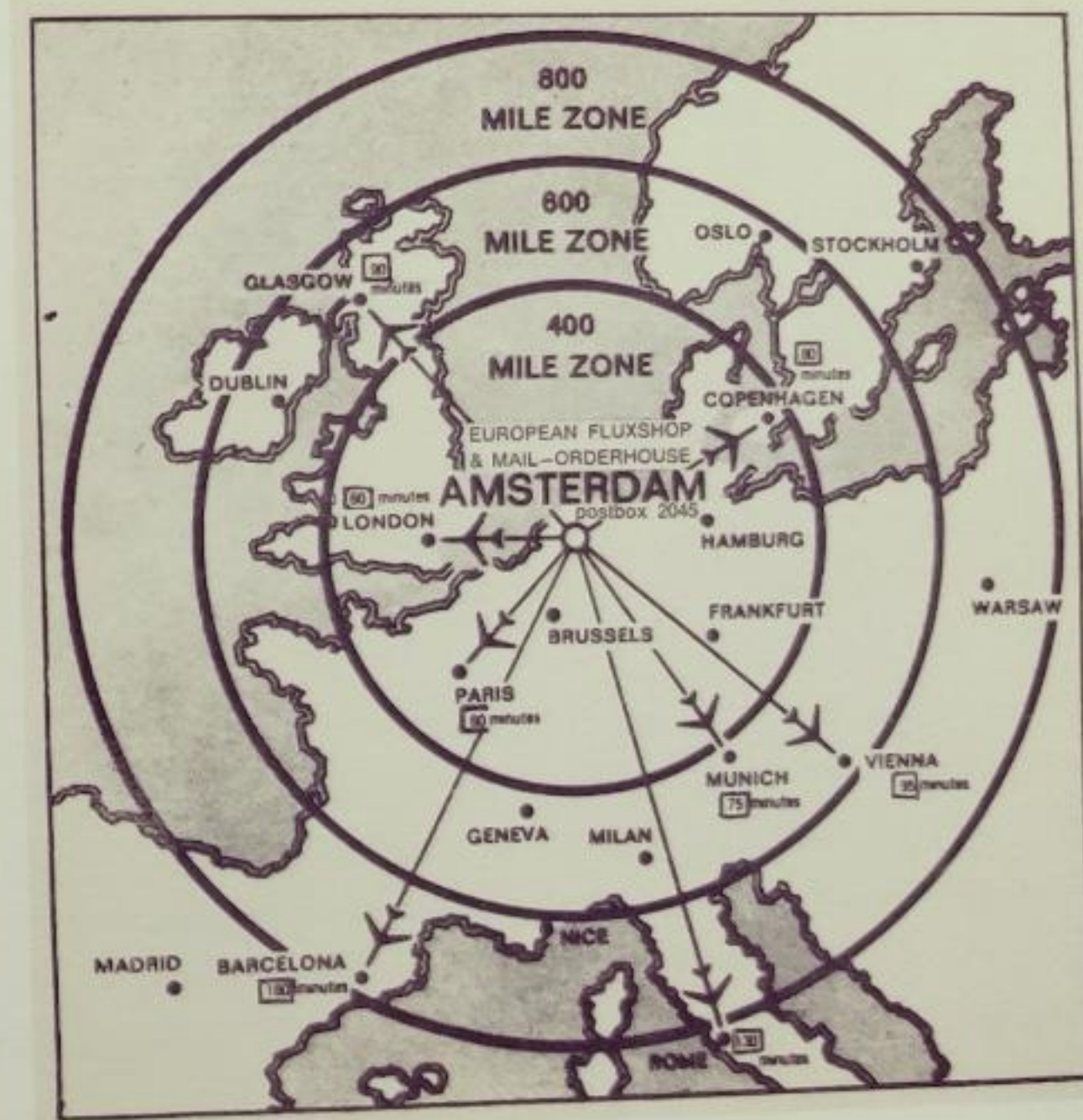


Historical avant-gardes always shared an interest in reaching across national borders, but in the 1950s and '60s many artists set up networks throughout Europe and the United States that were notable for their complexity. The art scene in Amsterdam—a city with a rich history of worldwide trade and immigration—showed signs of progressive internationalization early on. For instance, in the beginning of the 1960s Dutch artists Willem de Ridder and Wim T. Schippers promoted actions, a television broadcast, concerts, and festivals at home that expressed emerging artistic tendencies abroad. Amsterdam became one of the first European cities, along with Düsseldorf and Wiesbaden, to host, by 1963, Happenings and performances of experimental music, as well as Fluxus events. Moreover, numerous international artists' groups, among them CoBrA, the Situationist International, the German Zero group (together with its Dutch offshoot, the Nul group), and the Nouveaux Réalistes, found in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum fertile ground in which to develop new ideas about art and contemporary culture.

Willem de Ridder. Map for European Mail-Order Warehouse/Fluxshop. c. 1963. Photolithograph, 7 11/16 x 8 1/2" (19.5 x 21.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift



The Stedelijk Museum, founded in 1895, imposed itself on the international scene to become—under the successive directorships of Willem Sandberg, from 1946 to 1962, and Edy de Wilde, from 1963 to 1985—one of the defining institutions for the art of its time. The Stedelijk did not act in isolation, however. It was one among several remarkable collecting institutions located in the Netherlands, including The Hague Gemeentemuseum, Eindhoven's Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Rotterdam's Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, and Otterlo's Kröller-Müller Museum. These museums—all sharing more or less the same public—shaped their identities in relation to one another, focusing on distinct artists and movements. The Hague Gemeentemuseum and Eindhoven's Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, for example, led in the representation of Minimal art by organizing the first large-scale group show on the subject in Europe and by devoting solo exhibitions to

four of its central figures—Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Morris—between 1968 and 1970.¹

Many of the Stedelijk Museum's major exhibitions traveled to and from other museums, both in Europe and the United States. A particularly fruitful long-term international alliance was formed with Moderna Museet when Sandberg partnered with Pontus Hultén, who took over as director of the recently founded Stockholm museum in 1960. Their collaboration allowed the two institutions to diversify programming and share pioneering exhibitions.² *Bewogen Beweging* (Moved Movement) in 1961 and *Dylaby: dynamisch labyrint* (Dynamic Labyrinth) in 1962, for example, showcased a wide range of international artists, from Lucio Fontana and Yayoi Kusama to Robert Rauschenberg and Jean Tinguely.

Installation view of Jean Tinguely's environment in *DYLABY: DYNAMISCH LABYRINT* (DYNAMIC LABYRINTH), Stedelijk Museum, August 30–September 30, 1962



Sandberg and Hultén also actively promoted American art's latest developments with shows devoted to Abstract Expressionism and Pop art—a focus that Sandberg's successor, de Wilde, pursued by hosting touring mid-career surveys dedicated to such important figures as Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg, in 1968 and 1970, respectively. A particularly ambitious traveling exhibition of the time began in January 1970, when the Moderna Museet presented the first comprehensive show of Edward Kienholz's series of environmental assemblages collectively known as *Tableaux*. Over two years the exhibition traveled, in different versions and under various titles, to five cities across Europe—Düsseldorf, Paris, Zurich, Amsterdam, and London.³ The tour gave the artist, whose *Portable War Memorial* installation “dispens[ing] real live Coca Colas to the spectators” was on view, the idea that a piece made of “a six pack of bottles—one from each show—would be a nice souvenir of [his] European experiences,” as “those Coke bottles were manufactured locally with interesting things like ‘Buvez Coca Cola, Drick [sic] Coca Cola’ etc. imprinted on the glass or stamped on the caps.”⁴ Kienholz's pseudo-imperialist attitude would soon become familiar to other American artists, for whom travel was becoming increasingly important in their work.

EDWARD KIENZHOLZ: *TABLEAUX*.
Stedelijk Museum, 1970.
Design: Wim Crouwel.
Photolithographed exhibition
catalogue, 10 1/2 x 8 3/16"
(26.7 x 20.8 cm) (closed).
The Museum of Modern Art Library



Indeed, as American art appeared throughout Europe, it wasn't long before artists and galleries began to emulate the new strategies of partnership that developed among museums in the 1960s and early '70s. Galleries soon formed loose networks around groups of artists, allowing them to split airfares and shipping costs by scheduling strings of shows within short time frames. As Lawrence Weiner recalls, “It was a tour. It was like playing football—it went from stadium to stadium. And the interesting thing was that there was a whole system built into it.”⁵ Another Conceptual art pioneer, Robert Barry, made a piece solely based on this “system.” For *Invitation Piece*, 1972–73, he asked eight of his dealers to announce, in turn, an exhibition of his work in a successive gallery. The first card read: “Paul Maenz [Cologne] invites you to an exhibition by Robert Barry at Art & Project, Amsterdam, during the month of November 1972.” In November, Art & Project issued a second card announcing a show by Barry the next month in London, at Jack Wendler Gallery. The process continued until Gian Enzo Sperone brought it full circle by sending out an invitation to an exhibition opening in June 1973 at Paul Maenz Gallery.⁶

Two years later Sol LeWitt, who exhibited his work at many of the same galleries as Weiner and Barry, opened five European solo shows, visiting five countries and thirteen cities in just one month.⁷ LeWitt traced his itinerary on a map of Europe at the back of his 1975 pocket planner: his pen line starts in Sweden, crosses Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, before reaching Italy and the Mediterranean, where it makes a two-fold diamond-shaped form on its way back to Switzerland. The resulting geometrical outline brings to mind the shapes the artist would cut out in aerial photographs of Florence in May of the following year and, in September, in commercial maps of Amsterdam (see pp. 104–106). LeWitt placed these pieces among his “rips,” a series of works, probably initiated in January 1972, in which the artist's sole intervention was to rip, tear, or

cut different types of paper, from colored sheets and photographs to coffee filters and printed maps.⁸ The twenty or so maps of Amsterdam, in which the artist chose either to isolate an element, such as the Amstel river, or to mark the route between sites he frequented, such as the Stedelijk Museum and his friend Jan Dibbets's house, a favorite hangout of visiting artists, suggest the act of traveling as an act of creation itself. Using maps as the sites of his interventions, LeWitt displaced the relationship between spectator and space—a key aspect of Minimal art—from the white cube of the museum or gallery to the open world. Given that a city cannot be grasped entirely at once, the "Amsterdam rips" favor a conceptual approach over phenomenological experience and are thus emblematic of the new strategies of Conceptual art emerging internationally after Minimal art.

Art & Project, the Amsterdam gallery whose early history is chronicled elsewhere in this volume, acted as an antenna for Conceptual art. Founded in 1968 by Geert van Beijeren and Adriaan van Ravesteijn, Art & Project worked in close collaboration with European and American galleries, including Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, MTL in Brussels, Sperone in Turin, Jack Wendler in London, Yvon Lambert in Paris, and Claire Copley in Los Angeles. Operating with both an actual exhibition space and a mailed "bulletin" that functioned as an alternative or supplementary site for artists to work from, Art & Project devised its gallery activities in response to the new, often dematerialized art produced by a generation of young international artists.⁹ Van Beijeren and Van Ravesteijn recognized how significantly Conceptual art would change not only one's perception of an artwork but also its system of distribution, ownership, and promotion. In their first exhibition, for instance, they welcomed Charlotte Posenenske's proposal that the collectors—not the artist—would decide the ultimate shape of a sculpture: after ordering prefabricated elements of galvanized sheet metal based on Posenenske's designs, collectors were free to arrange and connect the elements according to their own needs (see pp. 110–11). Curator Kynaston McShine acknowledged Art & Project's innovations by including the gallery's bulletin in his milestone exhibition *Information* at The Museum of Modern Art in 1970. In his catalogue essay McShine argued that changes in lifestyle called for a redefinition of art: "The activity of these artists is to think of concepts that are broader and more cerebral than the expected 'product' of the studio. With the sense of mobility and change that pervades their time, they are interested in ways of rapidly exchanging ideas, rather than embalming the idea in an 'object.'"¹⁰

This sense of mobility manifested itself particularly in Amsterdam. In the 1960s and '70s artists came here from all over the world, attracted by innovative museums, an up-and-coming gallery scene, progressive socio-political policies, and by the city itself, whose history had been shaped by successive waves of both emigration and immigration. Curator Waling Boers has described how Amsterdam's alternative spaces, "where Body Art, Video Art and performances [were] presented," drew foreign artists, recalling in particular the In-Out Center—founded in 1972 by, among others, Latin Americans Michel Cardena, Raul Marroquin, and Ulises Carrión, and Icelanders Hreinn Fridfinnsson and Sigurdur and Kirstjan Gudmundsson—

which "develop[ed], in the two years of its existence, [in]to a meeting place."¹¹ Emerging Dutch artists, however, did not necessarily share this perception of a vibrant cultural atmosphere. Dibbets, for example, regarded the capital as a provincial city. As a young artist he declined the art subsidies granted locally for fear of becoming entangled in a self-promoting system.¹² He sought instead to extend his reach beyond the Netherlands, seizing the opportunity to leave Holland when he was offered a British Council scholarship to travel to London in 1967. His fellow countrymen Bas Jan Ader and Ger van Elk similarly took opportunities to live on and off in the United States during the 1960s and early '70s. Ader and Van Elk attended art schools in Los Angeles, quickly integrating themselves into the rising Conceptual art scene formed by such artists as John Baldessari, William Leavitt, Allen Ruppersberg, and William Wegman.¹³ As promising artists from the Netherlands moved abroad, they maintained connections to their home city, sometimes making work in response to it, as well as introducing emerging international artists, many of whom were American, to the Dutch capital. Van Elk, in particular, made important introductions between his Los Angeles colleagues and Art & Project. A few foreign artists not only showed in Amsterdam but took up residence there. In 1970 Lawrence Weiner moved onto a houseboat in Amsterdam and thereafter has split his time between New York and the Netherlands. Two years later Donald Evans, who became known for making his own postage stamps, emigrated from the United States and soon settled in Amsterdam.

Both the notion of travel and Amsterdam are frequent themes in the work of this generation. For a young artist at the time traveling was not necessarily motivated by educational purposes in the tradition of the Grand Tour but was rather a logical outcome of the art world's geographic expansion. Ruppersberg's first trip to Europe, for example, was on the occasion of his solo show at Art & Project in October 1971, when he was twenty-seven years old. That May, in Hollywood, he had opened *AI's Grand Hotel*, a building converted for one month into a hotel in which guests could rent one of his artist-designed theme rooms for the weekend. In Ruppersberg's work, hotels stand for the ultimate site of displacement, not only for the artist himself (for whom hotel rooms became a traveling studio), but also for the viewer, who is invited to experience art in a constantly shifting atmosphere.¹⁴ Ader made several works linking his adopted Los Angeles with the capital of his home country. *Fall 1* and *Fall 2*, both 1970, depict the artist falling from his rooftop in Los Angeles and cycling straight into a canal in Amsterdam, respectively (see p. 55). These short, silent black-and-white films play simultaneously on deadpan comedy—Buster Keaton's stunts come to mind—and ideas around dislocation, as comparable actions happen in different cities.¹⁵ In a subsequent piece Ader aimed to forge even more explicit connections between Los Angeles and Amsterdam. *In Search of the Miraculous* was intended to comprise three parts: a series of night photographs showing Ader with a flashlight in various locations throughout Los Angeles was exhibited at Claire Copley Gallery in 1975; a similar set of images was to be shot in Amsterdam, but the intervening part—the artist's single-handed crossing of the Atlantic on a tiny sailboat—was ill-fated, as

Ader was lost at sea (see pp. 56–60). Art critic Jan Tumlir has noted the absolute consequence of travel in Ader's work: "Bas Jan Ader's career—just like John Glenn's—is bounded by two momentous and heroic voyages. The first was accomplished in 1962 aboard a small passenger yacht, bringing a twenty-one year old Ader from Morocco to the shores of California. The second, attempted in 1975, solo this time, would ostensibly return an older and wiser artist back home to Europe."¹⁶

Gilbert & George. *POSING ON STAIRS*. Stedelijk Museum, November 22, 1969. Courtesy Ad Petersen



If most of Ader's fellow artists traveled the world extensively, their trips didn't always leave a direct imprint on the subject or form of their work. Gilbert & George, for example, gave "living sculpture" performances in such cities as London, Amsterdam, Düsseldorf, Oslo, New York, Melbourne, Tokyo, and Brussels between 1969 and 1977, quickly reaching a broad international audience.¹⁷ On each occasion, the artists, performing in British-tailored tweed suits, were seemingly unaffected by their surroundings, appearing as if straight out of their London home on Fournier Street. Hanne Darboven, who spent two years in New York before returning to her native Germany in 1968, also developed a body of work in which external factors, such as her place of residence or the exhibition context of her art, appear to have made no visible impression. More significant for Darboven were her travels not through space, but through time, with only a calendar as a roadmap. Stanley Brouwn's work shares with Darboven's scribbled notations a sense of inner travel that keeps the outside world at bay. The viewer is never told what happens in Darboven's years, months, or days,

nor given any indication—no address or reference to a known site—of where Brouwn's walks through cities took place exactly. Such anecdotal facts are suppressed, turning a concrete experience into an abstraction. In the series "This Way Brouwn," initiated in Amsterdam in 1960, for example, the artist asked anonymous passersby to draw on a sheet of paper directions to a particular unnamed location. In one piece Brouwn asked two people to describe an identical itinerary.¹⁸ The resulting two-sheet work presents different manners of depicting the same trip, one curvilinear and continuous, the other segmented and geometrical. Brouwn's signature works are transcriptions of measurements taken or steps counted during particular walks. In the latter, the itinerary is often symbolized by a straight line divided into segments, each representing a footstep. In *The Total Number of My Steps*, 1972, the artist planned consecutive trips in twenty-one cities, among them Oslo, Addis Ababa, Tokyo, and Dublin, which would be solely defined by the number of footsteps taken in each location.¹⁹ Despite the far-flung range of the cities, the work, omitting any details or description, is devoid of exoticism. Brouwn's insistence, dating from that moment, that no images of his work or biographical information be published only reinforces an idea already present in his work.

In 1972 Ruppertsberg self-published *Greetings from L.A.: A Novel*, an artist's book whose title inspired that of this essay.²⁰ The 240-page book is blank with the exception of ten interspersed fragments of text from which only the novel's basic elements—character, time, setting, action, and so on—can be deduced. The completion of the plot is left to the reader, and the specifics of the story are clearly inconsequential for Ruppertsberg: the idea of the novel is more important than the novel itself. The same could be said of traveling in the work of all the artists in this exhibition: no matter the destination, travel is understood first of all as motion, as going from one place to another. Lawrence Weiner engages this idea in 1969 by using *Art & Project Bulletin 10* as a true exhibition by mail, calling for "a translation from one language to another."²¹ Dibbets's *Robin Redbreast's Territory/ Sculpture*, a "drawing in space" from 1969 in which the artist moved a robin from one area to another in Amsterdam's Vondelpark, is another especially crisp expression of this notion (see pp. 76–77). Both works show a tendency in the generation of artists active in the 1960s and early '70s to focus on the idea of travel both physically and conceptually and to recognize that art exists in the simple act of coming and going. Such a state brings to mind philosopher Michel de Certeau's description of stories, which applies just as well to these artists: "Every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories."²²

NOTES

1. The Hague held the group show *Minimal Art* in 1968, followed by exhibitions of Carl Andre in 1969 and Sol LeWitt in 1970, while Eindhoven organized shows of Robert Morris in 1968 and Donald Judd in 1970.
2. One institution would often take the lead on a project, while the other would act mainly as its host.
3. The show originated at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and traveled to the Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Paris, in 1970; then to the Kunsthau Zurich, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in 1971.
4. Letter from Edward Kienholz to Bill Holmes, October 19, 1971, two pages, Stedelijk Museum Library, Amsterdam.
5. Interview with the author, in the present volume, 124.
6. The interim galleries were Leo Castelli, New York; Yvon Lambert, Paris; MTL, Brussels; and Toselli, Milan. The invitation card was the only work exhibited.

7. Beginning on September 18, 1975, LeWitt attended his openings at Saman Gallery, Genoa; Aronowitsch Gallery, Stockholm; Annemarie Verna, Zurich; Kunsthalle Basel; and Rolf Preisig Gallery, Basel. A sixth exhibition, organized through Sperone Gallery, Turin, opened on November 5 (through November 30) at Peccolo Gallery, Livorno, after the artist's return. His pocket planner for the year 1975 mentions visits to Stockholm, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Cologne, Basel (twice), Zurich (twice), Milan (twice), Bern, Varese, Genoa, and Geneva. The LeWitt Estate, Chester, CT.
8. The artist made works at the time by crumpling or folding paper as well.
9. Their quick adaptation coincided with that of Seth Siegel, who in New York between 1968 and 1971 sought to redefine the daily operations of a gallery by working primarily through catalogues and without a physical space. See Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003).
10. Kynaston L. McShine, "Essay," in *Information*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 139.
11. Waling Boers, "Foreigners in Amsterdam," in *Amsterdam 60/80: Twintig jaar beeldende kunst / Twenty Years of Fine Arts*, ed. Frank Gribling (Amsterdam: Fodor Museum, 1982), 102.
12. In conversation with the author, November 2, 2008.
13. On the Amsterdam–Los Angeles connection, see Phillip Van den Bossche's essay, in the present volume.
14. In 1970 Ruppertsberg self-published *24 Pieces*, an artist's book containing twenty-four images presented in twelve facing pairs: on the left images of individual hotel rooms and on the right exterior views of restaurants or domestic interiors. Each picture includes an obvious alteration—a bed turned head to foot for example.
15. *Fall* ([Los Angeles: the artist, 1970]), a book containing film stills of *Fall 1* and *Fall 2*, was published the same year.
16. Jan Tumlrir, "Bas Jan Ader: Artist and Time Traveler," in *Bas Jan Ader*, ed. Brad Spence (Irvine, CA: Art Gallery, University of California, 1999), 23.
17. The performance in Amsterdam, at the Stedelijk Museum in November 1969, was Gilbert & George's first outside England. In 1970 Art & Project hosted the artists' first solo show abroad, and in 1971 the Stedelijk organized their first monographic museum exhibition.
18. *This Way Brown*, 1962. See Checklist of Art & Project/Depot VBVR Gift, 134.
19. *The Total Number of My Steps*, 1972. See Checklist of Art & Project/Depot VBVR Gift, 134.
20. For a more detailed description of this book, see Helene Winer, "Introduction," in *Allen Ruppertsberg*, exh. cat. (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Gallery, Montgomery Art Center, 1972), 2.
21. Adriaan van Ravesteijn considers bulletin 10 Art & Project's first exhibition by mail. See interview with the author, in *25th Biennial of Graphic Arts* (Ljubljana, Slovenia: International Centre of Graphic Arts, 2003), 69.
22. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 115.