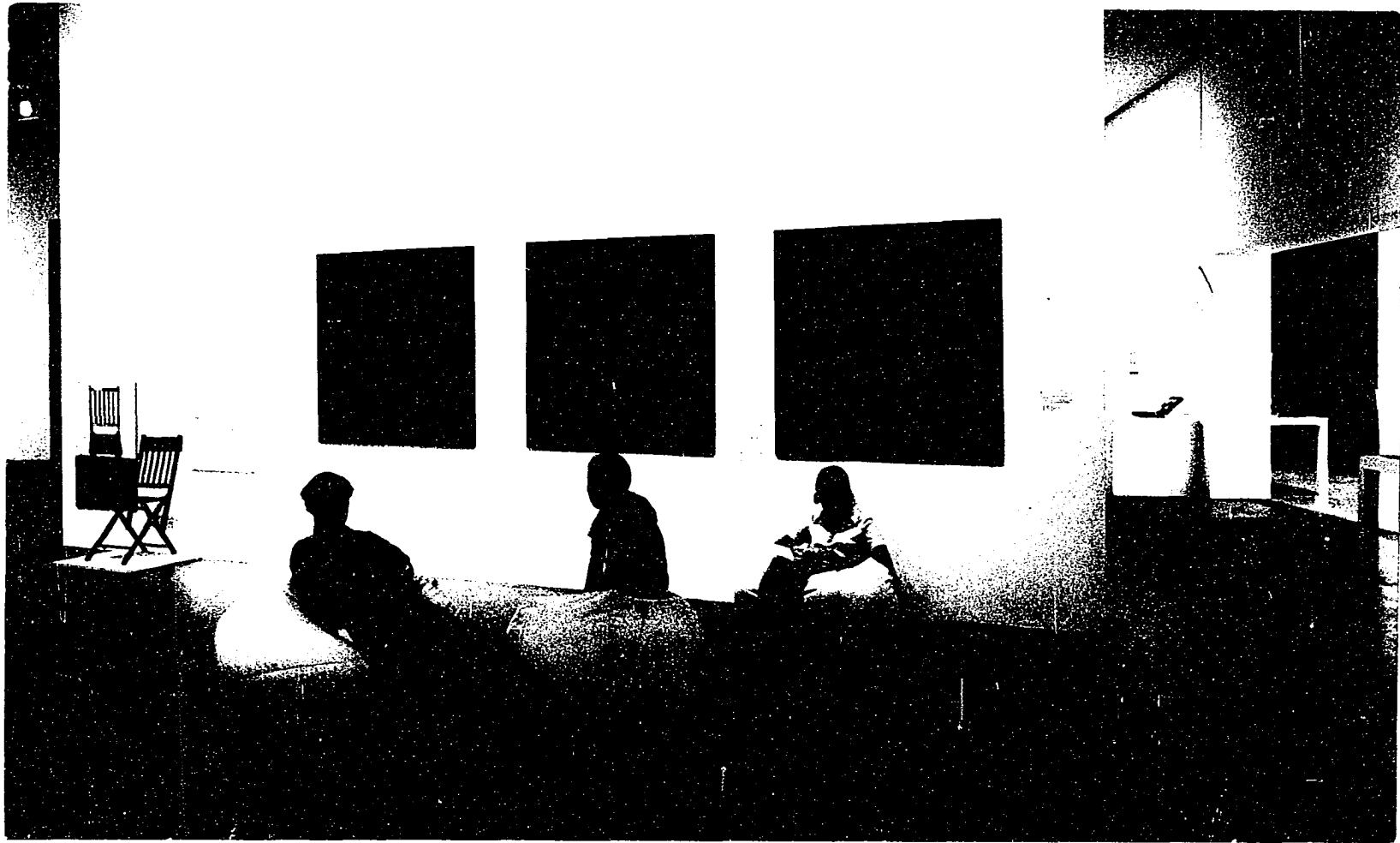


Fig. 7. Installation view of the exhibition Information. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. July 2, 1970 through September 10, 1970. ©1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

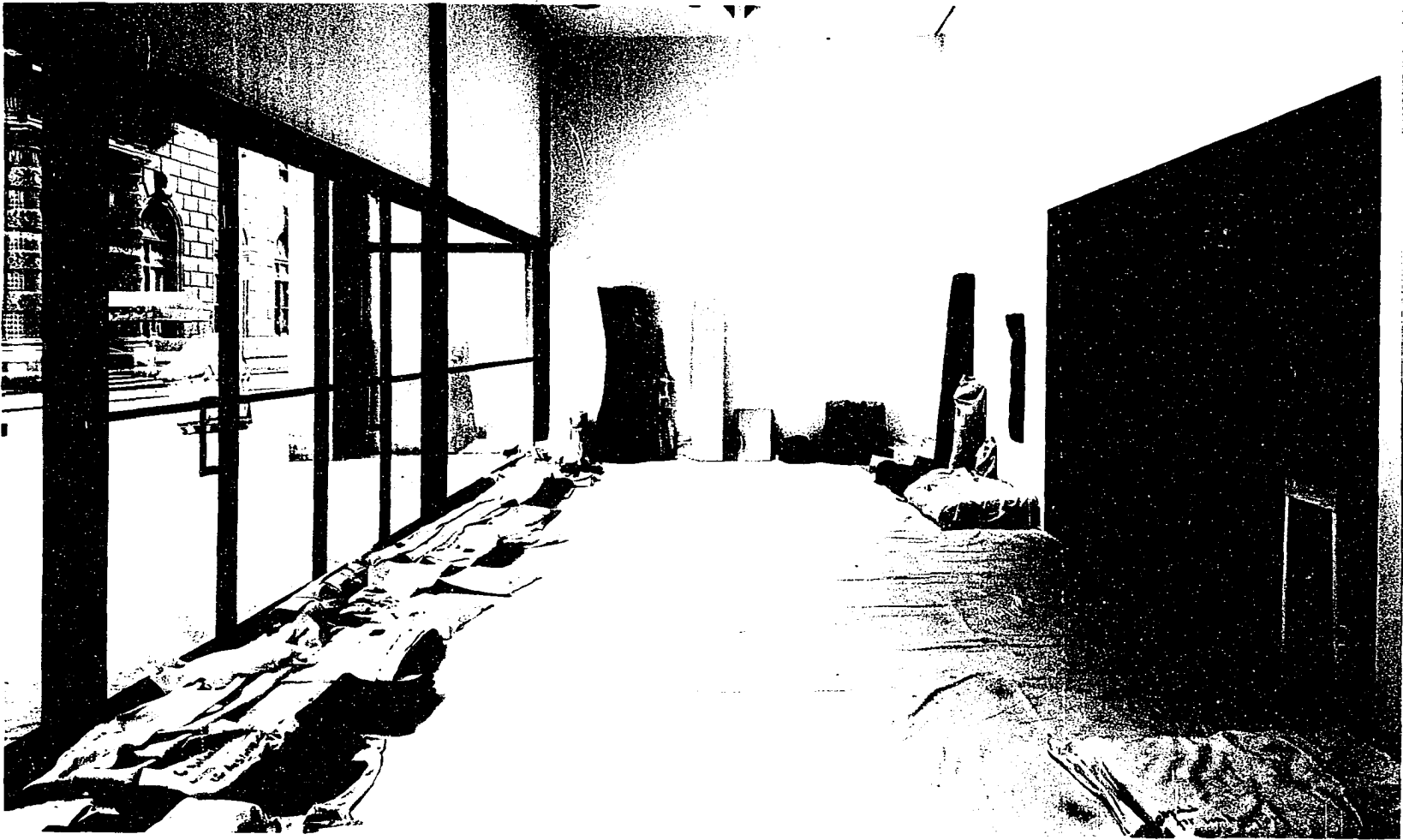


Fig. 8. Franz Erhard Walther, Instruments for Processes, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. December 30, 1969 through March 1, 1970. Canvas, muslin, felt, foam rubber, wood, composition board, leather. ©1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Fig. 9. Schedule for Franz Erhard Walther, Instruments for Processes, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. December 30, 1969 through March 1, 1970. ©1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

**Franz Erhard Walther
will be present
at the times indicated below
to use his pieces with the public**

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Noon to 2 p.m.

3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

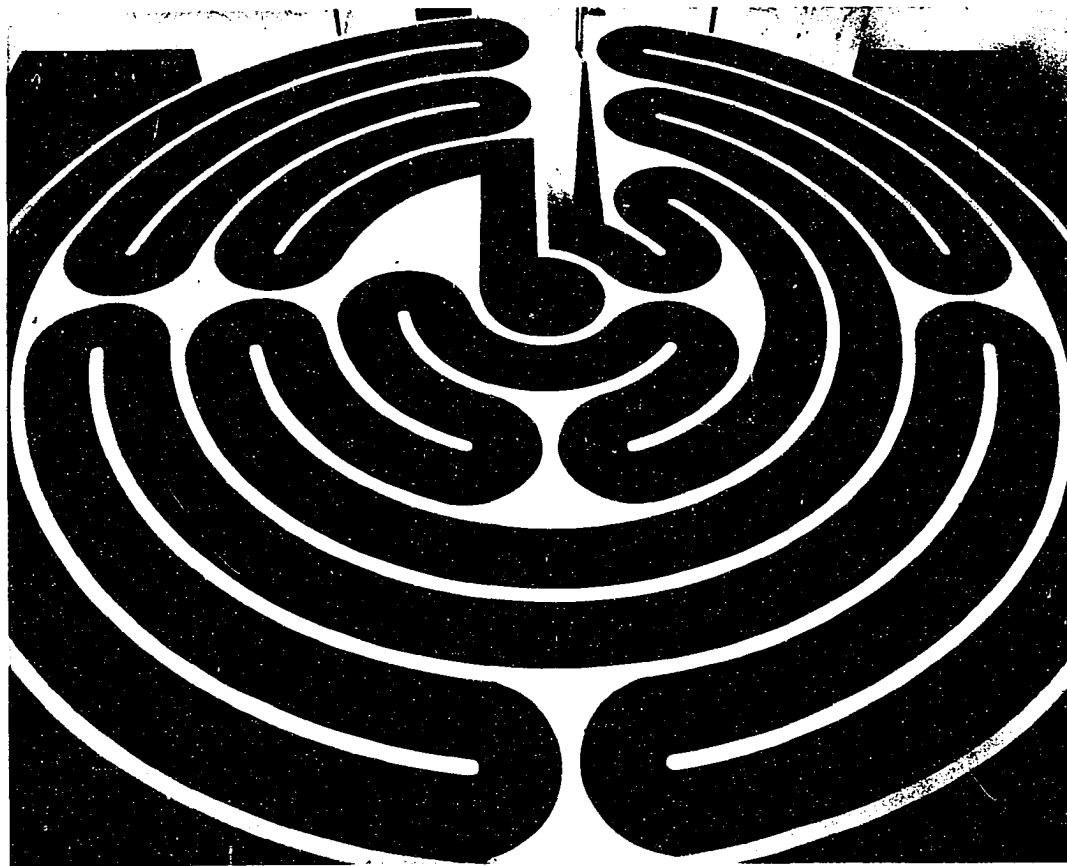


Fig. 10. Robert Morris, Labyrinth, 1974. Painted masonite, plywood, and two-by-fours. 96 in. high. 360 in. diameter. Installation view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Panza Collection



Fig. 11. Gordon Matta-Clark, Splitting, Englewood, New Jersey, 1974. Photograph by Gordon Matta-Clark

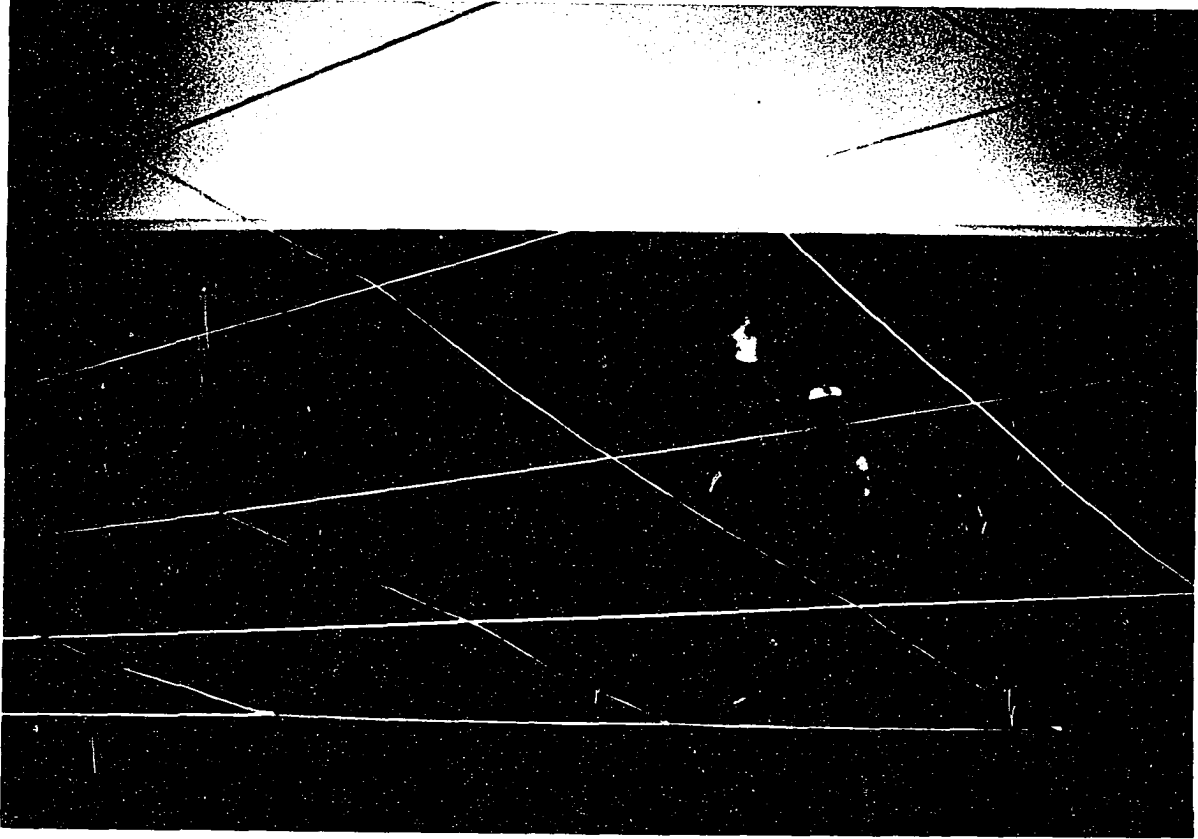


Fig. 12. Installation view of Patrick Ireland's One Drawing in Two Rooms, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, January 28 through February 23, 1975. Rope, liquitex.

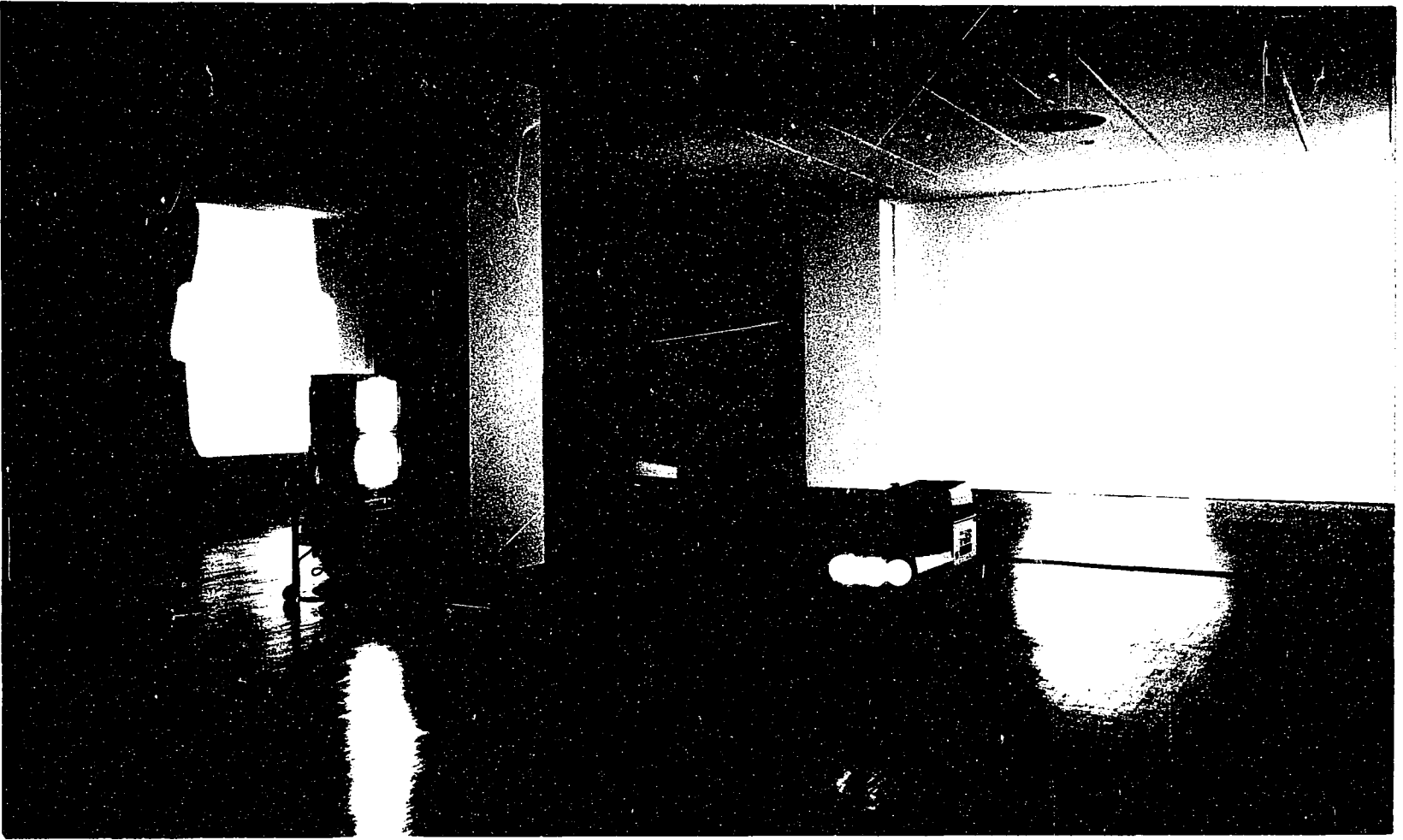


Fig. 13. Bruce Nauman, Anthro/Socio, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. October 16, 1991 through January 7, 1992. Video Installation. ©1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

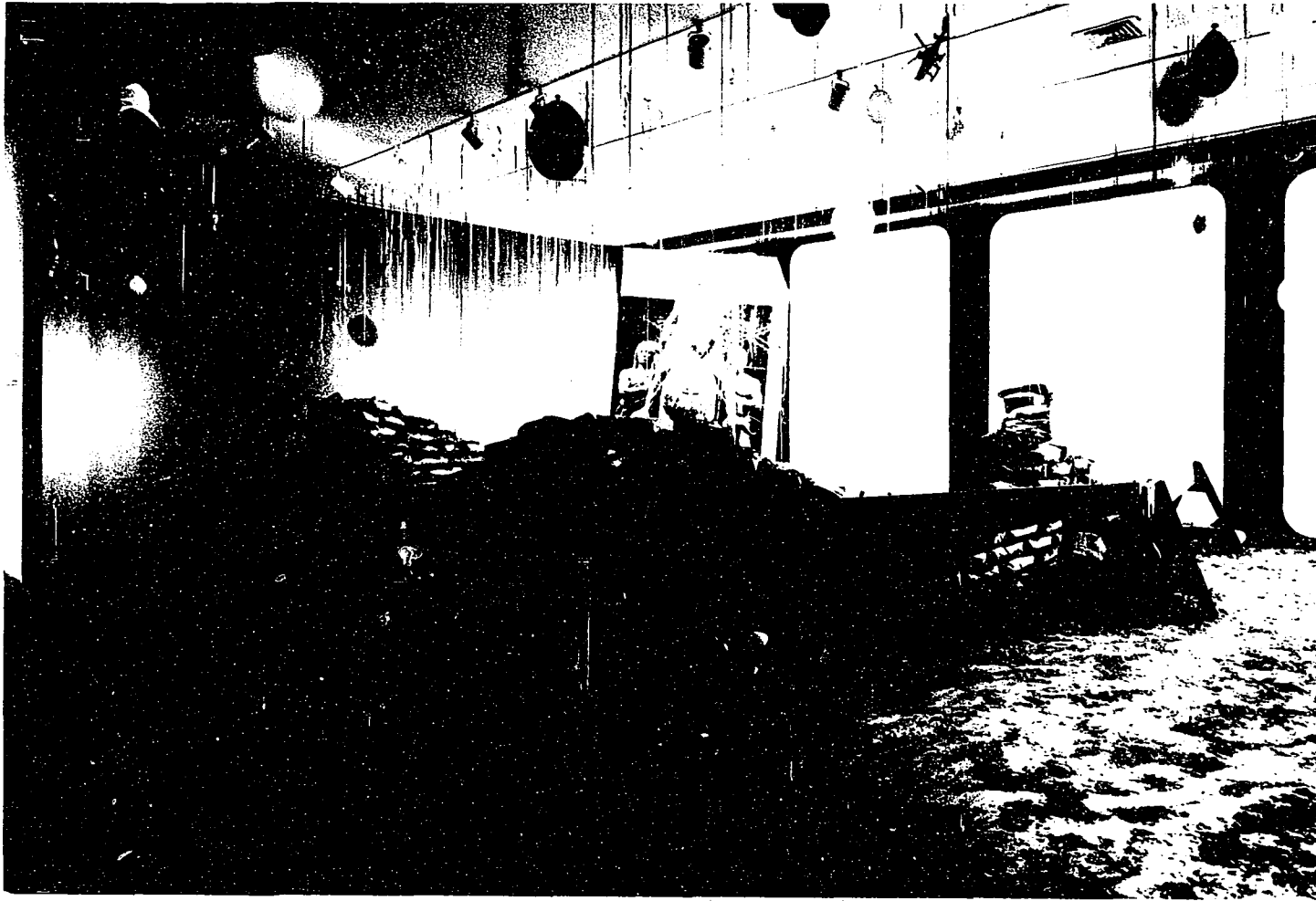
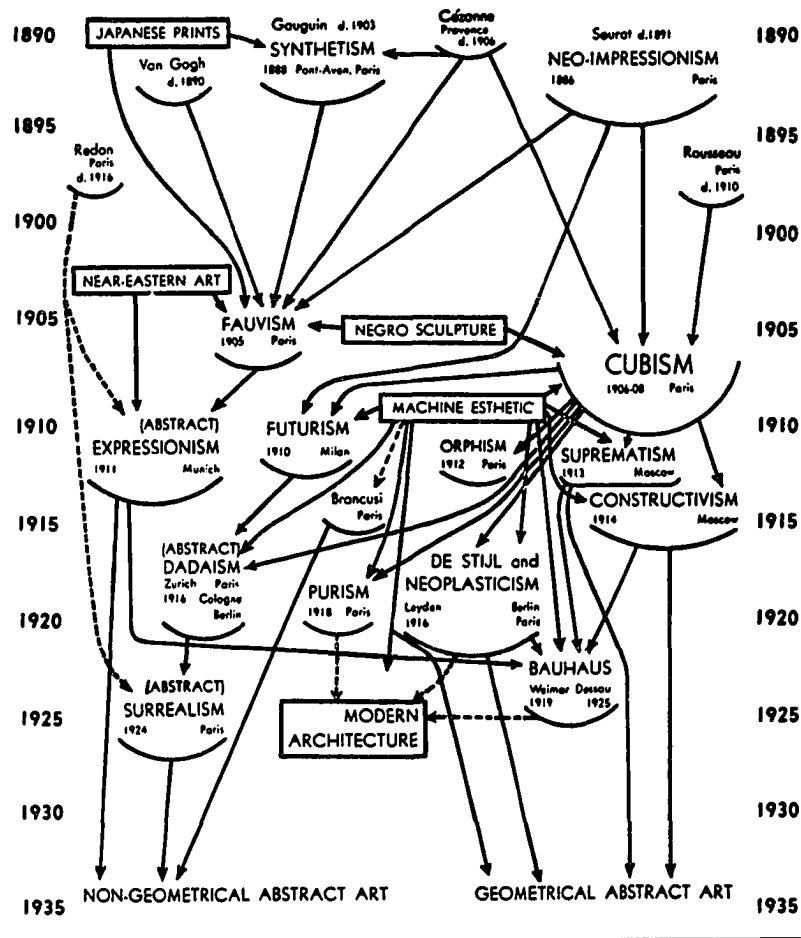


Fig. 14. David Hammons, Public Enemy, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. October 16, 1991 through January 7, 1992. Mixed-media Installation. ©1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York



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Fig. 15. Reproduction of cover illustration of Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Cubism and Abstract Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

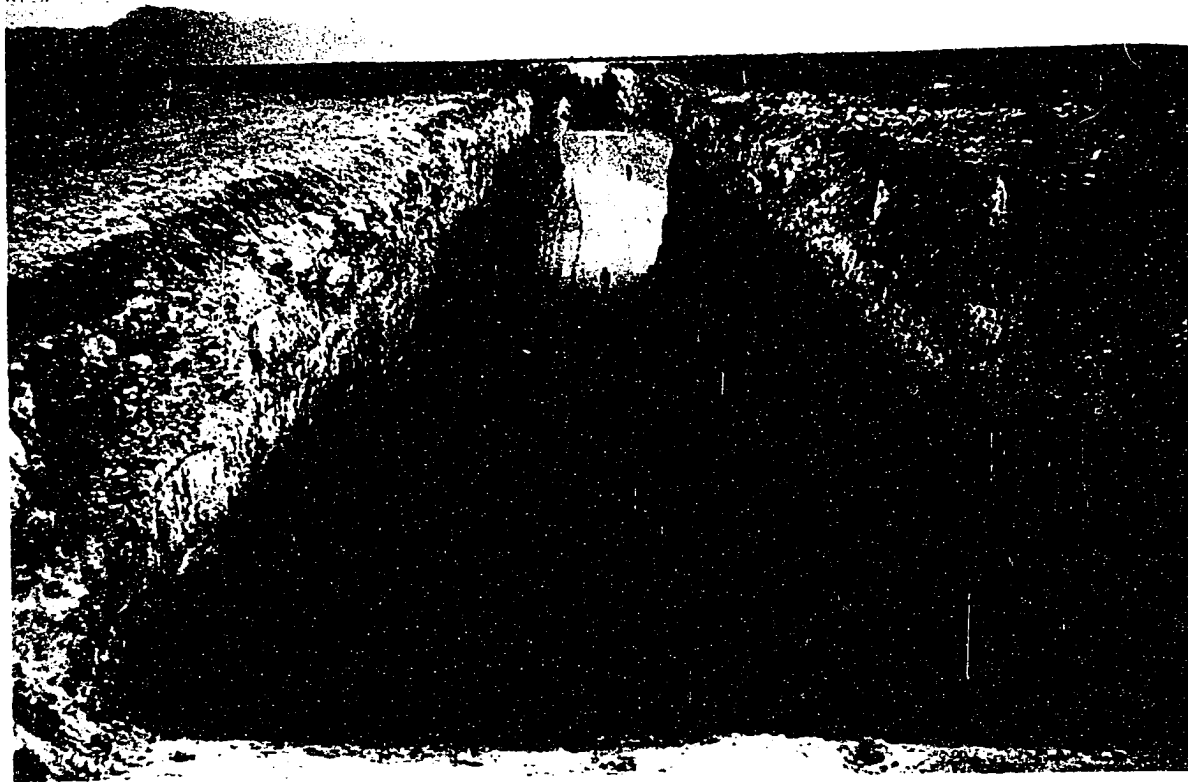


Fig. 16. Michael Heizer, Double Negative, Virginia River Mesa, Nevada, 1969-70. 240,000-ton displacement in rhyolite and sandstone, 1500 x 50 x 30 feet. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Gift of Virginia Dwan.

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