

A Primer

**of Happenings &
Time / Space Art**

**A Primer
of Happenings
Time / Space**

Al Hansen

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1965

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to Claes Oldenburg—

a giant in an art world

full of midgets

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A Primer

***of Happenings &
Time / Space Art***

LAURA CHANDELLE: *You cannot invent what you
haven't learned.*

AL HANSEN: *It has to go in before it can come out.*

GEORGE BRECHT: *What in, what out?*

Hansen on Happenings

I THINK of happenings as an art of our time. In happenings I am involved with communication and education. Schooling is so old fashioned that individuals get crammed into a compartmentalized egg crate approach to life. The goals of this education aspire to high ideals, but results are poor. The happening is about man's displacement from order. Men and women realize that there are pressures of life that seem to keep them from enjoying life. Somehow the Protestant ethic (which is fortunately crumbling) makes us feel that, if we endure, things will be better by and by, when, with a little planning and the ability to choose and set goals, things could be better right away. Wars such as that in Viet Nam will not be won with guns and napalm bombs. That is all over. If we win, it will be with food and medical supplies and education.



Midst bursting pillows Donna Brewer and Bob Watts revel in the finale of his happening-event at the Café au Go Go, November 9th, 1964. *Photo: Peter Moore.*

Down through time artists have always been involved in the theater. We know Leonardo da Vinci made incredible machines for balls and fetes and parties as well as remarkably inventive war devices, such as chariots with blades sticking out from each axle which could maim more people in a crowd than simple chariots. The artist is constantly approached by the social group he is in to be an artist for them. No matter what the pressure or triggers, the person talented in expressing himself in a creative art form is sought out by the people around him.

Things come to light in history that make one think of happenings and experimental theater. In the Orient plays containing a person really being killed are

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common. Many early forms of religion also have this aspect incorporated into them. Caligula enjoyed theater pieces and had a predilection for having what took place in the play he was seeing be real. He carried realism to the point of seizing individuals from the street for particular roles in the play. Sometimes the role would involve being stabbed and showing surprise at being stabbed, in the character of the play.

Elegant streamers of toilet paper assemble a graceful environment.
Photo: Peter Moore.



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How well the actor performed would depend on whether his wife and children would be allowed to live. They were the producer's security.

Caligula also had a large bronze bull with a reed mechanism in its throat. The penalty for breaking a taboo was that one became an experimental vocalist. The victim was placed inside the bronze bull under which a roaring fire had been lit. Long before the bull became red hot the person locked inside screamed himself to death. The force of his mad yelling caused delightful sounds and tunes to issue from the intricate and highly inventive mechanism.

At the court of Louis XIV a creative abbot was in charge of developing useful novelties for the monarch. He built an organ of a high tiered wall of boxes containing pigs chosen (probably by size) for the quality of their squeal. Upon striking a key on the console board a pin or nail would hit the pig in the behind, rendering the desired squeal. (I have no information as to how timbre or duration of squeal was handled.) Louis was so delighted with this new toy at the premiere performance that he had the abbot made a bishop and presented him with an estate in the country.

In the history of the circus there are traditional groups of players who travel the countryside presenting odd little dramas in exchange for lodging and food. Gypsies do this with fortune telling and trained dancing bears. In the film *La Strada* we see Zampano,

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the strong man, and his girl friend, the drummer and musician, who put on an act throughout Italy, traveling in a house on a motorcycle.

The whole quality of happenings keeps reappearing. Rodeo clowns are descended from the Spanish tumblers who operate in the bull ring during bull fights. Perhaps these Spanish bullfight clowns are descended from the Cretan lads who tumbled to and fro on the backs of bulls in the festivals of ancient Knossos. If there's anything that is missing from happenings themselves, it may be a lack of pageantry.

◊ In the twentieth century happening chords are struck by different forms of experimental theater, most notably the Futurist, the Dadaist and the Bauhaus. They were involved with performance art work, with art work for theater. Previously some artists were involved to the point of doing sets and props, or an overall image involving the ads and posters. This would be a comparatively minimal involvement. Toulouse-Lautrec, for example, did many a theater poster. The Dadaists were committed to operate in every area of art possible. It was not unusual for one man to do experimental poems, random or automatic writing, plus paintings, drawings, etchings and lithographs, combining things in the manner of photomontage. The Bauhaus was also the seat of a wonderful commitment to investigate and push through boundaries. The Futurists and Surrealists, although their political and sociological set-ups were quite dif-

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ferent, were still very inventive people, involved in creating art work that would back up their politics. Marinetti is recorded as having described the black cloud of bombs dropped on Ethiopia as very beautiful, as a kind of action art.

There seems to be a richer involvement of artists in theater in the twentieth century than at any other time in history. One reason, in our own time, might be the complete absence of anything interesting in more conventional forms of theater. Broadway is operating in terms of real estate and property and is entirely lacking in nerve. Thus, artists put on happenings in their lofts that quite often provide the money for rent and food.

The idea that seems to come from Futurism, Dadaism, even Surrealism, is that of the art work enclosing the observer, of art work that overlaps and interpenetrates different art forms. This focuses on the happening in the way that these performances engulf the spectator; the environment is a work of art that the observer goes into and walks around in and in some cases actually participates in.

The actual voyage of exploration of happenings is well under way. Each year they capture the imagination of several more artists, young and old; they have their own audience of both sympathetic and highly critical observers. As with other artists and performers, happening people are more involved with their

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next piece than with controversy and arguing with squares.

Whether or not these things were done before by the Dadaists, Surrealists or whatever is not as interesting as the overall picture. Within the happening world the differences in approach and pacing, timbre, choice of sound tracks, etc. cover a much wider range of meaning and production than is suspected by the establishment. The happening is an art form in a state of germination.

Happenings have a reputation for being a crazy theater, an ultra-experimental situation. Actually, the happening is a rather unique art form which, simply because it holds a great deal of energy and promise, has been misunderstood and misinterpreted in wonderful ways, perhaps giving us a much broader range of very powerful, exciting, experimentally rich theater than would have been available had there not been this confusion as to what a happening was.

Contrary to the public's conception, the majority of happenings are quite formal, are very carefully rehearsed, and do not invite any audience participation at all. Audiences pay healthy amounts of money for admission. These happenings advertise, send out mailings, and have a theater-bill-what's-going-to-happen-in-what-order sheet. This pattern is heavily Victorian, highly causal and related to what we might call more normal, old-fashioned theater.

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There seems to have been a need on the part of two- and three-dimensional artists to work in four and five dimensions. Out of all the painters, sculptors, filmmakers and dancers who have undertaken happenings or dance happenings or happening theater or theater happenings or collage events or situations and all the various things that they have been called, every one of them has been an artist in one or two other areas of creative activity. The majority of American artists were painters or sculptors working in collage and collage constructions—what later came to be called assemblage.

The happening, no matter how much it is rehearsed, is still curious and unique from more formal theater in that one puts its parts together in the manner of making a collage. The things in a collage—a piece of linoleum, a fruit can wrapper, a cigar butt, a comb wedged into a thick slab of white paint—might be worked in initially to fit with the things around them, but in the finished piece any or several of these items might be covered over with black paint and have something imbedded in them; the same process seems to apply to the happening. No matter how the happening person prepares and rehearses and goes about his work in a formal business-like way, certain things become evident to him and, just as on a Broadway opening night, two minutes before the curtain parts people are told to do something a little more or to drop a whole section out. Unlike Broad-

Hansen on Happenings (9)

way, the product doesn't suffer by accidents or the disappearance of one performer. It might be upsetting to the person producing the happening if particular performers didn't show up, but it's the nature of the happening—the fact that it's a theater collage of things occurring in time and space over a given period of time—that the missing performers would be missing only to the one who wanted them there. The audience would see the thing as it was.

The actress, Lillian Levy, sits mutely in a polyethylene column. Polyethylene is a basic material in constructing environments for happenings because it is cheap, light, disposable and soluble in spray paints. Photos: Peter Moore.



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As Dick Higgins raises Zap-milkbox, Lillian Levy cues him to change action material on her way to saw the piano in half. On the right, Henry Martin unrolls toilet paper, and, far right, Bibbe Hansen chants a rock and roll song. *Photo: Peter Moore.*



Judy Nathanson carries Wolf Vostell's suitcase past a Dada political agitator (Hansen) as Deborah Lee begins revealing a mile of Mylar plastic. *Photo: Peter Moore.*

All the photos on this page are from an untitled Al Hansen happening presented at the Café au Go Go, November 2nd, 1964. *Photo: Peter Moore.*



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For example, *Hall Street Happening*, which took place several years ago in the backyard of the First Third Rail Gallery of Current Art at 104 Hall Street in Brooklyn. The setting was a backyard, long and narrow, about fourteen by forty feet. Vestiges of gardens past peeked from various weedy bushes and a huge oak or elm grew in one corner. The audience was just in front of the back shed or porch and faced the yard. Seats were shelving boards supported by milk boxes. One performance area was the back porch roof itself and even the rear windows of the Third Rail house had performers in them. Huge trees growing up out of adjoining yards . . . a summer night sky . . . neighborhood people in windows wondering what was up . . . kids on nearby tool shed and garage roofs waiting for something to happen—a classic Brooklyn landscape. This very old neighborhood was soon to become the Fontainebleau Wood of happenings.

A large man had been constructed of framing wood and corrugated cardboard. His neck and chest began at the left hand fence and he divided the yard so that his waist came to the other fence. This giant was about four feet high at the waist and no more than five or six feet at the chest. His big left arm, constructed of cardboard boxes, lay towards the audience, the huge hand palm down.

Behind the man was a platform on which there was a bed, tilted so that it had a multiple-point-of-view effect as in the cubist work of Picasso and

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Florence Tarlow is the mother of us all. She works in the New York City Public Library and, when one knows she has been there for several years, one marvels that the two lions are still sitting out front looking so placid. She has premiered in countless Hansen, Higgins, Mac Low, Brecht and Carmines performance pieces. Here she is "Owl" in *Winnie the Pooh*.
Photo: Peter Moore.

Braque. Two girls made love on this bed (or one could infer from what they were doing that they were making love).

Most of the performer-participants were from Pratt Institute a few blocks away. In the audience were more students, professors and instructors, some mildly confused but open neighborhood people (Tony the Bomb was one) and a good avant-garde crowd consisting of many artists from the city, some of whom also performed. At several points during the proceedings it was hard to tell who were performers and who was audience because they tended to overlap and

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of "Current Art"
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4. HELLO WELLO GUMBO

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Al Hansen's *Hall Street Happening* has become such a legend by that name that it is usually forgotten that it ever had another, as the poster, shown here, indicates.

Hansen on Happenings (13)

interpenetrate in a very noble way.

Inside the stomach of the cardboard giant Larry Poons sat reading the Motherwell Dada book, just reading at random whatever he chose. Before him was a large bowling ball on an iron stake with lit candles on top of it. First one could hear only his voice in the darkness. A dancer slowly descended a rope tied high in the big, looming tree. My eleven year old daughter, Bibbe, moved about in the garden with a lit candle on a plate. Performers began to peel away pieces of the cardboard and, as the hole became bigger, one could see that there were lights inside the man, and as the hole got still bigger, that there might be a person inside the man. More dancers came down



The artist Alison Knowles involves herself with a favorite element, water, after Albert Fine had placed thirty dowel sticks in the bucket. From *The Gunboat Panay*, at the Third Rail Gallery, February 15th, 1965. Photo: Peter Moore.



Phoebe Neville in Al Hansen's *Piano for Lil Picard*, at the Third Rail Gallery, April 25th, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.

from shed roofs and the tree. The two girls were embracing each other on the raised bed. Some students were digging a hole with shovels within the crook of the huge arm. Now one could see that there was definitely someone in the stomach reading a book. Music came from above. Soon the hole was big enough so that one could see that it was *Poons* reading the book. At the same time a girl, Cynthia Mailman, was dancing on the back roof of the house, dressed in a leafy leotard, while Chinatown Powers played a very popular tune, *The Stripper*, on a record player.

People read poetry from the bushes in the garden. There were large sheets of plastic on which words were spray-painted. Many in the audience were seated on milk boxes which had been painted in different colors, with words such as "Zap" and "Zowie!"



Bill Meyer operates sound and lights from a self-making console, while Steve Balkin and Phoebe Neville assume their stations, in Hansen's *Oogadooga*, at the Third Rail Gallery, April 25th, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.

lettered on each side in contrasting colors. The two girls making love on the couch proved quite shocking to the audience, and turned them on in a way. One of the girls later got a dish and a fork and spoon and filled the dish with dirt and grass, which I noticed her feeding to members of the audience.

We had planned to have a large sheet that would be passed out over the heads of the audience so that they would be completely covered. While the audience was covered the setting would be changed: the big cardboard man would be destroyed and several pedestals would be erected at the top of which people would do things—perhaps launch balloons with poetry in them. Then each person in the audience would be handed a razor blade with which to cut a hole in the sheet to poke his head through. But we

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never got around to unrolling the sheet because, as Larry Poons appeared in the stomach of the man, chanting "Roar" from the Motherwell Dada book, the belly dancer on the back roof let out a scream and crashed through the skylight, falling 12 or 13 feet to the floor below her. She was lying there bleeding and screaming, and everyone in the audience thought it was part of the happening, as indeed it was, though not planned so. A few people fought for a telephone to call police and an ambulance. I ran out into the warm midnight-Brooklyn slum street and looked up and down each way—my first impulse was to hitchhike to Mexico and forget the whole thing. Then an ambulance and the police arrived. Simultaneously,

Parisol 4 Marisol by Al Hansen, at the Gramercy Arts Theater, August 8th, 1963. Photo: Peter Moore.





Camille Gordon hands Meredith Monk an article of clothing at Hansen's *Baby Jane Goes West*. During this entire performance, the musical score was provided by the audience, to whom Yvette Nachmias had issued generous supplies of chewing gum. Photo: Terry Schutte.

several people were trying to apply tourniquets to Cynthia. It proved to be a very wicked, superficial cut. At one point I tried to get the entire audience to leave by stepping over Cynthia, but they remained where they were. In the meantime, the performers themselves weren't too sure whether anything had really happened or not, so they continued to perform. Poons read more from the Dada book. Dick Higgins proceeded to recite poems from his head. People climbed up into trees who had climbed down out of them. At one point a policeman questioning a member of the audience was circled several times by my daughter carrying the candle on the plate and chanting a rock and roll song. It was a fine bit of mayhem and quite abstract.

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From the beginning, the plan for the happening was unhinged. The performers were given things to start them in the piece, but were allowed to go in whatever direction they felt like. They'd been given no limitations. They were not told not to go into other



Malcolm Goldstein fiddles while Philip Corner rests after an incredible trombone ride, in Al Hansen's *Parisol 4 Marisol*, at the Gramercy Arts Theater, August 8th, 1963. Photo: Peter Moore.

yards. They were not told just to do just what they were told and nothing else. Just because I enjoy it so much, I had asked Larry Poons specifically to recite Tristan Tzara's "Roar," which he was doing as the

police arrived, and which the audience took up, so there was a good deal of chanting. It was very mysterious. (Later one of the audience said that it reminded him of Fontainebleau Wood because it was art outdoors amidst nature like the old days.)

Cynthia Mailman was taken to a nearby accident hospital which seems to cater mostly to the large slum area and the superhighway nearby—their traffic is mostly in stabbings and automobile accidents. In the meantime, the happening tended to go on by way of talking and enjoying the atmosphere in the backyard. The repercussions from Pratt Institute were nil and it seemed to be a very well enjoyed happening by all, including Cynthia Mailman, although those of us who were aware of what had happened to her and what it all amounted to were horrified.

Many of the neighborhood people lazily looking out of their back windows that evening had been astounded to see the dreary Brooklyn landscape invaded by so many attractive girls in leotards prancing and posturing about the yard and trees, to see people carrying lit candles and chanting, to see policemen and ambulances and screaming and falling through skylights and eating dirt and grass from plates. Yet they told me during the ensuing weeks that they'd enjoyed it very much although they did not know what it was. (The children in the neighborhood, little tots from about seven to fifteen years, kept climbing in and out of the happening from different garage

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roofs and seemed to link up and join in immediately with the anarchy present. None of them did anything too evil—like tipping things over or breaking things—but there were many objects missing the next day.)

I've been asked many times whether I enjoy that sort of accident, perhaps even plan for it. I do not. Because the happening notation has anarchy and freedom built into it, because people are free to be as noble or evil as they want, such hair raising events can occur. But most of the stimulation and energy of happenings comes from the anarchy also. That is why I am compelled to take the risk.

Sometimes performers get hysterical (and this is one of the parts of happening theory that overlaps into Yaddo, the Moreno Institute, group therapy, Gestalt therapy and the dynamics of crowds); then what does one do? If the dancer slowly backs up into the Joe Jones automated guitar, snarling the beaters in her hair, do you take out a scissors and cut the hair that is snarled or try to disentangle it? Meredith Monk did this in a performance of *Baby Jane Goes West* at the Bridge Theater. She knew the guitar was there and she knew the motors were going and the beaters were attached, yet she still backed up and, spontaneously, whimsically thrust her hair into the beaters, completely snarling them; they haven't worked well since. But one must prepare in advance to accept whatever takes place in the happening.

As in many things in life, events and situations and



Meredith Monk's hair gets the Hansen treatment during Dick Higgins' *Celestials*, at Sunnyside Garden Ball Room and Arena, April 17th, 1965. Photo: Peter Moore.

objects have facets with which they address themselves to us and we get as much as we're tuned up to get. I know what I'm doing, where I'm going and what the things I have seen mean and could mean. The person of limited view, someone who had never seen a happening before, might not realize that the strange look on the dancer's face was because her hair had gotten snarled up in Brooklyn Joe Jones' automated guitar electric beaters. A friend of mine, such as Bill Meyer, knows that I could cheerfully have cut off not only Miss Merrie Monk's hair, but her head for snarling up the beautiful Joe Jones automated black guitar, although after the piece was over, I congratulated her because it presented a strange focus for us to work with, a problem that had never occurred before.

Chaos seems to be everyone's threat; I find it my rhythm. If there were no order and all seemed chaos

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then one would be suspended in a place where change seemed to be the whole—no steadiness, no anchor, no fulcrum. I prefer the flux and buildup of changes, all interpenetrating, with surprises arriving steadily. Life and the world are quite enjoyable. We are actually very lucky.

It seems to me the happening is more successful when the performers and myself have come to terms with the environment; the time/space place, accepting the limitations of what is available and working with them. What takes place then becomes significant through the organized way everyone concerned goes about impinging on the environment.

On rare occasions, a happening can occur completely spontaneously. There is a gathering in a home, a foreign visitor asks, "How can I see a happening in America? I've heard about them all over Sweden." If there are several happening people present, a happening might well be undertaken within a few minutes. A foreign visitor who is at a gathering at which Dick Higgins, Lil Picard, Wolf Vostell and Phil Corner were present (although this reaction is not limited to just these people) would be treated within a few moments to a superb gem of a happening. These happening people, among those whom I most enjoy, have learned to do something instantly, on the spur of the moment.

One of their number would start in and the others would soon follow suit, doing things that related to

Hansen on Happenings (23)

the space and what the others were doing in a consciously meaningless way. For instance, one would start hopping up and down and, in a way that didn't match up with his hops, count slowly. Another would crawl around on the floor, and from time to time say "Psst Ralph! Psst Ralph!" Wolf Vostell would immediately move to the TV set (and the phonograph and any other audio-visual materials available) and proceed to *décollage* images by manipulating the controls in such a way that the picture was fractioned or fractured. He would hook up the tape recorder so that he could use its microphone through the TV set somehow, playing records at the same time. (I can see him dialing Grace Glueck or Andy Warhol or Baby Jane Holzer on the telephone so their voices would come out on TV.) Dick Higgins would treat all

Dick Higgins performing his *Danger Music Number Seventeen*, November 2nd, 1964.
Photo: Peter Moore.



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to his wonderful ability to scream unremittingly. I would immediately go to the jon or the cupboard looking for toilet paper rolls with which to festoon the place. Carolee Schneemann would immediately start to divest herself of her clothing. Jackson Mac Low would move to the nearest book shelf and start to take down books at random and read words from them in some order, of which he knows many.

I would accept as a concise definition of happenings the fact that they are theater pieces in the manner of collage and that each action or situation or event that occurs within their framework is related in the same way as each part of an abstract expressionist painting, i.e., not that it depicts a tree or nature or a book or a famous event in history, but that this paint is doing this at this time, at this place. The happening is a collage of situations and events occurring over a period of time in space.

I think all the "characteristics" of formal dance and theater as they have been known throughout human history can be applied to the happening. Yet the happening remains a unique and separate art form with its own clothes that would not fit any other forms.

Funny things that happen in happenings are very much like the slapstick and pranks of real life. *Parisol 4 Marisol* ends with my getting hit in the face with a pie and it is set up in such a way that the audience thinks the people in the piece are playing a trick on

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me. I am in a clinch with a girl; we are kissing each other, each is tearing the shirt off the other. (The shirts are prepared with little razor blade nicks along the back so that something can be gotten hold of to tear.) During our kissing and tearing down strips another performer taps me on the shoulder. I ignore him and continue to kiss the girl. He looks at the audience and taps me on the shoulder again and I ignore him again and continue to kiss the girl. The third time he taps me I count to three and turn to look at him as if to say "What could be more important than kissing the girl?" Whereupon I get a pie in the face. The audience usually goes up in smoke and laughs heartily because they have seen him there standing with the pie and they hope he is going to hit me in the face and they're rewarded.

Outrageous things also occur in happenings. Nudity and/or profanity used to outrage an audience unprepared for them (the same people might eagerly go to a nightclub and enjoy these things), but they are accepted now.

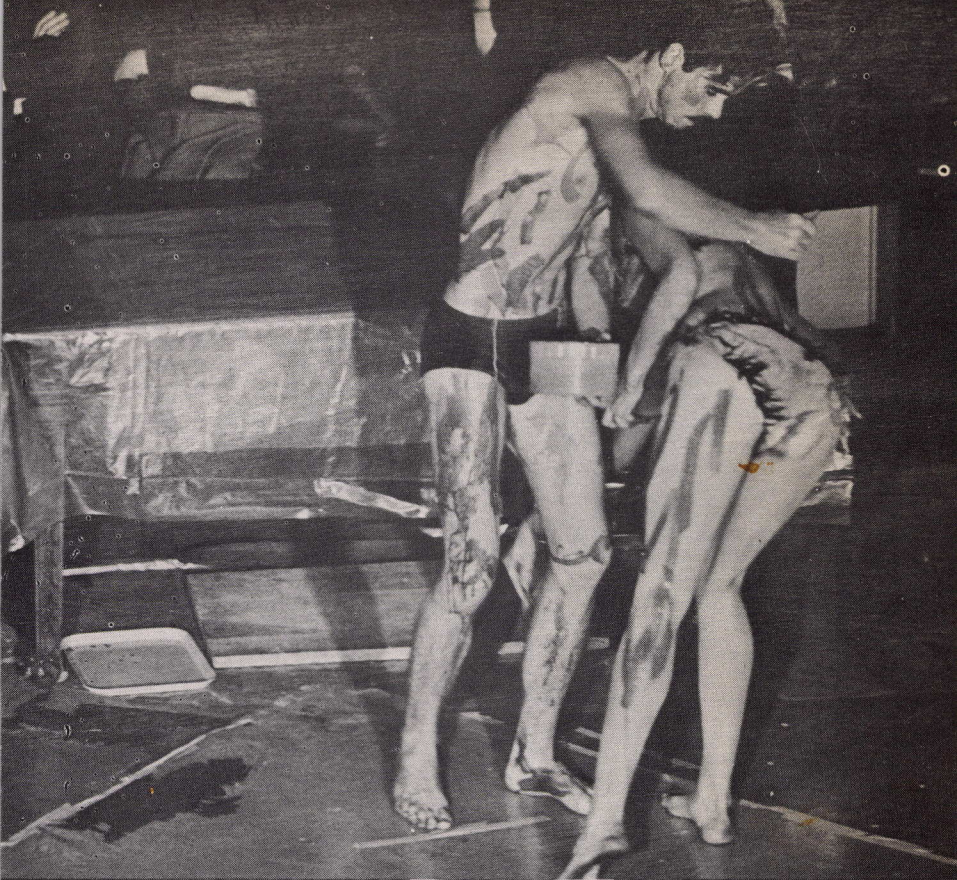
The thing that annoyed many people in Carolee Schneemann's beautiful *Meat Joy* was the use of dead animals, chickens and fish. Several people moved about with dead chicken heads in their mouths and the rest of the chicken hanging down. The effect was heightened by the sexual implications of voluptuous, scantily clad girls playing provocatively with the decaying carcasses. Many people left

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the hall, but, in its bizarre and haunting imagery, this was an unusually beautiful happening.

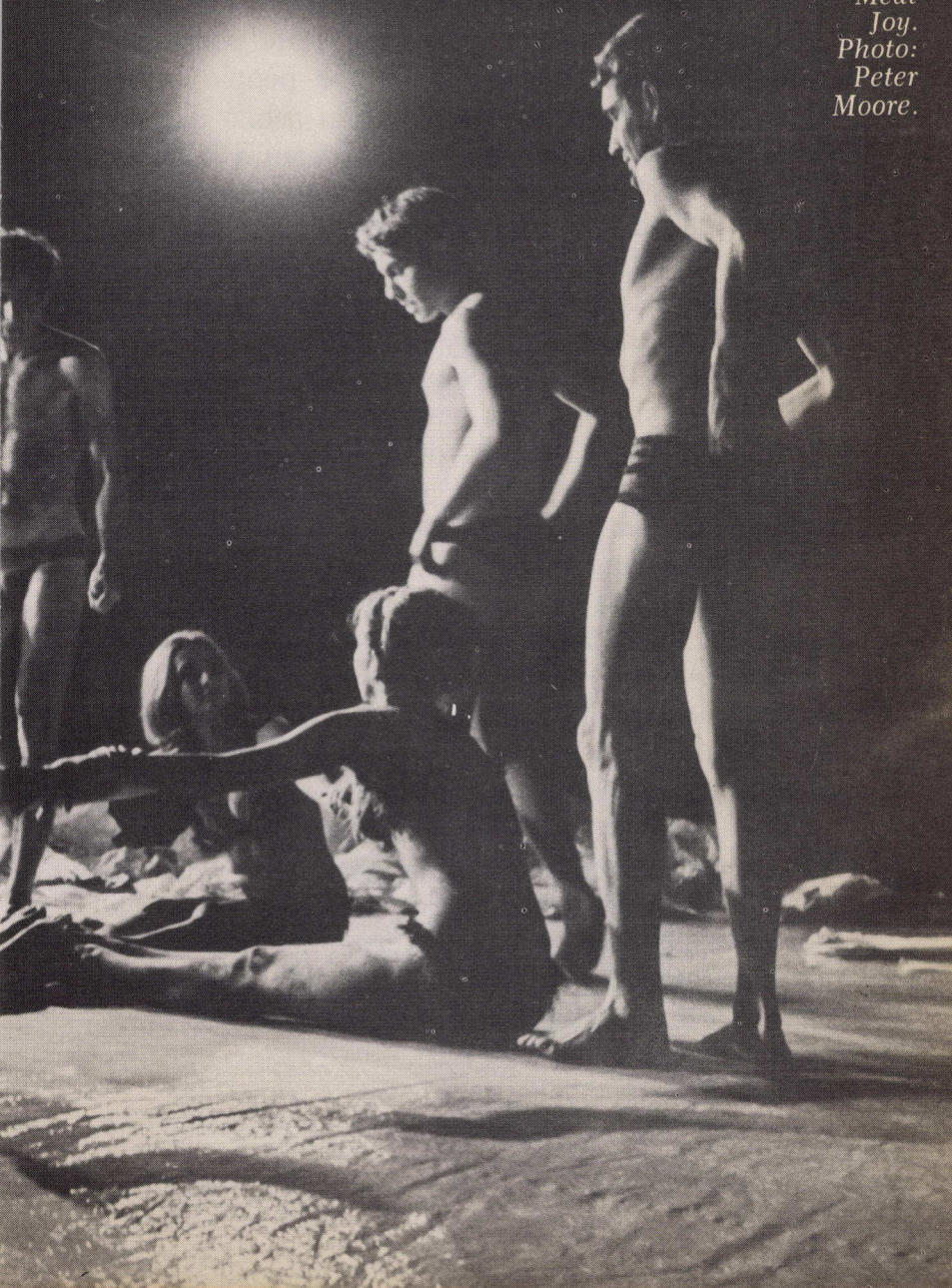
Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* at Judson Memorial Church, November 17th, 1964. Opposite top: James Tenney and Carolee Schneemann paint a love scene. Left: an open-lens camera captures the kind of fast, smooth movements that characterized much of the performance. Below: less serene moments, when the performers orgy and revel. Photos: Peter Moore.







Prehistoric
sensuality
was
the
hallmark
of
*Meat
Joy.*
Photo:
Peter
Moore.



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Happenings have a sad side, too. There were moments in Claes Oldenburg's early happenings and in Jim Dine's *Car Crash* that were quite poignant. In Oldenburg's *Nekropolis II*, all the people sat at a table eating food in slow motion while Hawaiian music played at the wrong speed from a Victrola in the bathroom. All was very still and quiet and the music was playing and this large group was sitting around the table like a family. In these modern times such a scene is sadly nostalgic because large families don't sit around tables any more. Each is in his own car driving all over the country.

Jim Dine's *Car Crash* was sad because he packed it with the quiet anxiety of frustrated communication. Pat Oldenburg was the first performer one noticed. She sat, staring, atop a step ladder that was hidden by a long muslin skirt, so that she appeared like a levitating sex angel. Tapes of auto traffic—muted rumbles, beeps and honks—played as the cars (performers with flashlights under their arms) moved about. The cars nudged each other—were they crashing, or were they a symbol of people unable to communicate because of our mechanical age?

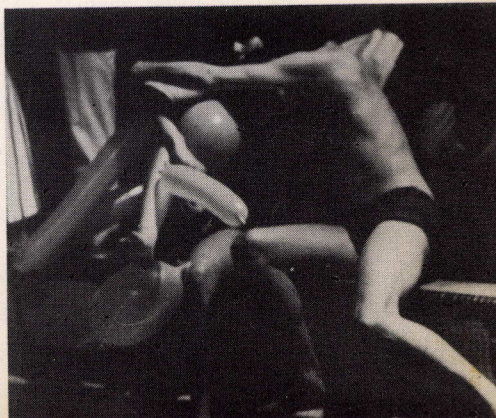
Dine, in silver coveralls, seemed to be choking. He was trying to tell us something; then he tried to write with fat chalk on a blackboard. The chalk kept breaking; he was trying too hard. It crumbled and the dust and chips came through his fingers, as he gurgled, trying so hard to communicate. Red chalk, then green chalk. I cried.

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As I went outside to the lobby, I met Dick Higgins drying his eyes. "Ah," he said, dabbing at his face with a handkerchief, "wasn't that funny? It was so funny!"

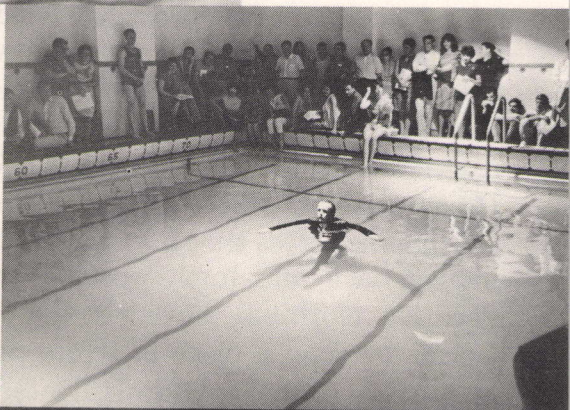
Happenings are often lyrical, but this calls for a particular kind of performer, one at home in the happening framework, adding his art and wit to the happening. Lucas Samaras and Pat Oldenburg are two such performers. Every happening in which I have seen them has provided lyric moments—a certain grace and breadth are achieved, through their being naturally themselves and liking to express themselves in that format. During Claes Oldenburg's recent swimming pool happening, *Washes*, held at Al Roon's Health Club, Lucas and Pat were performing on a plank across the short axis of the pool. They had moved back and forth wearing crazy, sexually provocative clothing. Towards the end of their stint Lucas dropped a piece of white plastic into the pool at the side of their plank. It floated squarely and perfectly parallel to the board. Only Lucas Samaras could drop a sheet of white plastic into a pool so neatly. He then picked up Pat, held her by her ankles, threw her across his shoulders and dropped her head first, smack into the exact center of the

David Whitney assaults a balloon-clad Letty Eisenhauer in Claes Oldenburg's *Washes* at Al Roon's Health Club, May 22nd, 1965. Photo: Peter Moore.





Left: David Whitney bites Letty Eisenhower's balloons. Below: David Whitney in the pool. Far below: Henry Geldzahler. All in Oldenburg's Washes. Photo: Peter Moore.



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white sheet, so that she plummeted straight down much like a big ice cream cone. It was a beautiful moment.

In a more philosophical vein are Allan Kaprow's happenings. They have great pathos baked into them because of his seriousness. His happenings are like a master chef's cake.

In a flat field at George Segal's farm he arranged a huge hill of hay bales, on top of which he stuck a tree. On the bales sat La Monte Young playing his sopranino saxophone. Bottles of beer hung from the tree. A line of autos slowly approached the hill, each auto knocking down stacks of hay that had been placed in its way. People from the cars got out and restacked the bales only to have them knocked down again. It seemed like the faculty of a college approaching a Ph.D. candidate who had hit on something quite original and unique.

On the other side of La Monte an army of men, women and children hid behind detached leafy branches. At a signal from their bearded leader, Kaprow himself, this ragged phalanx moved forward—a modern day Birnam wood. La Monte continued to play.

When the army reached the musician, Kaprow fought with him for supremacy of the hay mound, vanquished him and cut down the tree. Cheers from the crowd and stick-waving mob! One was reminded of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* and the film

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1,000,000 B.C.

∂ Many things happen in real life that are quite like a happening. The events and traumas of the average shipping room during the rush season often present the quality of happenings. A leftist student meeting in Union Square, any transportation terminal—air, sea, rail or bus—all have this happening feeling. Many people have told me that, after leaving a happening in my loft, the happening seemed to follow them home. An altercation between two cab drivers, a person knocking a jug of wine that had been on the windowsill out into the street, a woman screaming for her children, a bum standing talking to the moon on a street corner, fire engines going by—spontaneity, surprise, happenings!

When I was a paratrooper, one always expected the unexpected. Someone's parachute wouldn't open; instead of falling through the air they would land on someone else's parachute top, which felt like being in a big marshmallow. Or a friend you didn't even know was in the same plane would be hanging in the air next to you, yelling. In civilian life there is the traffic jam, the construction job, the bus that gets four flat tires all at once for no readily explainable reason, the train that stops mysteriously in the middle of the tunnel under the East River. To the average person, these might be minor tragedies; a happening person would exult that the normal, mundane order of things had been suspended or changed vividly. To us, the

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unexpected is not a threat; it is welcome.

☞ I think many things happen within a happening that both delight and awe the observer. I have seen happenings provoke the audience into taking part. John Cage's silent piano piece does this. The audience realizes that it is being turned into the performer, and provides a performance—booing, scraping chair legs, chatting, moving about, visiting each other and going to the rest rooms.

La Monte Young's music pieces, although not purely happenings, are certainly very relevant to the happening area. They are quite experimental, with a sound or sound cluster repeated for anywhere from a half hour to thirteen hours, to several days and nights. This is a Satie idea, which several other people have tried, but no one has taken it to his breast as La Monte Young has.

At a performance in Cooper Union they played his tape of *2 sounds*: one, a contact mike on a tin can whose open end was being rubbed in a circular movement on a pane of glass; the other a contact mike on a cymbal with a drum stick or drum stick head or brush stick being moved about in a circular motion on the cymbal. This made a sound not unlike a wagon wheel creaking, which was repeated for at least fifteen or twenty minutes and it seemed like three hours. Members of the audience became quite distressed. Many people started stamping their feet and chanting.

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A girl came down to the audio bank in the orchestra pit and begged the man operating the tape recorders to stop; her mother was sick from the noise. He refused, saying the piece wasn't over yet, and that members of the audience had the alternative of leaving. She then approached a uniformed guard, imploring him to make the noises stop. Groups in the audience continued to stamp their feet or call out. I was reminded of Cage's description of the audience during his silent piece: how a few of them had seemingly decided that no sounds or only one sound do not constitute music and had therefore added more of their own.

Old Jewish men and women from Second Avenue, who dearly loved the programs at Cooper Union and came to them regularly whether it was dance night or politics night or psychology night or theater night or music night, were heard to shriek "Gavolt!" to each other frequently. At first the audience was packed; about half-way through the audience was half empty, and towards the end there were only thirty or forty people left in the hall.

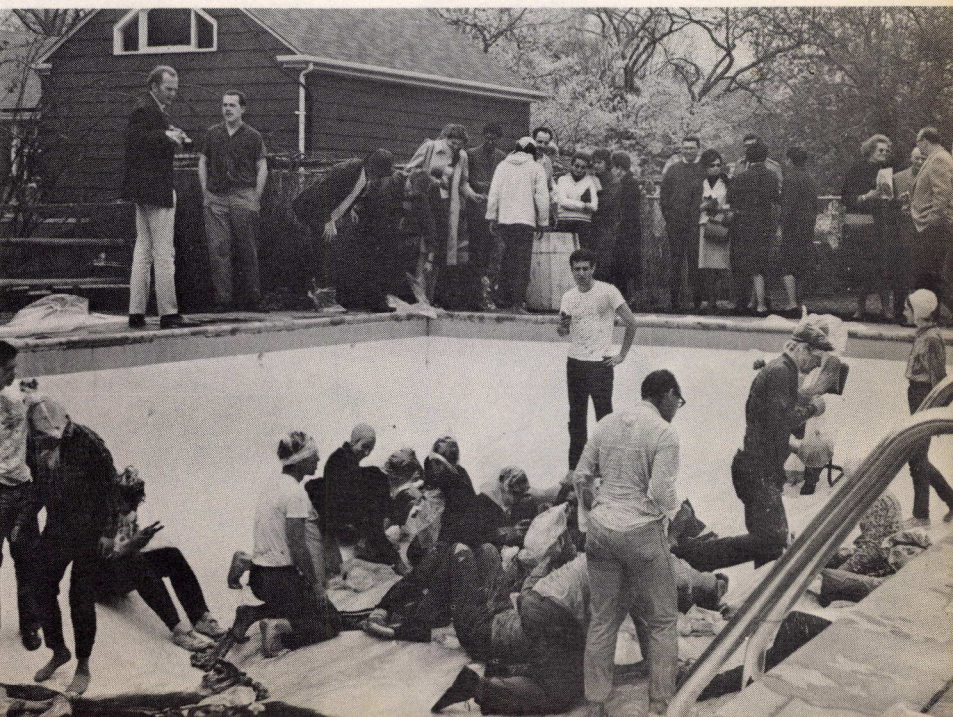
What is it that attracts producers of happenings to perform in this manner? There is something about games and play in happenings. There is something about showing off. There is something in any art about toilet training, where the artist does a nice piece or thing and friends comment as if "Isn't he a good boy! Look at what he did!"

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But why happenings, why not socially conscious plays? Or can a happening be political? Can a happening be oriented towards what is good or bad in life? Wolf Vostell accepts this as true. In Vostell's happenings one infers immediately the terror and depravity and awfulness of the concentration camp, of the dictatorship, of the monolithic state stamping on the individual. Whether his happening involves 40 people or is a solo-performance-one-man psychodrama, these things come to mind. One thinks in social terms; one thinks in terms of politics. Such is the great value of Vostell in the happening world.

At the home of Bob Brown on Long Island, Vostell's piece, *You*, was performed with 30 or 40 per-

In this swimming pool, the color-orgy section in Vostell's *You*. Photo: Peter Moore.







Left: the color orgy in Wolf Vostell's *You* at Robert Brown's residence, Kings Point, New York, on April 19th, 1964. Note, upper left of photo, Letty Eisenhower, naked among the lungs, on the trampoline. Also, lower right of photo, figure holding knee is Ben Vautier. Photo lower left: in the mud field, audience observes from an enclosure under a scudding sky, in Vostell's *You*. Photos: Peter Moore.

formers and an audience of several hundred who came out in hired buses, cars and trucks. The audience debarking at the Brown residence made their way up a tunnel of colored string and wire, very much like a cattle run. Behind the Brown house, through bushes and trees and along fences they went, walking on newspaper. It was a wet, coldish day. Everyone was



Unidentified rescuer separates Allan Kaprow and Wolf Vostell, whom Ben Vautier had handcuffed together. The key was at Nice, 3000 miles away. At performance of Vostell's *You*. Photo: Peter Moore.

in good spirits. They reached a hardware and garden utensils shed, beyond which the path opened out suddenly onto the swimming pool, where they were handed water pistols filled with colored water. On a trampoline a nude woman in an organdy coverall was bouncing up and down rubbing huge pieces of animal intestines between her legs and on her breasts. Around the pool were huge sides of beef and meat and bones and other animal parts. In the pool were



Red smoke grenades further the war games and atrocity effect in Vostell's *You*. Audience is enclosed and concealed by smoke. *Photo: Peter Moore.*

typewriters, parts of furniture. Performers began to go down into the pool. The audience squirted them with colored water. (What had these people done?) Around the edges of the pool there were huge plastic bags of colored water that people would throw or tumble into the pool. Those in the pool would grab them and hit each other over the head. It was as if the Gestapo guard had said, "OK, we will let you live another half hour before we turn on the gas provided

you give us some fun." This kind of image leapt to mind, although the people in the piece were enjoying it very much in spite of the cold. Slowly the pool filled a few feet deep with water from the bags.

For me, a feeling of evil pervaded the entire piece—something ominous, as if I had been asked out to a concentration camp to see people bullied, and went with the sneaking suspicion that they'd found out I was Jewish. If I refused to go it would draw suspicion, so here I was—such was my mood. How Vostell made use of the grey damp weather!

Eventually the audience was directed through another walkway, a vile muddy way, all the way around a big field, where they were ordered to put on army-navy store gas masks, the real thing. The audience was now in an enclosure in the middle of a big field of mud at the end of which there was a pyramid of television sets, some going. Wood, sticks, newspapers around the sets were ignited and red smoke grenades were thrown. People were rolling and frolicking in the mud, frenzied. People went among the audience handing out white envelopes in which were messages like, "Look in the eye of an elephant," "Consider China," "How long has it been?"—cryptic messages, questions, ideas: "Are you a Nazi?"—things like that. I was so in the mood that only now I began to recognize friends among the performers: Tomas Schmit, Michael Kirby, Dore Ashton's younger brother, Steve Ashton, Mimi Stark—wandering, rolling on all

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fours in the mud. Fuming billows of red smoke grenade clouds blanked out groups of people. The red smoke grenades were quite acrid and the audience could only see parts of what was going on in the mud field. The audience was now opening the envelopes and reading the messages.

Then, as the flames mounted and the metal and wood of the sets got hotter and hotter, the bulbs began to explode with loud smacking sounds.

Soon after the happening was over I overheard a little man with a European accent (was he Jewish?) bothering Vostell about the concentration camp aspect of the piece. He seemed to be taking umbrage that a person would do something like this that seemed so full of fun. It had such a strong concentration camp, Nazi feeling. The man wondered whether it was accidental that this aspect of the piece was there or whether Wolf had planned it that way. And Wolf said that there were concentration camps in the world—the Germans had them and there are people now perhaps, that have them elsewhere—and this was in the piece on purpose; it is part of what he feels is not good. This is typical of Vostell's political feeling getting into his art work, never to the detriment of that art work. It always makes the pieces stronger and more dangerous. One feels one is looking at one of the most important of the happening people's work. To make this sort of political statement in America is nothing; to do it in Germany is to invite

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a midnight ride. This is the heroism of Vostell.

Violence seems to be more characteristic of European happenings than of happenings in America. There is something soft and poetic and perhaps even music hallish about the American happenings. The European happening has much more of a chicken wandering across the stage followed by a man quickly swinging an axe who cuts it in half, by the participants or performers having intercourse or being stripped naked. The Europeans seem to break down frontiers and display the fact that they have complete freedom in going as far as they would like to go, whereas the Americans are more involved with the idea of a total piece, with an overall message or image, as opposed to symbolism.

Nam June Paik, a Korean experimental composer and time/space art worker who has lived in Germany most of his life, fuses Orientality and German stoicism. The results are quite frightening. It would be a Paik piece to move through the intermission crowd in the lobby of a theater, cutting men's neckties off with a scissors, slicing coats down the back with a razor blade and squirting shaving cream on top of their heads.

No special type of person comes to happenings; they attract all kinds of people, but I feel they are mostly attractive to openness oriented people. The only people who might be antipathetic to happenings are Ukrainians. Ukrainians are probably the

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most closure oriented people that ever existed. The key to Ukrainians is in their Easter eggs, just as the key to the Viennese is in their pastry. In a Ukrainian Easter egg design and the process that creates it, there is a certain resistance to anything that is free and open and exciting.

Nam June Paik serenely aids Alison Knowles in finding the exact center of the Café au Go Go's raised platform during Knowles' *Composition for Paik*, November 9th, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.



Once a very lovely Ukrainian girl named Oresta asked me what I was doing with the Steve Canyon plastic space helmet, spray cans and big sheets of plastic in the elevator at Pratt Institute. (This was just before the first performance and World Premiere of *Hi-Ho Bibbe*.) I told her I was going to do a happening that evening. She asked what that was. So I explained that I would have a poet reading from the top of a step ladder, I would have six modern dancers in black leotards move in slow motion across the per-

formance space while other people walked about very quickly and a sheet of plastic was hung on which people would spray-paint large symbols and letters from both sides at once, and that throughout the lights would go on and off in no predetermined way. With a completely straight face she said, "Why do you want to do that?" I said, "To see what happens. To see what it looks like. To make a happening." She said, "It doesn't seem to make any sense." And I said, "No, it's completely abstract. It's more involved with nonsense." She said, "It sounds very silly to me," and flounced off the elevator at her stop. I was thoroughly delighted because almost everyone I know is an artist, and I hardly know any people who are narrow-minded about happenings. (Of course, there is one well-known gallery director who abominates any form of theater. He feels that for people to walk around on boards in a box and for other people to come and pay money to see them do this is incredibly medieval.)

I think juvenile delinquents and members of gangs enjoy happenings and abstract modern dance pieces and avant-garde art because they have nothing to unlearn. (The works seem to be talking to them. Martin Esslin speaks in his book, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, about the great effect that Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* had on the inmates of San Quentin Penitentiary. Not wanting to disappoint the actors who had planned to do something for the prisoners, the prison staff agreed to let them go ahead

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and present this very avant-garde play to the inmates, but they had no idea how well it would be received. All sorts of key phrases and the names of the characters and whole sentences from *Waiting for Godot* have since become underworld slang. The prisoners related to the play by seeing Godot as "the outside."

In working with disturbed youngsters in "600" schools, community centers, or as a worker for Mobilization for Youth, I was bemused and touched by their instant acceptance of so called avant-garde art. The youngsters would immediately appreciate a thing just for the color or design value or the image it projected and like it or not like it in a very naive, beautiful way.

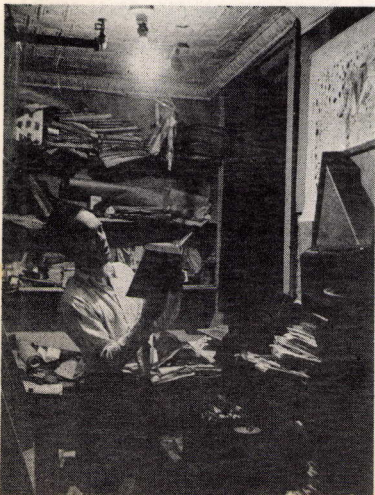
Somehow, their being unhinged from normal life, their not having a mother, father, or meals at a set hour each evening, or any of the stability that a classical good home would have, freed them from the kind of blinders that straighter people with more correct, stable lives have.

Anyone can do happenings—painters and other artists, even musicians, in a way. John Cage's musical pieces have a visual appeal that is very enjoyable theatrically and in no way detracts from the sounds as they might be heard from a tape recorder alone or from another room. There is something rich about a pianist of David Tudor's calibre very seriously lifting a large haddock and slamming it against the side of an expensive grand piano.

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Anyone can be a performer in a happening. The challenge is for the creator of the happening to choose people who will do a good job, i.e., do exactly as they are told and yet transcend that. The role each person is given to play in my happenings is a limitation that they are expected to surmount. So often in other happenings the person is expected not to use his part in the happening as a springboard but to do exactly as he is told. To me limitations can be used by accepting them. I want the performers to surprise me and they usually do. The piece should be as new to me as it is to the audience. If everyone I'd conferred with individually prior to the happening contributed action material that had absolutely nothing to do with what we'd been discussing, I'd love it. The experienced happening performer has the same "fudo" as a karate or aikido master.

One of the reasons happenings are more exciting to people who are, let's say, tuned up to art—and by this I mean painters, actors, dancers, singers, composers, sculptors, poets—is that it gives them something that is meaningful in their own approach to the



Al Hansen reads from Havelock Ellis during his *Red Dog for Freddie Herko*, at the Third Rail Gallery, April 25th, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.

world—a sort of kaleidoscopic effect. John Cage says the conventional theater presents life to us in such a way that everyday problems are transcended and we're provided either with examples, as in O'Neill, that make our own troubles seem smaller or with solutions to problems in the manner of Alan Ladd. But when we leave the theater or the movie there is no screen, no stage—it is going on all around us. Let there then be a theater that hypnotizes like the big silver screen and that goes on all around us as life does, in cabs and luncheonettes.

The whole process of making a film in the underground cinema movement in America has the quality of a happening. While the film is being made it is impossible to tell what will be shot next or what the film will continue into or whether funds will be available for the film to be longer than it is already.

The relationship between the performer and the spectator in happenings is classical. When the happening is open ended to a point that is beyond the audience's comprehension, the audience invariably joins in and either rains salt shakers and cigarettes and hats on the performers or moves up onto the stage or performance area and takes part. Rarely do these people, who are moved into taking part by the freedom that seems to be exhibited, add anything. They usually do not know how to do a little—they try to do too much and to allow them to do this is a lot like entering into a debate with a heckler in a nightclub.

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A person coming into the performance area spontaneously from the audience who picked up, let's say, a \$50 guitar and, as his contribution, destroyed it by breaking it over someone's head or against the wall or his own head would be doing something evil. That occurs from time to time too. I do enjoy pieces where the audience is tricked into being the performer or when they are solicited. By solicited I mean they receive cards saying something like, "Look an elephant in the eye," "Consider China," "Do you realize it's 20 years now since it was 1945," "Whistle five times," "Say the word 'banana' forty times," or "Go to another part of the room and kiss someone." In this respect an open happening that solicits the observer to become a performer undertakes the spirit of a party. It challenges the people as spin the bottle would at a party. But you also run the risk that when the audience is solicited the results may be atrocious. There's something thrilling about the heroism of a producer of a happening or a performer in a happening who solicits the audience to take a part.

John Cage feels that the anarchistic situation frees people to be noble or evil. It is my experience that when faced with this choice the stranger to happenings contributes little and there is a need for the old vaudeville shepherd's crook to get the dull performer off stage quickly. Another interesting device is to have three people carry the offender off. However, to be true to my feeling for education and communi-

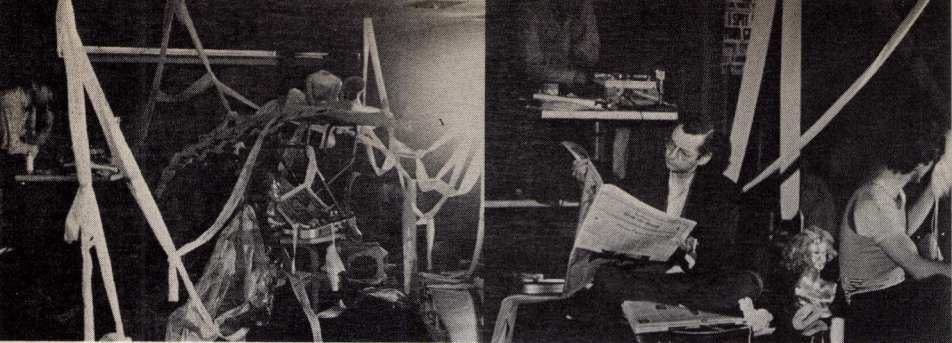
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cation, I would prefer to ask the person to help me by blowing up balloons and fastening them to a wall with tape. He could even have a pretty girl to help him, but he would have to be very silent and grim about the job.

I would like to accept whatever happens, but having seen so many performances I have developed a taste for a particular flavor and timbre of operation. What is occurring is still unpredictable, but one develops an ability to spot low key contributions to the whole the way an experienced bartender can tell a new customer "has had enough" or is a trouble maker.

There is also the kind of person who will join in by casually approaching a volleyball lying in the performance area and then kicking it with all his might. Younger volunteers tend to do this, as they would anywhere. But the volleyball tips over a statue and knocks a nearsighted girl's glasses off, breaking them. Experienced performers handle this the way an experienced infantry team goes after a new sniper. One or two get the person off stage or involve him in activity while another, moving in slow motion, sweeps the glass away.

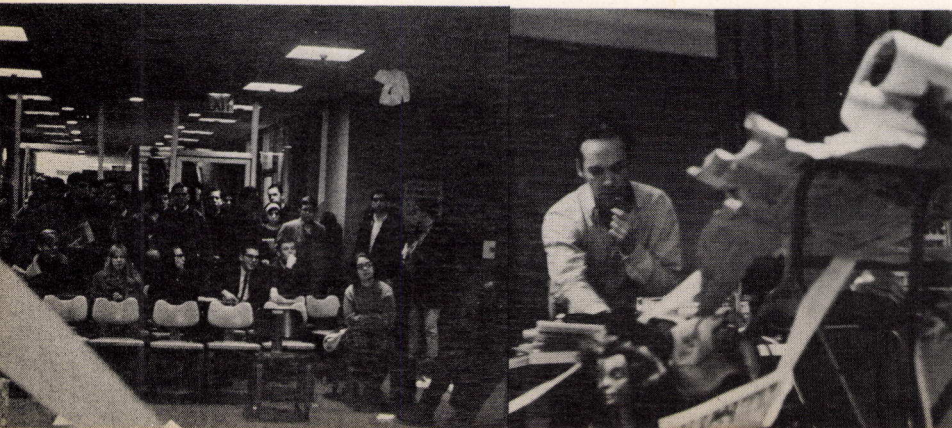
In a performance at an NYU spring arts festival, several of the performers were gentle folk. Chief of these was the late dancer, Freddie Herko. Members of the audience (who were probably engineering students or hydraulic systems drafting majors) singled



Left: the environment created during *Monica Harmonica* by Al Hansen at New York University, February 11th, 1964. Right: Hansen at the tape recorder, John Herbert McDowell having lunch, and Freddie Herko unfolding his ballet slippers, same happening. Photos: Peter Moore.

out Freddie for being quite effeminate and began to catcall and yell, "Yoo hoo, Baby" from the back row. Freddie ignored this. I was talking through a microphone at the time, accompanied by my own voice coming from a tape recorder. The silences in the tape recorder and the silences in my speech matched up from time to time and presented a hole through which one could hear John Herbert McDowell having lunch and performing on several sound makers and toy musical instruments he had brought with him. Freddie finally began to talk back to the catcalling. (This is against what I would have done in a similar position; if one ignores hecklers, they will collapse under their own weight.) He kept feeding them, so finally

Left: the audience at the NYU happening (see text). Right: Hansen gives instructions over PA system during NYU happening. Photos: Peter Moore.



I offered to have them come into the performance area and take part in the happening in a more dynamic way. One of them called, "If we come into the performance area you'll be sorry." In a slow Cageian voice I suggested they come up, one at a time and we would fight. They had already become participants in the happening and I thought it would be interesting to work with that. They didn't want to do this, whereupon Freddie Herko walked up the aisle toward one of them, still posturing and undulating his arms and being very poised and erect as only a modern dancer can, looked the leader dead in the eye and said, "I used to go to college."

There has to be some intercourse between the producer or director and the performer, whether he is from among the ranks of friendship or solicited from the audience. The person with experience in happenings develops ways of soliciting from the audience participation that will be positive. During a Ken Dewey performance of *Action Theater* at the Palm Gardens on 52nd Street in New York City the audience was asked to do a tug-of-war. Ken Dewey's process was at first neither exciting nor interesting theatrically—it was very interesting psychologically and sociologically.

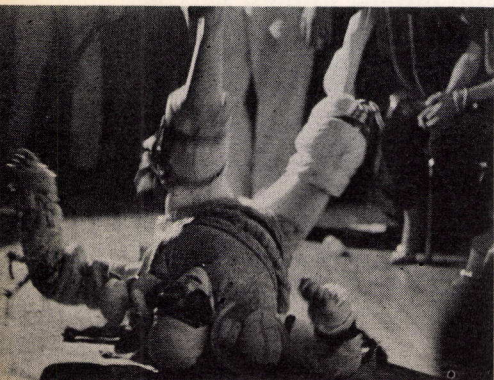
There is a thing in academic circles known as the five minutes of silence. Nothing is more threatening to a young teacher or young instructor than to ask the class a question and be greeted by complete si-

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lence. Older teachers know that the five minutes of silence is for asking the question again. The class is testing, the group is testing the person who presumes to be the leader. The next thing is to ask the question of a specific person in the class and if he doesn't answer and just sits there, you ask him why he doesn't answer. In a way Ken Dewey was forced into this position with his audience. He wanted the audience to divide in half and have a tug-of-war with a huge hawser—that is to say, a fat rope at least three or four inches thick, the kind of rope that is used to moor a steamship. The audience was reluctant to participate. They had paid \$2 or \$3 apiece to look, not to perform.

Finally some people undertook to form two sides and hold the rope; there were still many people who did not take part. Ken insisted that nothing else was going to happen until everyone got on both sides of the rope. It was tyrannical and dictatorial, yet it was very interesting to those of us present who had had a lot of experience in happenings.

Very slowly and painfully he got everyone to participate. I would say I was very impressed by the fact that, over a period of a half hour or so, finally everyone was on one side of the rope or the other



Unidentified performer during Ken Dewey's *Action Theater* at the Palm Gardens, June 8th, 1965.
Photo: Peter Moore.



Heroic, audience-participation tug-of-war ending in a lifting and lowering ritual, during Ken Dewey's *Action Theater*. Photos: Peter Moore.

because it became obvious to everyone that nothing else was going to happen until they did this. I would almost bet money that there were a couple of people who slipped off into the next room, the bar, because they realized that they were going to be forced to take one end or the other of the rope. It was interesting to notice also that the people who had been holding back the most, once they became involved with

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the tug-of-war, enjoyed it very, very much.

The tug-of-war was broken up into three or four movements. The first ones acquainted the audience with the idea of getting everyone to take part; then it was revealed that they were being prepared and trained for a very beautiful theater piece.

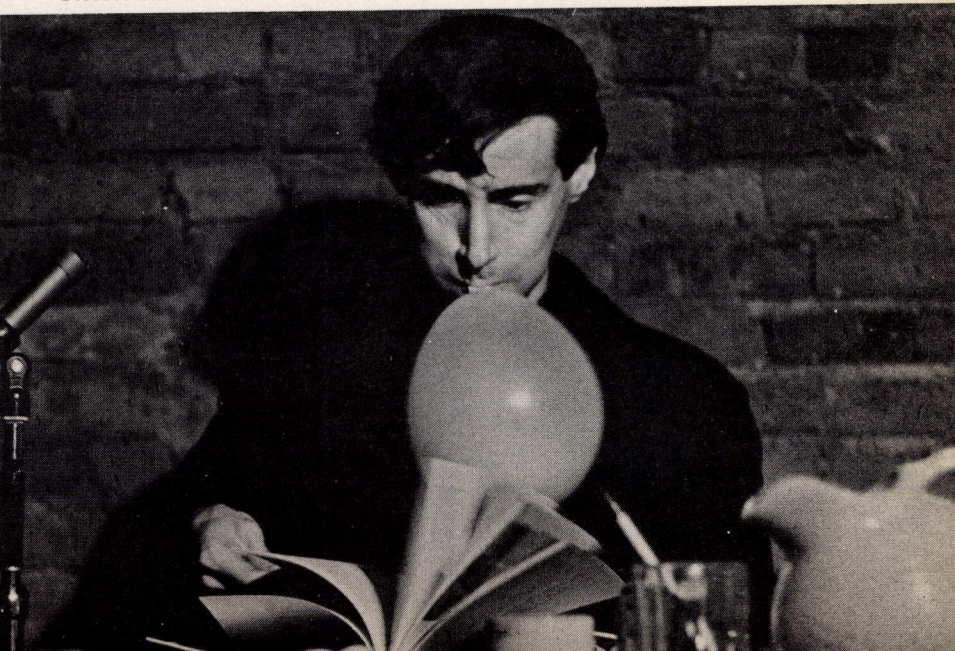
They were asked to take sides again, only this time each person would approach the rope as slowly as he could in his own way. Some people sat on the floor and edged toward it; others crawled slowly; some wriggled on their stomachs; some walked on tiptoe; some walked three or four abreast making a huge arc towards the rope; it was very beautiful. Most of the lights were out. All were finally kneeling on either side of the rope. They were then instructed to raise the rope very gently in their hands and to consider the rope. It was like a religious experience or a ritual act of a religious nature. A large triple folded net was raised by attendants over those holding the rope, so that they were enclosed in the net. It was a very beautiful piece. Some people wondered why the whole evening hadn't been spent doing this—it seemed so positive, so rich and unique.

Performers and spectators are usually separate because it's the very nature of theater that there be two groups that give something to each other. On Broadway, which is very much involved in real estate, the audience is supposed to give love to people who are there expressly to be loved by the audience, to

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people who will arouse the audience to come and love them. If the star is great and no serious questions about life are asked, the audience loves it. In good theater, which is rare, love comes from the star and actors toward the audience, in the manner of Zero Mostel. Broadway real estate theater at its most evil is when the love is going from the audience to the stage instead of from the stage to the audience. The wonderful thing about the happening is that the love is going not only from the stage to the audience but from the audience to the stage and back and forth between the people in the happening to each other. This is my own poetic view. It would be very unique to perform a happening with spectators who were unsympathetic and with performers who were at odds with each other.

James Waring, a beloved key figure in the modern dance, during his *Lecture-Demonstration* at the Café au Go Go, November 23rd, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.





Al Hansen and Allan Kaprow
discuss the time/space race.
Photo: Terry Schutte.

2

Hansen on People

I FIRST heard of Allan Kaprow through the Hansa Gallery on Central Park South, a cooperative run by Ivan Karp and Dick Bellamy.

The Hansa Gallery fell apart, but Allan Kaprow had already realized the happening situation, doing provocative art work that pushed at limitations, experimenting strongly and creating in the observer the need to decide for or against it immediately. There was no way to be casual about what Allan Kaprow did at the Hansa Gallery. He was no longer interested in doing solely two- or three-dimensional work; he was now involved with happenings in time and space.

At this time, Anita Reuben decided to form the Reuben Gallery, a semi-cooperative on Tenth Street and Fourth Avenue. She asked Allan to help her arrange shows and to produce his happenings.

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The Reuben became one of the most dynamic galleries ever to exist in the city on such a low budget. It became a huge thorn in the side of abstract expressionism. Once the establishment, represented at the time by a popular art magazine, referred to a big group show at the Reuben Gallery as "more junk downtown." The cover of this magazine had a large abstract expressionist painting. Within two or three years this "junk" had gently placed abstract expressionism in its coffin, put the lid on, lowered it into the grave and shoveled dirt on it.

The giant Below Zero Show at Reuben was one of the most important. It involved a newspaper mountain by Allan Kaprow, Bob Rauschenberg's Coca-Cola Plan (incorporating a carved eagle and Coca-Cola bottles and blueprint), a big plaster sculpture by George Segal of a figure on a bicycle. This was before George discovered how to mold people with bandages or rags dipped in plaster; it was an attempt at really hacking something out of rough plaster—very crude and unwieldy, always falling over and breaking. The show also included one of my giant machine sculptures called the Hep Amazon, composed of guiding motors and electricity and micro-switches and lights and shavers and hair dryers and vacuum cleaners. This was before we had heard of Tinguely who has come to rule the kinetic machine art area.

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The famous *18 Happenings in Six Parts* by Allan Kaprow was given at the Reuben Gallery. The observers were each given a card on which there were three numbers. The space consisted of three rooms, divided by plastic walls, numbered 1 to 3. The audience was instructed to go from one room to another at each intermission in the order of the numbers on their tickets. Thus everyone had an idea of what went on in each area. A few people had seats from which they could see through the hallways between the rooms and enjoy the visual experience of several rooms at once.

Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine had arrived in New York from Chicago and Ohio respectively some years before this and were making use of Judson Church. Judson believes that the church should go out to the community around it, rather than expect the community to come to it. To do this correctly and effectively is to become involved with the problems of its parishioners, people in its immediate area—in this case artists needing to show their work, writers to be published, singers to sing, dancers to dance and actors to act. So they founded a literary magazine, *Exodus* (which later became the *Judson Review*), the Judson Poets' Theater and the Judson Dance Theater. They have groups around doing something about housing, alcoholism, drug addiction and everything else. The Judson Gallery was for artists to show their



Next page: Claes Oldenburg in his *Snapshots from the City*, at the Ray Gun Specs, Judson Memorial Church, February 29th, 1960. Photo: Martha Holmes.





This was followed by my multi-film, multi-projection piece of many paratroops and children rock and roll dancing and newsreels of the China Clipper taking off and W.C. Fields and travelogues. Next was a Kaprow happening, performed by Dine, Oldenburg and Samaras back down in the gym. Then the audience had a sort of open-play-wander-around period during which people sold assemblage items from push carts as well as small magazines and comic books made by the artists who took part. I handed out 800 children's drawings in poster colors. After Oldenburg read from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in Swedish from a balcony the audience went back upstairs for Bob Whitman's *Duet for a Small Smell*, which involved Pat Oldenburg chopping up a body that had plastic bags of paint in it, and ended with acrid incense being burned—the odor of rotten egg chemicals. The finale was Dick Higgins' long piece, *Cabarets, Contributions, Einschluss*, a collage of small happenings. (Details and scripts of theater pieces from this period are available in Michael Kirby's book, *Happenings*.)

It's important to mention here the Oldenburg series done at his store-front studio on the lower East Side in 1962. *Store Days I and II*, *Nekropolis I and II*, *Injun I and II*, *Voyages I and II*, *World's Fair I and II*—each had integrals that stand out very strongly and that one still remembers with great clarity. Pat Oldenburg on the floor dressed in blue serge suit and

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man's hat; the sleeves of her jacket are folded over her hands and fastened with a safety pin; the cuffs of her pants are folded over her feet and fastened with another safety pin; the jacket is pulled up around the top of her head and fastened in the same manner; Lucas Samaras then calmly picks up her body and places it in a large bathtub full of water (*Nekropolis I*). Lucas Samaras with a mountain of bread taking one slice at a time and very carefully, with a knife and a jar of jelly, putting the jelly on the bread around its perimeter, while live fish are flipping about over the audience's head on a plastic ceiling (*World's Fair I*). Three girls in sheer dresses all sleeping in a pile as Lucas Samaras walks about marking their bodies with black tape (*Injun I*). Great volumes of paper suddenly arriving out of a crack in the wall and engulfing all the performers and the audience; large mounds of newspaper building up and billowing over the people and welding or wedding the audience and the performers in a sea of things or objects (*Voyages I*). The lights going out and nothing existing but sounds of breathing in pitch black darkness (*Injun II*).

These programs presented an artist's complete image, yet each was markedly different. Even the versions of each happening were quite different from each other. It's not known how much the performers played in this, but I know that things that occurred in rehearsals, that might have been mistakes, were

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left in and enhanced by Oldenburg. He approaches his happening's performance date through a series of rehearsals in which he will throw away and throw away large sections of material that he had presented to the performers for rehearsal, only to find that they are not going to be used.

So he works on the whole piece all the while it is coming into being, in the same way that a good painter would work on the whole canvas or a sculptor would work on the whole piece, not starting at one end and going through to the other. There is nothing of the real estate sickness of Broadway in Claes Oldenburg's work.

The roots for his theater field are in Europe. Certainly there is something of the understructure of European cities in a Brechtian way that stands out in his work, but it also spells Chicago and Red Hook and Coney Island and midnight Italian madneses of gangsters and death and living on dimes.

Leo Castelli was quoted, on the art page of *Time* magazine, as saying that within two years these downtown artists would be ready for his gallery. A week or so after this appeared I was talking to Anita Reuben at her gallery when the phone rang; it was the Martha Jackson Gallery. They wanted one piece by each of the artists the Reuben represented for a group show to end their season. That was virtually the end of the Reuben, although it was revived briefly at Second Avenue for Dine's *Car Crash*, a

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great Simone Morris piece and Bob Whitman's *The American Moon*, among others.

The first New Media New Forms Show at Martha Jackson's that spring generated a greater response than had been anticipated. Few of the artists were ever seen downtown again.

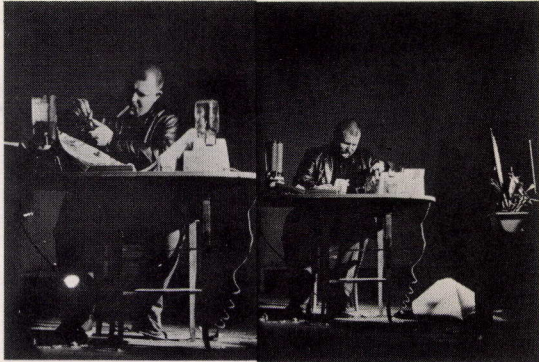
Allan Kaprow had filled the gallery's backyard with automobile tires. A Mark Di Suvero sculpture of log beams covered with heavy brown wrapping paper stood in the center of the courtyard. A Jim Dine environment had painters' buckets suspended over a rug covered platform. It was obvious that the buckets were to be filled with paint that would drip through onto the rugs, but an attendant said the gallery would not allow the buckets to be filled. I went out to the yard and walked across the boingy rubber tires to where Allan Kaprow was standing. "How are you guys going to get back downtown?" I asked. He said, "I live in New Jersey."

Throughout this period, 1958-1959-1960 in New York City, many of us were aware of parallel things taking place in foreign countries. Through composer Earle Brown and his wife Carolyn I saw many foreign art publications. Brown had magazines and booklets that showed the work of the Gutai Group in Japan; if you covered over the captions, you would have thought they were photographs of things being done by Red Grooms and Allan Kaprow and Bob Whitman here in America.

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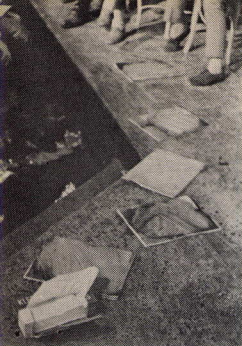
In reading these magazines, I also became aware of the Korean composer, Nam June Paik, of Maderna and Berio in Italy, of Wolf Vostell doing abstract

Wolf Vostell dissolves the *New York Times* in a Waring Blendor during his décollage - happening, *Morning Glory*, at the Third Rail Gallery, May 25th, 1963. Photos: Terry Schutte.



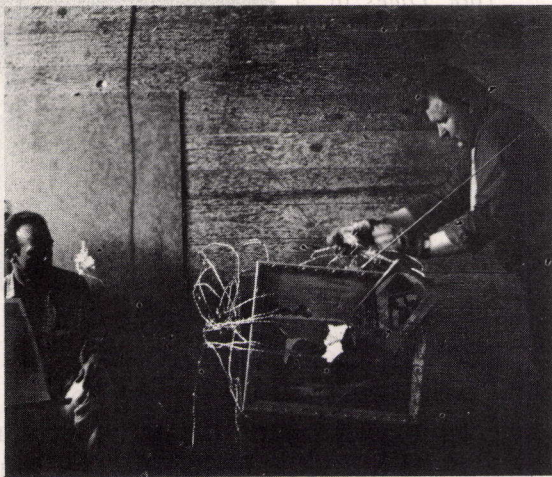
expressionist-poster ripping work which was very strongly related to the tearing and violation of paper that seemed to be a keynote of the Gutai people. The action pieces done by Gutai—rolling nude or stamping around with your feet and hands in a mound of slowly drying plaster, then withdrawing gracefully as it becomes hard and results in a piece of art work—were similar to those by neo-Dadaists in New York and on the West Coast. Meanwhile, in Europe, there were other people who came to be associated with the Fluxus movement.

Fluxus comes after happenings and neo-Dada. Fluxus is a word meaning “a gushing forth”; we see, through their publications under the stewardship of George Maciunas, a much wider range of experimental performance art work than has ever before been

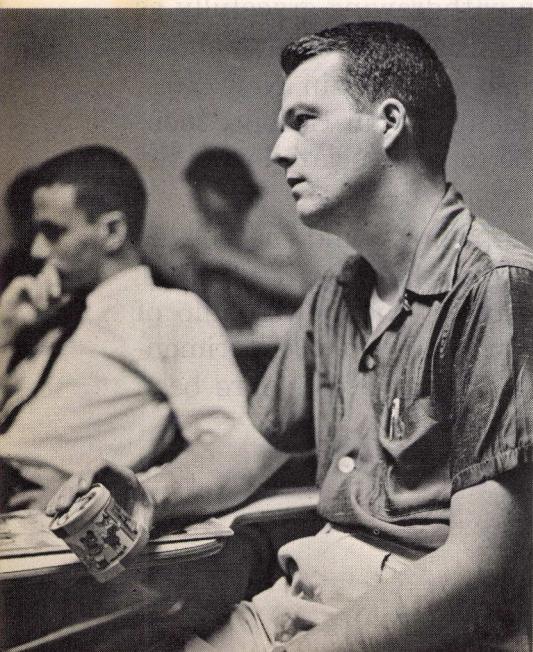


Examples of *Verwischung*, a way of décollaging picture magazines, at Wolf Vostell's lecture preceding *You*, April 19th, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.

After defacing a TV set, including hitting it with a huge whipped cream pie, Vostell wraps it with barbed wire prior to burying it, in *TV Décollage*, at George Segal's farm, May 19th, 1963. Photo: Peter Moore.



George Brecht, in John Cage's New School composition class, 1958. Photo: Harvey Gross.



possible in the world. Truly in tune with the population bomb. And now with Maciunas' Fluxus production and Dick Higgins' printing large groups of notations, and La Monte Young and George Brecht and others putting out their *Anthology* of experimental notations, we see the entire area of experimental performance arts expand to something that I have come to call time/space art—an experimental area that covers everything from one man's psycho-dramas to George Brecht's business-card-size notations to Dick Higgins' index-card-size Danger Musics to the giant number of notations represented in the work of La Monte Young, Philip Corner, and the inevitable Yoko Ono in her book, *Grapefruit*.

Ralph Ortiz and Arman do a death-sings-for-life kind of destruction-happening-art work. For example, Ortiz took a new mattress to the beach at Coney Island. He hacked it with an axe, sawed it, cut it with a knife, sledge hammered it, and then with a rope, tied it around a huge boulder in a jetty, letting it marinate in the ocean for a few days. He then took it to a lot, drove a car back and forth over it, poured acid on it, set fire to it, and put it back in the ocean to marinate some more. When it was just right he took it out of the oven of his mind and mounted it in a big white box.

César owns a big hydraulic press that crushes cars. The car is made into an artistic monument to its former way of existing. In Manhattan one often sees

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trucks bearing huge César-like or Ortiz-like compressed, exploded, tortured bales and bulks of industrial detritus. To those who are tuned up, art seems to be going on everywhere. Arman smashes objects with a hammer. Each piece is glued where it fell. An event? A document of an occurrence? Abstract expressionism consists of the happenings of paint; why not show what happened to a clock or a mattress? (Arman says, "Oh yes, I arrange a little, but not here where you are looking—up here in this corner.")

While Ortiz and Arman are exploding and re-revealing objects, Christo hides them, wraps them up, obscures them.

Betty Thomson is a cowgirl from out West. Her motto is: "Think superfuture." She rides, shoots, fishes, throws the lariat well and pitches a mean pup

Betty Thomson assembling one of her puzzles at the *Roof Spectacular*, 517 East 87th Street, New York, on March 27th, 1965. Photo: Terry Schutte.



tent. What is she doing in New York City making giant pop art jig saw puzzle paintings? She gives roof happenings with a fashion show feeling, in which costume is as important as script.

Tomas Schmit operates in time and space by making a large circle of soda bottles, beer bottles or milk bottles. One of them is filled with water. Crouched in the middle of the circle he proceeds to empty the contents of the one bottle into the next bottle, working his way around the circle very carefully, very neatly. The aim is to spill as little of the water as possible, to use up the water only by allowing it to pass into the air it is being poured through. It frequently takes 13 or 14 (and in some cases 20) hours until all the water evaporates. He works very slowly and very patiently. It has been very hard for him to present his work in a production of experimental performance art because of the time it takes. I would include Tomas' work in a program by having him start in the lobby at about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. The program that would follow would have 4 or 5 intermissions so that every time people came out there would be a little more water missing and Tomas would be pouring throughout the intermissions.

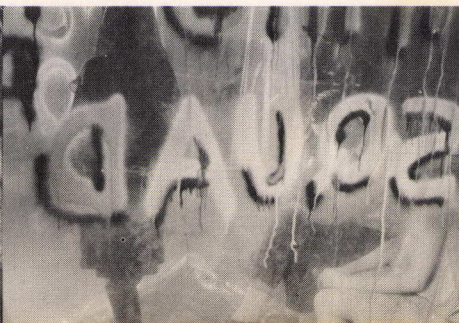
William Meyer is an interpreter of the American telephone pole, water tower and fire escape, which he reproduces in miniature from nine or ten inches in height to seven feet in height. He has just in the past few years started doing happenings in a completely

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spontaneous way. All he needs for a happening is the agreement of several friends to show up at the performance site, roughly within the time it is supposed to occur. The performers are completely free once the happening begins. One piece was *LSMFT*, in which 1000 cigarettes were lit by the audience. After several puffs, the cigarettes were taken away and placed in a central area, while more cigarettes were passed out to the audience and lit. This was repeated until the entire loft was full of acrid, choking cigarette smoke. Meyer was toying with danger perhaps, since the loft was next to a firehouse, but there is something in his approach to happenings—as in the contributions of Meredith Monk and Phoebe Neville—that makes one think of Nam June Paik and Dick Higgins and the whole area of Danger Musics in time/space art.

In 1962 Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton formed a dancers' workshop in the basement gym of Judson Memorial Church. This group met once a week to perform and discuss works, eventually presenting them before the public as the Judson Dance Theater. In time, artists, musicians and other interested individuals joined the group, making it into an influential collaborative of all art forms.

William Meyer's untitled happening at the Café au Go Go, January 18th, 1965. Left: Alison Knowles and Al Hansen obey the command to fire as it comes over the tape, operated by William Meyer. Right: behind the "Q" is the painter Peter Hutchinson. Photos: Peter Moore.



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Meredith Monk is a young dancer out of Sarah Lawrence College, who has worked with the Hardware Poets Playhouse and other groups in New York. She began operating as a modern dancer in the dying days of the Judson Dance Theater and has performed

Meredith Monk extending.
Photo: Peter Moore.



in many happenings by myself and Bill Meyer. She came to be known to most of the happening people through the Café au Go Go evenings during the 1964 season. She approaches happenings in a completely anarchistic way and invariably comes very close to putting out eyes, hurting herself badly or destroying expensive machinery. But her performances are not to be missed. She might better be called "Miss Danger" of the happening world.

Phoebe Neville is another young lady who, as a dancer, is very effective and has taken part in the same happenings through the past few years. A little older than Meredith Monk, she has been involved with the Judson Dance Theater in both a performing and technical capacity.



Phoebe Neville.
Photo: Peter Moore.

The difference between Meredith and Phoebe is physical and geographic. Each has to be watched carefully so that any delicate or expensive equipment can be retained for other happenings. These two girls approach happenings so filled with danger and *joie*, that if not watched carefully they will easily destroy something or hurt themselves. It is not unusual in the happening world for happening performer types to be uninhibited to the point of actually hurting themselves or someone in the audience.

In approach to dance Meredith Monk is much more prone to verbalize; she seems to enter more into the total possibilities of being in theater, in that she draws from a broader range of theater, whereas Phoebe Neville is a more committed dancer whose involvement is with moving as an individual. At this she shows a great degree of skill.

Nam June Paik squints and twitches and is wonderful to see. He might be Brother Rabbit, but to me

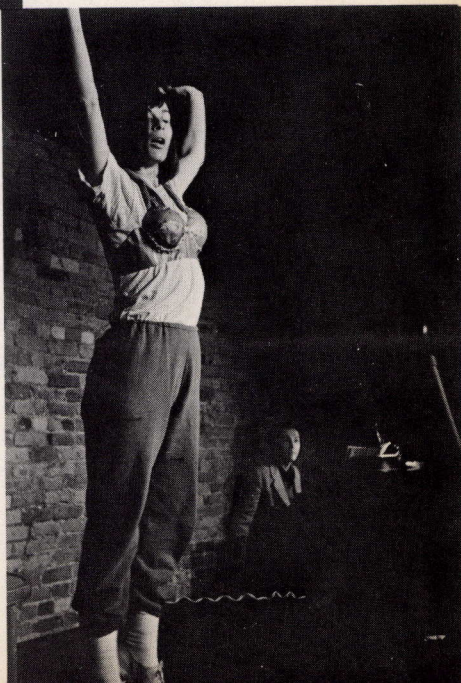
Hansen on People (77)

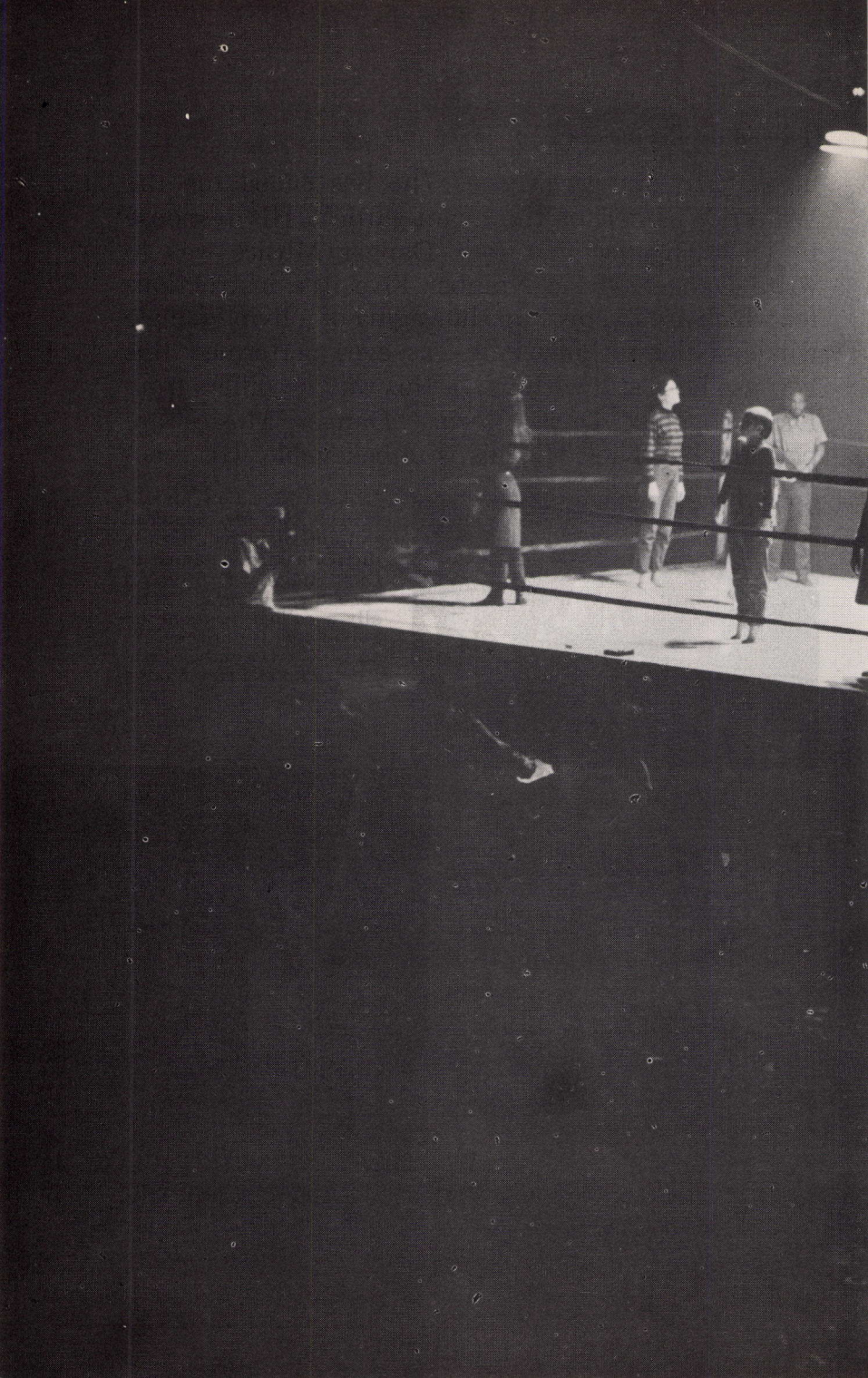
he is "Mr. Danger Music" (he has called me the Walter Winchell of the avant-garde). His response to Dick Higgins' first four Danger Musics was to write Danger Music Number Five, the instructions for which are to crawl up the vagina of a living female whale. I don't think Paik has ever performed this because he is still with us. In this way he differs from Dick Higgins: Dick Higgins' Danger Musics are performable. Dick Higgins is unbelievable. His reac-

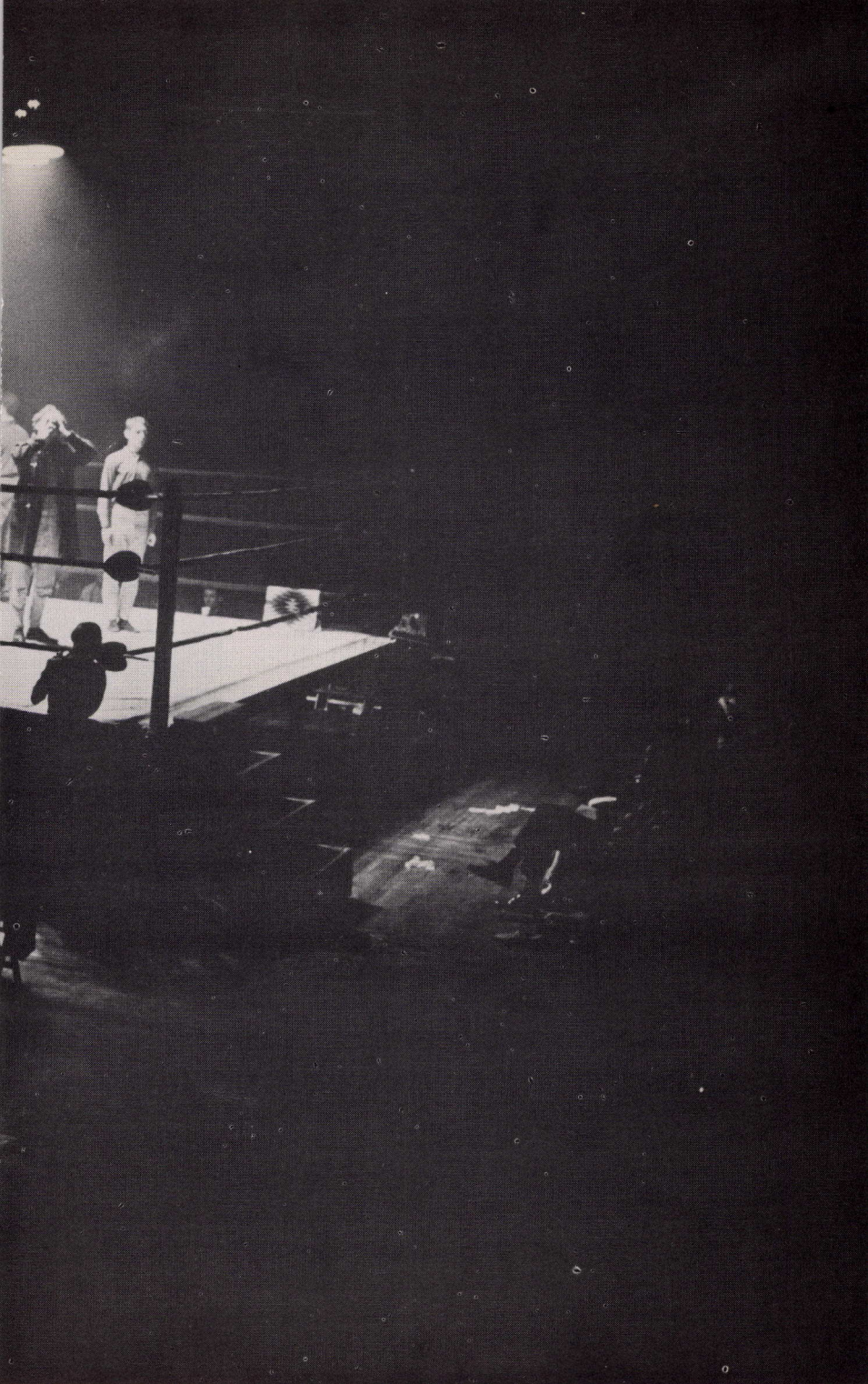


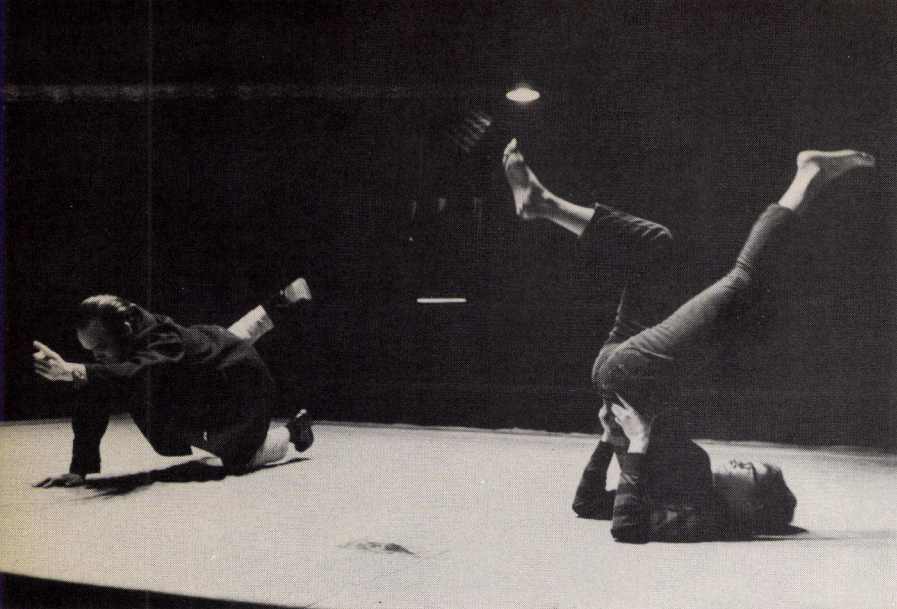
Jackson Mac Low and Al Hansen, as Mr. General-san and Siegfried, discuss their dastardly plans in Dick Higgins' *Hrušalk'*, a "Broadway Opera" (actually a collage pastiche on Slavic operas) at the Café au Go Go, December 12th, 1964. Photo: Peter Moore.

The incomparable Yvonne Rainer dances at the wedding of Siegfried and Carmen in *Hrušalk'*. Miss Rainer's gown was designed by Robert Morris. Photo: Peter Moore.



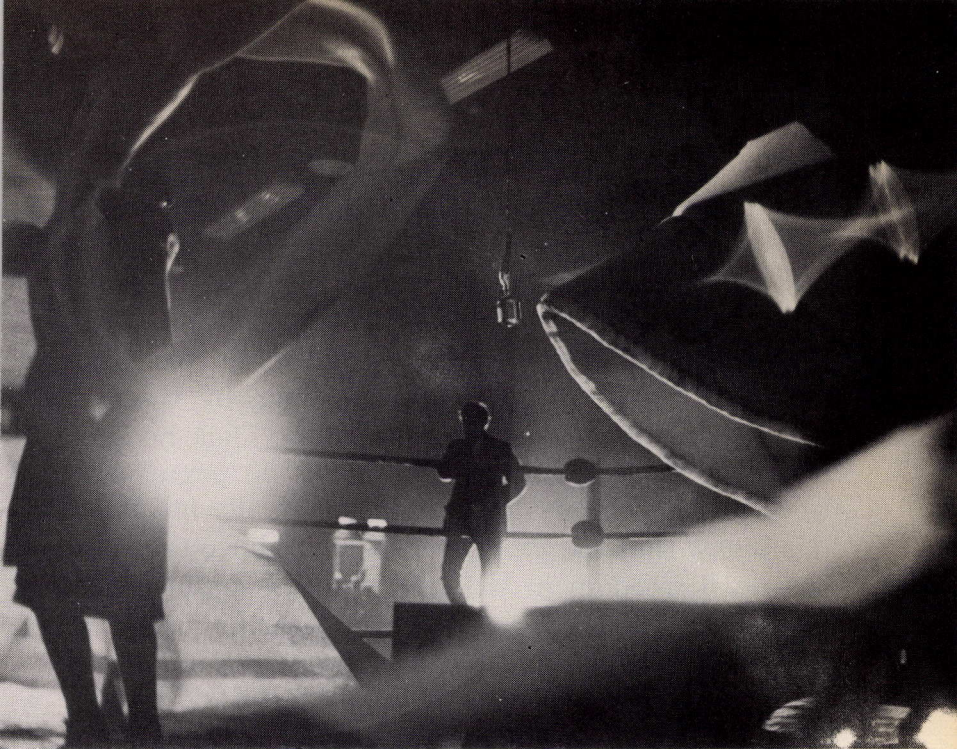






Preceding pages: the entire cast of Dick Higgins' *Celestials*, produced with his *The Tart*, in the ring at Sunnyside Garden Ball Room and Arena, April 17th, 1965. Above: Alison Knowles and Al Hansen in the gymnastics section of *Celestials*. Right: Alison Knowles, as the Salvation Army Worker, accosts Letty Eisenhauer, as the Tart, to whom the work is dedicated. Below: Ay-o, as the Special Performer, cues Letty Eisenhauer in *The Tart*. Far right: Ay-o's scenic inventions partially obscure Letty Eisenhauer and William Meyer, Ay-o's assistant, in *The Tart*. Photos: Peter Moore.





tion to the state of theater in America is appalling prolificness. He has provided the theater of the future with thousands of performable pieces, many open ended to a point of individual interpretation that would be impossible to duplicate.

It would be typical for Higgins to lie awake one morning, composing over a period of an hour or so several hundred pieces. During the next few days, working straight through, he would edit and type up all the permutations, cut stencils, mimeograph same, collate same, staple bind same, and by the next Sunday would be mailing a book of 100 notations all over the world.

In John Cage's class at the New School, Higgins

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would frequently take over the class with twenty-page documents that seemed like manifestos, with very long, involved instructions. They were notations for pieces that would take perhaps three or four hours to perform. John Cage was fascinated by this. Once, during the fourth or fifth class, when, by the time the bell signaling our departure rang, Dick had just finished his introduction to a 40 or 50 page manuscript, Cage wanted to know if Dick really felt it was necessary that the thing be that long. Since there was so much freedom in the piece for the performer to build his own part, couldn't this be explained more simply? He suggested that it might be an interesting control for Dick to limit himself by doing his notations by hand. That would be very tiresome. He said he had once tended to do the same thing and he had broken the habit by writing notations by hand, on some material that was hard to write on, such as plastic. That way one didn't want to spend two or three days putting together a huge piece; one simply condensed.

Whereupon the world was treated to several hundred notations done on acetate pages, dolls' arms, cardboard folders—a series of notations that were just art work things that could be held up to the light or reached inside of or altered and twisted around. A series of slide projections came from this, in which 35 mm. slide holders were filled with little odds and ends of paper and colored plastic and whatnot. They

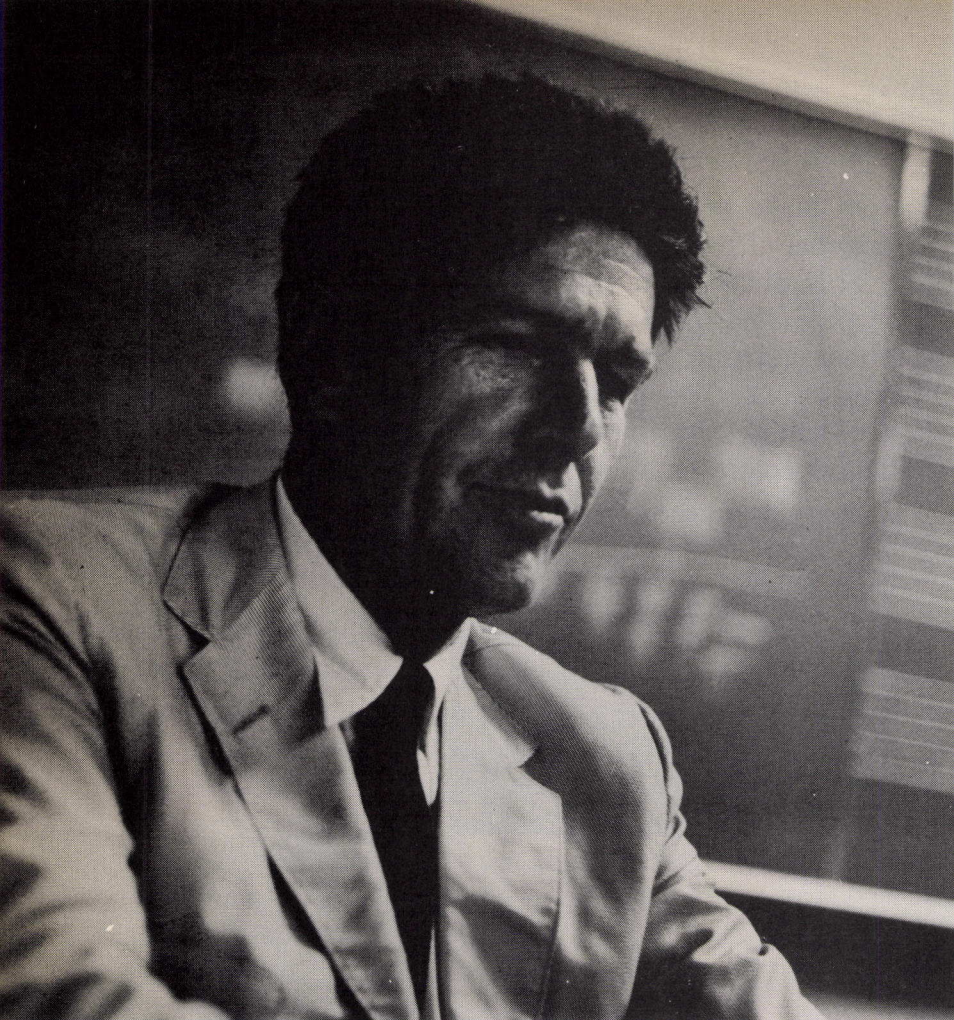
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were quite beautiful, exciting abstract compositions, in a sort of hard edge, School of Paris way.

This phase gave birth finally to *Inroads Rebuff'd* or *the Disdainful Evacuation*, a performance piece where a strong part of the notation consisted of slide projections. The performers would act according to whether or not they were in the light or had particular colors on them



The incredible Brooklyn Joe Jones, who is not to be believed by Christianity, unconventionalizes musical instruments by mechanically altering their contexts. The immense invention below, through being stolen from the Pocket Theater in the summer of 1964, became part of the George Brecht Stolen Art show. Photos: Peter Moore.



"The trick is, without any apparent means of transportation, to suddenly appear at a different place . . ." John Cage. *Photo: Harvey Gross.*

3

Hansen on Hansen

At the core of happening theory, and central to the thinking and philosophy of the happening people, is the idea that there is a fusion of art and life. Like life, the happening is an art form of probability and chance. The action material, products, items, sounds I integrate within a happening are results of life as I live it. I will carry around, unjelled, a fragment of conversation overheard in a 5 & 10 or on the street, eventually surrounding and overlapping it with kids playing an unfamiliar game on a front stoop (is one acting out part of a movie for the others, or what?), or an argument with a cabby about politics, or someone buying one dozen, dollar toy pianos spontaneously in a dime store, or an hour long conversation with a girl at the other end of a wrong number. All these things marinate. Collage is so much like cooking!

I think there is a need for artists to become more

involved with their homes and their neighborhoods and their cities. Not to the extent that they become politicians, but to the extent that they get to know each other and perhaps make the politicians realize they exist as a group. Surely in New York City, the art capital of the world, this should be possible in a more serious way than it has been in the recent past. This is not to say that the city should subsidize artists, but that it should recognize the artists' presence with more than peeping tom firemen and gum chewing policemen.

I think it would be a challenge to the pop artists, to the happening performers, to the Fluxus bent people, to make use of their talents in the service of a good cause. It would be interesting to see what our era could do by way of making artistic statements about politics and sociology. Usually, art suffers under a message, but occasionally in the past it has been brought off beautifully. At the same time I do not feel that a work of art need be more than just a work of art. It is really the choice of the artist. Artists in our time, when they do band together to do something for a cause, like the rent strike or like the Artists' Tenants Association, picket City Hall.

As painters and sculptors, we once used figurative and/or abstract integrals and colors with a subtle space concept. It was not enough. The happening brings life, friends, strangers, speech, actions, movement, music and lighting into the creative process,

making a new theater of collage that is also a representation of the creative process in action.

I personally want a theater with the urgency and truth of a child crying at night. I'm seeking the truth of the helmeted policeman murmuring erotic proposals to the sitdown freedom fighter in Times Square.

I mean to work more toward happenings with a message. Right now the message of my happenings is fairly simple, to the point of being trite—the meaning in meaninglessness, the meaninglessness in meaning. I am saying “What a conundrum life is. Things, events, situations, works of art, people, events—all have facets with which they address themselves to us. We get as much as we are tuned up to receive.” Perhaps in my happenings I am trying to tune people up.

I am always interested after a happening when someone comes over and says, “I would have enjoyed it more if, at such and such a point, everyone took off their clothes.” Or, “I enjoyed the happening very much but it would have been better if everyone had screwed each other at the end.” I fail to see how a theater piece could be made better by having sex introduced, although many happenings I've seen have been sexy or have had sensual integrals in their structure and I have enjoyed them. Sometimes a person will come to me after a happening and say, “I particularly enjoyed what the man and woman on the left were doing as opposed to the man in the military uniform who kept saluting on the right.” Each of these

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things would have been completely unprepared and spontaneous, thought of during the process of the happening and either outside or in addition to anything I asked the performers in question to do, but here is the audience looking at what they have seen and ascribing meaning to it.

I think I enjoy happenings most when we have a question and answer period afterwards, usually at schools and universities, during which it is as amazing for me to see what the questioners think as it is for people in the audience to see what I thought. Many people in the audience are always quite sure that the happening they have just seen was very carefully rehearsed. It is beyond their comprehension that some of the fancies and delights they have observed came about purely by chance, by the most random accidents. It is downright upsetting to some of them that it was unrehearsed and completely spontaneous.

There are also others who, because of the unhinged way the parts relate to each other, because of the completely abstract expressionist aspects of the form, deny that there could be any meaning attached. They feel it is impossible for the person breaking eggs to be related in any way to the man painting the wall. So I usually say something equally banal by way of explanation, such as, "Suppose one was the father of the other, or suppose they are homosexual lovers, these two men, or suppose they are brothers, or suppose they used to be in the army together and now

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each has been discharged and is home and one is home breaking eggs and frying them and the other is working as a house painter in Sheboygan, Wisconsin." They cannot see the meaning in even this trite an explanation. They think I'm being facetious, seeing what goes on in the happening in an allegorical or classical way, or in a completely abstract way.

I seem to have always been doing this sort of thing, but it's just recently—since 1957 or 1958—that I have become aware of the word "happenings." When very young I would put on theater pieces in the backyard with friends and my brothers, Gordon and Robert. We would make a huge enclosure out of clothes pins, much like a primitive stockade, and then we would drive twigs into the ground like nails all over the center of this and would very carefully cut out beautiful women from funny books and Sunday comic sections. There was one in particular, Tillie the Toiler, that also had a semi-nude cut out doll in color each Sunday, with clothes that could be cut out and tried on. We dearly loved to cut out many of these dolls and tie them all to stakes with little pieces of string and put grass around the bottom and make a trail of grass out the doorway of the stockade and light a match to it and see what happened. Perhaps we were reacting to the powers of "momism"; I don't know.

Or we would put on sort of rodeo-circus-western-thriller-product-of-American-movies-play collages in Jimbo Breslin's garage and other sites around the

neighborhood. The different leadership types in the groups of girls and boys doing this would each argue for the kind of thing they had been affected by most recently in the movie houses, so if it was decided to put on a western drama with rodeo overtones, there would mysteriously appear a child who stubbornly insisted on being Charlie Chan with a short chopping axe in the sleeve of his coat, or the phantom of the opera, or Flash Gordon. Whenever anarchy is demonstrated people in the audience who are free souls join in. The whole quality and tone of these theater pieces were much like a happening.

In my late teens and early twenties, I was, like most young men, busy wrestling with the truth. And the truth I wrestled with was my predilection for being very eclectic and going in different directions. I used to worry about whether I was to be nothing more than a dilettante. One week I would be painting and at the same time I would start doing sculpture; then I would be very busy writing a play and drop that to work on a novel and then finish the paintings and stripframe them and then finish the sculpture and give it to a girl and sell two of the paintings and send the short stories out to a magazine and become fired with ambition and write twenty poems and send three each to different magazines and write a little sociological document and send it to *The New Yorker* magazine; at one point I was keeping the whole post office busy: there were rejection slips coming back

from the other direction as fast as I could send out new work. But my worrying didn't keep me from busily experimenting in all these different directions.

At this point I discovered Stanislavski and Eisenstein and became absorbed in non-fiction and technical books, including treatises on things like education, communication and scientific research. Every issue of *Scientific American* seemed to have an article that was more about art than about bird nests, or masers and lasers. Eisenstein's feeling was that the film-maker must have a good working knowledge of all the art forms in order to know what to bring into the film frame—that all the art forms meet in the film frame on the silver screen. Thus I realized that I might be going towards being a film-maker without realizing it.

One art form I knew nothing about was music. Although I could sing and remember tunes very well, I played no instrument, could not read music, etc. In addition I wanted to know who to get for sound tracks for my experimental films, and so I took John Cage's class at the New School.

I had first heard Cage's music at what I then considered a crazy performance of music at the Museum of Modern Art. Cage and several other people performed in a very, very contemporary experimental music evening. I was much more thrilled by these people being from Black Mountain College than by the music, which just seemed like a lot of noise, al-

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though I enjoyed its visually theatrical aspects. The sound was meaningless to me at the time. I didn't appreciate it as music at all.

Later, in a class at Pratt Institute taught by John Pile, called Theory of Visual Form, I and II, Cage's music was played as part of a tape to demonstrate the varieties of musics there are in the world. Pile made me appreciate these sounds by his way of relating music to architecture and art history and auto design. I was very impressed by Southeast Asian music, cymbalon music, gamalon music. It was the first time I had heard the koto, the samisen and the sitar. I could compare the beauty of Oriental music with Cage's contribution, which stood out as the wackiest thing on the tape—the hardest to appreciate perhaps, but I was ready for it then. I made a mental note to become more familiar with music as a whole, due to the wonderful things I heard on that tape that I really hadn't been too aware of before. It now seems that, for the preceding four or five years, I had been wallowing in Mahler, Gustav Mahler.

When my then wife decided to take a Thursday evening course in contemporary philosophy at the New School, being a great one for togetherness, I got the New School catalogue and proceeded to make a list of all of the things that were taught during the same hours. There were many possibilities, political, social and artistic, but then I remembered my urge to get more information about contemporary music, and I

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turned to the music section and there was Cage's class.

I got to the first session late. When I entered Cage explained that everyone had just finished telling who they were and where they were from and why they were there, and so why didn't I tell about myself before class began. I said my name was Al Hansen and I was interested in experimental music composition.

He asked me what my experience was in music composition, and I said that I had had no experience in music composition. And he said, "Yes, but you must have studied things like rhythm?"

"No," I said.

"Harmony?"

"No."

"Counterpoint?"

"No."

"Yes, but you play a musical instrument, don't you, like the guitar?"

"No."

"Piano?"

"No."

"Any of the reeds?"

"No."

"Any brass?"

"No."

He was quite sure that someone who was going to take his course must have studied some kind of music

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somewhere before, but no matter how many different hooks he could think of, I didn't fit on any of them. As he began to run out of things, he became more and more delighted and his face began to hang open in the smile that I've come to love so much, and the other members of the class seemed to enjoy it too.

Finally, he said, "But why are you here?" It was then that I explained that I had read in Eisenstein that all the art forms meet in the film frame and if I was going to make experimental films I wanted to know more about music and the most experimental composers. This seemed to pacify him beautifully. Everyone else seemed to think that was a good idea too.

Actually, by the time I had finished the course, I realized that all art forms do not meet in the film frame, but in the eyeball. In the head of the observer, for better or worse. Therefore, in the happening—which I developed as a way of overlapping and interpenetrating art forms in the hope of finding a new one, without at first realizing that the happening was the form itself—I realized my solution. This would be my party platform and the thing I would stand on. This would be the wall I would beat my head against faithfully.

Some of the other members of Cage's class were Allan Kaprow, Dick Higgins, George Brecht, Florence Tarlow and photographer Scott Hyde. We tended to bring our friends in as visitors: film-maker Harvey

Gross, George Segal, Jim Dine, and Larry Poons. I first met most of the well-known contemporary artists in this class. To a great extent, and probably to John Cage's disgust, the class became a little version of Black Mountain College. (It is on the basis of that season, with both Dick Higgins and myself in full glory, that Cage is said to have vowed that he would never again accept students whose last name began with an "H.")

There was also a wonderful, sexy girl named Carol who was very interested in getting better at composing Tchaikovsky and little piano pieces and who was not a bad pianist in this area. She seemed to be paired with a young man named Stephen Addiss who has now become a folk singer traveling around the world under State Department sponsorship, and who was at the time interested in composing canons for flute—never, I think, to John Cage's satisfaction. The trouble seemed to be that Addiss was interested in composing in terms of classical canons, in terms of classical flutes, and John would have preferred something experimental. Stephen had very ethically taken the class hoping to find something new and unique to experiment in, but somehow he seemed unable to experiment himself, which is no great crime.

Anyway, Carol would get carried away during experimental pieces. Once during my *Alice Denham in 48 Seconds* she began beating the drum and ignoring the notation card. So I stopped performing from my

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card and began to hit her over the head with a mallet.

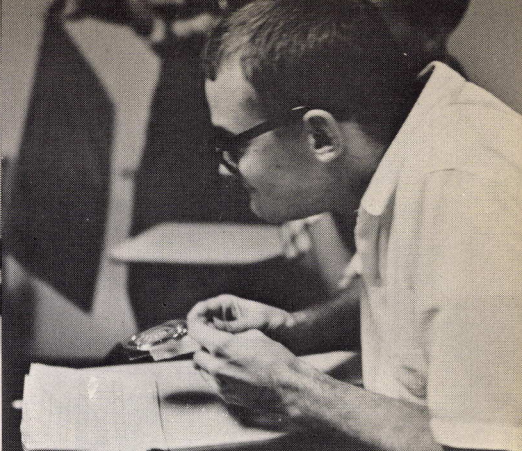
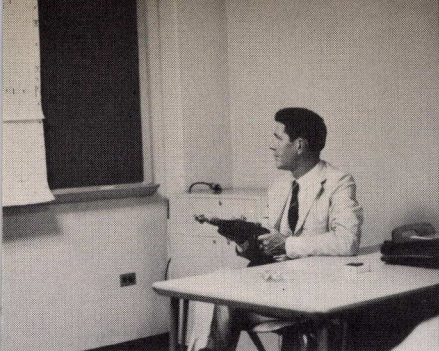
Most of the pieces involved a notation and explanation from which the class would perform. Cage would suggest different ways to alter the performance so that the piece would grow in our minds in time and space and achieve mass. *Alice Denham in 48 Seconds* was achieved by taking Alice Denham, an author and model with whom I was impressed at the time, and transposing her name into alphabetical number equivalents, thereby making a number chain, which was a device suggested at the beginning by John Cage.

You simply write out the alphabet, and using numerical equivalents change a word or name to a string of numbers.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

ALICE DENHAM becomes 1, 12, 9, 3, 5; 4, 5, 14, 8, 1, 13. The first digit becomes the number of sounds, the second digit the number of seconds they occur in, the third digit the number of sounds, the fourth digit the number of seconds, etc. Thus you have one sound in the first second, two sounds in the next nine seconds, three sounds in the succeeding five, four in the next five and so on. It's just a new way of writing



Above: This is probably the only picture ever taken of John Cage with a gun. He is performing Al Hansen's *Alice Denham in 48 Seconds*, along with: upper right, Robert Weblein, and lower right: Stephen Address. Summer, 1958. Photos: Harvey Gross.



down music. One only has to develop how high or low the sound will be or leave it up to the performer.

We tried *Alice Denham* the first time using toys. I was employed in commercial art at the time and would spend my lunch hours walking through five and tens just buying whatever hit my eye. I had a preference for toys that made noises. If anything made a noise that was cyclical—like the little ratchety sparklers or sirens or army tanks that you wound up or rubber mice—these were distributed to the class.

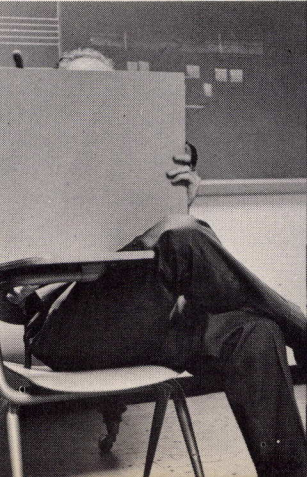


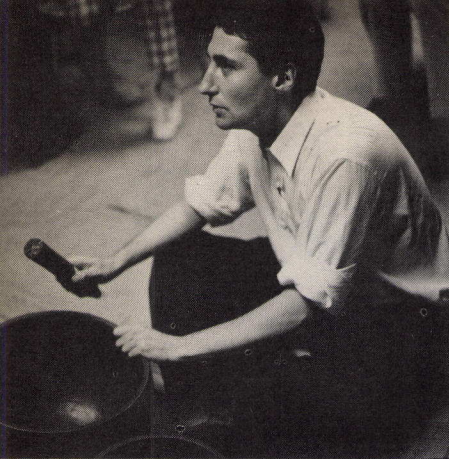
Masters of their instruments! Left: John Klein, whirler tube, and George Brecht, tricycle bell. Center: Dick Higgins, toy battleship, and Jackson Mac Low, whirler tube. Right: Dick Higgins, machine gun (awaiting cue). *Photos: Harvey Gross.*

Cage enjoyed this very much. Several people in the class didn't seem to know how to begin the piece. I think he asked me how it began and I said "At the beginning." So Cage said, "Let's all consider it a picnic. When one arrives at the picnic site, he then proceeds to do whatever one does at a picnic and after a while goes home or goes away or isn't there anymore." So everyone could begin at any part he wanted of the big number notation on the wall and proceed from there in any direction. The only static part of the piece is the notation; it is merely a doorway or a springboard for the performer. The performer has complete freedom to move in any way he wants through the number chain or even consciously to ignore it. One has to evaluate the capability of the performer to be responsible and operate within the spirit of the piece. A girl might say "I want to bring in a bag of tomatoes and throw them at people instead of handing out cards." The tomato girl could



Also from *Alice Denham in 48 Seconds*.
Upper left: sopranino and alto mics,
played by Al Hansen. Upper right:
George Brecht at the cat-meow. Right:
John Cage suggests the use of tradi-
tional instruments to evaluate the
piece. Drums were chosen. Lower left:
Al Kouzel, the film-maker, standardizes
the beats by using his finger as a metro-
nome. Lower center: Dick Higgins
plays a Haitian signal drum while. . .
Lower right: Carol Galente plays the
tom-tom. John Klein and Stephen
Admiss listen. *Photos: Harvey Gross.*





Upper left: Jackson Mac Low on the Buddha bowls. Upper right: Al Hansen explains the coming performance of *Alice Denham* to George Brecht and Allan Kaprow. Left: unidentified listener and Robert Weblein, performing. Lower left: Al Kouzel. Lower right: Jackson Mac Low and others. Facing: Al Hansen listens to the orchestra performing this first performance of *Alice Denham*, Summer 1958, at the New School for Social Research. Photos: Harvey Gross.





hit people with tomatoes only after getting permission from each person to be hit. She would also have to undertake the expense for any damages. Performers with this kind of hostility usually decide to control it rather than pay the dry cleaning bill. A variety of things are provided for and the performer's instructions are merely to: not hurt any other performer, not destroy any of the toy machine guns and cars and things. We tried the piece on another occasion with drums from all over the world and on another occasion with gongs and cymbals and sharper sounds. The first

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classical orchestra in this area of endeavor was derived from this piece in Cage's class.

The next spring, in 1959, the concert world wound up its season with a large-scale performance on the stage of Kaufman Concert Hall of the YMHA. We used five-and-ten toys, broke bottles with hammers, nailed nails, and made rattles specifically for the performance by putting different amounts of nails and tacks and pins in boxes and taping them shut. One of the first big happenings in public for a theater audience was this performance of *Alice Denham in 48 Seconds*, my music happening. The piece began with the curtain opening and proceeded from there. Toward the end of the piece, Larry Poons stopped nailing nails with a hammer and drumming on a table top with a broom handle and began to sweep up some of the debris. But he swept up the debris according to notation: so many movements in so many seconds.

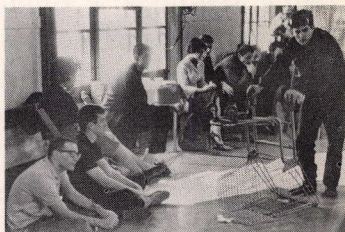
Each week, after Cage's class, Dick Higgins and I and others would meet at Emilio's Restaurant and discuss ways to continue the contacts made and work being done in the class after the course was over. We realized that one couldn't stay in the course forever. I had an idea to get a group of people together under some sort of heading. I remember arguing a lot about what it should be called, but somehow we settled on the New York City Audio-Visual Group as a good title and this was the heading for the performer list in the Kaufman Concert Hall.

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The New York City Audio-Visual Group met on Sunday mornings at a Bleecker Street coffee shop called the Epitome where we performed and taped experimental notations. Very few tapes of these pieces are in existence, but usually a goodly crowd was there. There seemed to be a predilection for vocal works; I remember at the time I was very involved in making experimental notations for creating sounds. So were Dick Higgins and Jackson Mac Low, as well as several others who have disappeared into the mists of Bohemia.

One of the owners of the Epitome Coffee Shop was a painter named Larry Poons, now a well-known op artist. Poons wrote a beautiful piece called *Tennessee*

Larry Poons performing at Douglass College, April 6th, 1963.
Photo: Peter Moore.



which involved a motorcycle, an electric guitar and a blue basketball. There were one or two other sections to his mad orchestra. The idea was to have several groups of people; Group I consisted of as many people as could be gotten around an electric guitar on a stand, and (let's say there were four) one would tighten and loosen the strings, another would pluck the strings, another would work one control, another

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would work another control, and they would move about the guitar in some fashion. Group II was involved with the motorcycle—starting and stopping it and beeping its horn and whatnot—and, I remember, one person was to bounce the blue basketball and cough. Or perhaps there was another group that just coughed at one moment or another. The piece was one minute long.

Another owner of the *Epitome*, Donald McAree, a geometric artist, realized suddenly that there was a backwash in New York of poets from the 1957–58 San Francisco poetry-literature revolution. He decided to have regular readings for which I was to get together several artists and poets. In going to other poetry readings I remember wondering why there weren't more girl poets, so I went out of my way to get girls. For a while the *Epitome* Coffee Shop readings and programs were interesting mainly because there were so many girl poets reading. Dick Higgins and I and other members of the New York City Audio-Visual Group exerted some influence on these performances by intersplicing the poets with very short experimental theater pieces.

The city was on the lip of the whole neo-Dada movement and these were very much in the spirit of neo-Dada. This was the beginning of the reinvestigation of Dada in which young artists have used all the Dada ideas as doorways. Larry Poons in particular had a wonderful feeling for Dada. One of his pieces

was a large square canvas with long pins stuck through from behind, on each of which a lit cigarette was neatly impaled. Beautiful. I remember his saying it shouldn't be placed near a subway or where heavy trucks passed by, so the ashes would remain on the pins. (Poons and I were primarily geometric artists at the time and I remember taking our paintings up to the National Academy and entering them in the annual competition. Stacked everywhere were oils of dogs with birds in their mouths, still lifes of fruit and landscapes. Naturally we weren't accepted.)

At the Epitome I recited a poem entitled *Incomplete Requiem for W. C. Fields Who Died of Acute Alcoholism*, and while reciting it I showed W. C. Fields movies—flipped, upside down and backwards—on my white shirted chest. The movies were spliced with newsreels and different things—it was the beginning of my multi-film idea.

The multi-film idea was to create a film environment (Kurt Schwitters' idea of environmental art was coming into popularity in the city right alongside of happenings) in which movies would be going on all around the audience instead of just on the screen. The challenge was to set up images that would move from projection to projection, from left to right and right to left. To do this involved an awful lot of editing. It would actually be an incredibly expensive job to do it precisely. Not being financially able to deal with such details, I thought it best to use that as a



Events at the Café au Go Go, Winter 1964-1965. Upper right: Alison Knowles' *Proposition*. Far right pair: Emmett Williams' *Yes, It Was*

limitation and show films that would relate to each other and would therefore seem to be going together. If one had 30 or 40 dance films, for example, the dancers would seem to be moving from frame to frame when actually it would be many films of the same thing, some going faster than others. They would meet in the observer's eye. I wanted newsreels in multiplicity and dance films in multiplicity. My younger brother, Kenneth, had tons of 8 mm. color footage of teenage friends rock and roll dancing, so I used that in a performance at the Hotel Albert.

The "Advanced Music Program" at Kaufman Hall led to our appearance on the Henry Morgan Show. Talent scouts for the Todson-Goodman TV Empire of quiz shows and guest appearance shows read the thrilling newspaper reviews of what had happened at Kaufman Hall and thought something like this might be interesting to have on one of their programs. So we got our people together—Florence Tarlow, David Johnson, Dick Higgins, Pattie Strutz and others—and with our impedimenta went up to the Seagram building to audition. Dick Higgins set out a huge



Still There, an opera. Left, in the opera, is Benjamin Patterson, at center is Alison Knowles, at right is Ay-o. Photos: Peter Moore.

sheet of paper, placed a colonial tin bathtub beside it and stepped out into the hall. I performed on flower pots with a hammer. David Johnson was the conductor with a slate, chalk and dice. Other performers had a weapon we had invented called the Schmatte-zereiser—that is, long strips of cloth nailed to a board on which a performer stands and then, holding the rags with both hands, rips them as per the notation. There were toy pianos and toy xylophones and clickers and cap pistols and other things. The conductor would shake the dice and write; if a 5 and a 2 came up, he would write that on a slate. Each performer had a list of the possibilities on the dice and what they should do depending on what was held up on the slate: keep quiet, operate their instrument loudly, softly, medium, hand it to someone else—whatever the possibilities were.

It was decided we were too rich for any program except one, so within a few weeks we appeared on the Henry Morgan Show. It seems that the format was not to tell Henry Morgan anything in advance. He showed up and worked cold with whatever happened. He seemed to be very irritable that night. We began

to do our actions. Dick Higgins entered wearing a terry cloth robe and a dunce cap, opened the robe revealing old fashioned swimming trunks, stepped into the big colonial tin bathtub, blobbed himself with green paint or ink and then slowly got out of the tub and flopped himself about on a huge sheet of paper, creating a two-dimensional work in green ink—hand and foot and body prints. At the same time, David Johnson was shaking the dice, writing his answers on the blackboard, holding the little slate up so we all could see it. Then he would clean the slate and prepare to roll the dice again while we did what he said for one minute. He moved one hand from his side to overhead to provide a sort of metronomic effect for us to gauge the minute with.

When it was over Henry Morgan asked Dick Higgins what it was all about.

Dick said, "It's about art."

"Well, what did you end up with?"

Dick pointed to the thing on the floor.

Morgan said, "Well, you're the New York City Audio-Visual Group, and I can see that this is a painting, but does it make any sounds?"

As he said this, I took one of the flower pot shards and tossed it so that it went just over his shoulder and crashed in the middle of Dick's painting on the floor which gave everyone a laugh—here was the sound. Then Morgan came over to me and asked me whether I considered this music and I said, "It is the

music of our time; we are involved with the music of our time.”

Later on the program's band leader was asked whether he considered what took place music. He said that he had enjoyed it and felt we were trying to find out new ways of doing things, but that the only way he would really be convinced would be if he knew that, when listening to a Waring Blendor, we said, “That's me.” He said his test of whether music was really good was that, when he heard a musician playing, if he liked it he would say, “That's me, Jim.” If any of us would hear a Waring Blendor churning up some fruit, or an automobile crash and say one to the other, “That's me, Jim,” then he would know we were really serious. We were never able to get in touch with him to tell him that we frequently felt that way when listening to a Waring Blendor chew up fruit, or an automobile smash, or an airplane flying overhead during a Beethoven sonata.

My approach to happenings has been to write a framework notation as a skeleton within which the performers will fill space and build a monster or creature which could then be considered the product of us all. I am moving away from all of this. My goal now is to involve the ideas of all my favorite people—Artaud and John Cage and Ray Johnson—in a total theater project in which things which weren't possible before will be done.

One thing that has always been hard to do with



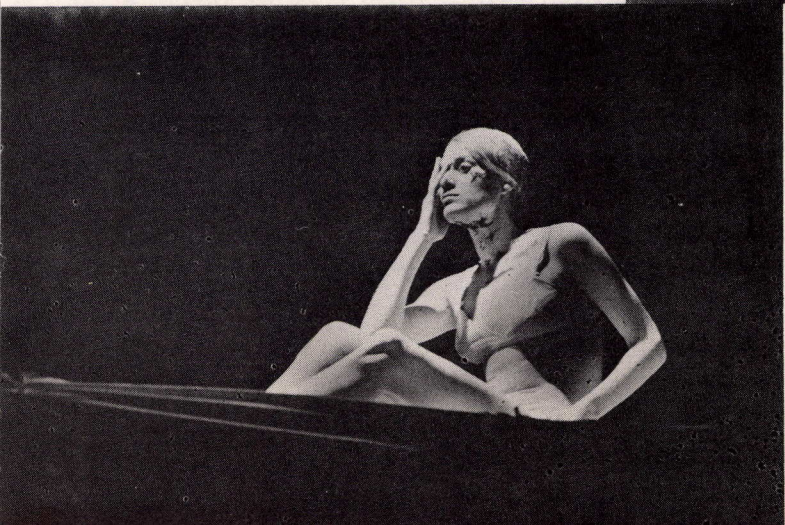
Robert Whitman's *Flower*, left, and *Hole*, right. New York, Spring 1963. These pictures show typical Whitman means of exploiting textures and shapes. Photos: Peter Moore.

my spontaneous theater idea in lofts and luncheonettes is a lighting system adequate to the challenge being made on the performers—a lighting system that doesn't exist now in comparatively rational Broadway or even off-Broadway theater. A sight and sound realization or audio-visual implementation for the total theater project that heretofore has been a financial impossibility.

The goal of total theater is to totally use the performance space, to investigate all the possibilities of the space. Any modern dance or theater group is winning an immense battle just to put on a piece or program for one night. The building of platforms and stairways and machinery for flying is a beginning, but even that is prohibitively expensive. The result is that most performers do without these extras and do what they can within a large flat space. I always try to fill up/use the whole space—if the ceiling is high things should go on up in the air, things should move through the air, things should come down from up



Robert Whitman's *The Night Time Sky*, TV Studio, 81st Street and Broadway, May 15th, 1965. Above: in the empty studio, Bob Whitman's cloth dome was constructed. Right: flaps in the wall of the dome reveal a glittering Mimi Stark. Below: behind another flap, Lucinda Childs was revealed, in a white skin make-up covered with blue plastic paint, which she slowly peeled off. Photos: Peter Moore.



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there to us below; perhaps the audience should even be raised up at some point to experience the space. So many happenings I have done and have seen are like weak soup compared to what was conceivable. I want to make a thick stew.

A simple, informal version of total theater might go in either of two directions. In a performance space such as a loft or theater there would be activity demanded of the audience such as has only been suggested or inferred up till now. There would be movement that would experiment with new ways of having the audience take part. There would be new ways of taking up the whole space.

Total theater could also go out of the theater into life after an audience that hadn't particularly asked for it. For instance, to perform a piece in a bus or subway train, an airplane or luncheonette, in such a way that the lives of the people would be enhanced, in such a way that they would be aware that there is something strange in the world today, but not in such a way that they would be imposed upon.

I had a friend perform a total theater piece, a fat hypertense man whose clothing wasn't nutty or gauche (because this would have telegraphed to people that something very *outré* was going on). His approach was to be perfectly normal, presenting extensions of everyday scenes and activities. He went into a luncheonette, bouncing a blue basketball and coughing, and asked the cashier whether he liked the

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sound and whether he would like to own a ball like that. The cashier became edgy. The man offered to sell the cashier the basketball for 50¢ (it was an expensive ball); the man then went to the counter and took an empty seat, bouncing the ball from time to time. Now he had a little network or matrix built up.

The cashier didn't buy the ball so the fat, hypertense man who was having a one-man happening asked for 22 pieces of apple pie. When the people behind the counter became suspicious of this he laughed and said, "I was just joking, give me three slices of apple pie." Having finished the three pieces of apple pie, he smacked his lips loudly and called the counter-man over, handed him the blue basketball saying, "I would like you to give this to the chef with my compliments," walked smartly to the cashier's desk with his check, put down the money, and left so quickly and smartly that there was no time to return the basketball. This to my way of thinking was a nice little notation or outline for a happening, which was then enhanced by the performer himself and everyone he drew into it.

The matter of dress or costume for the performance depends on the neighborhood. On the Bowery it is very common for men to sell things, anything from an old toothbrush to 32 pocket combs, or a single shoe for the left or right foot, or an old wind-up alarm clock, or a used enema bag or a brand new swizzle stick. In the 70's between Lexington and Madison

Avenues this is not so usual, so if a man were very well dressed and had his shoes shined, even if he were bouncing a blue basketball, he would seem of that neighborhood and would not appear so unusual. It is a matter of protective coloration. If the direction one's personality takes one in might lead to trouble, one must remember that one cannot get out of trouble by saying, "Oh, we're just doing an experimental theater piece."

There should be friends with bail money who are watching from across the street. They can also provide things to do in jail as parts of the performance. Perhaps there could be an intermission to be called the *Patrol Car Piece* which would involve a particular conversation to have with the policeman or a song to sing all the way to the police station.

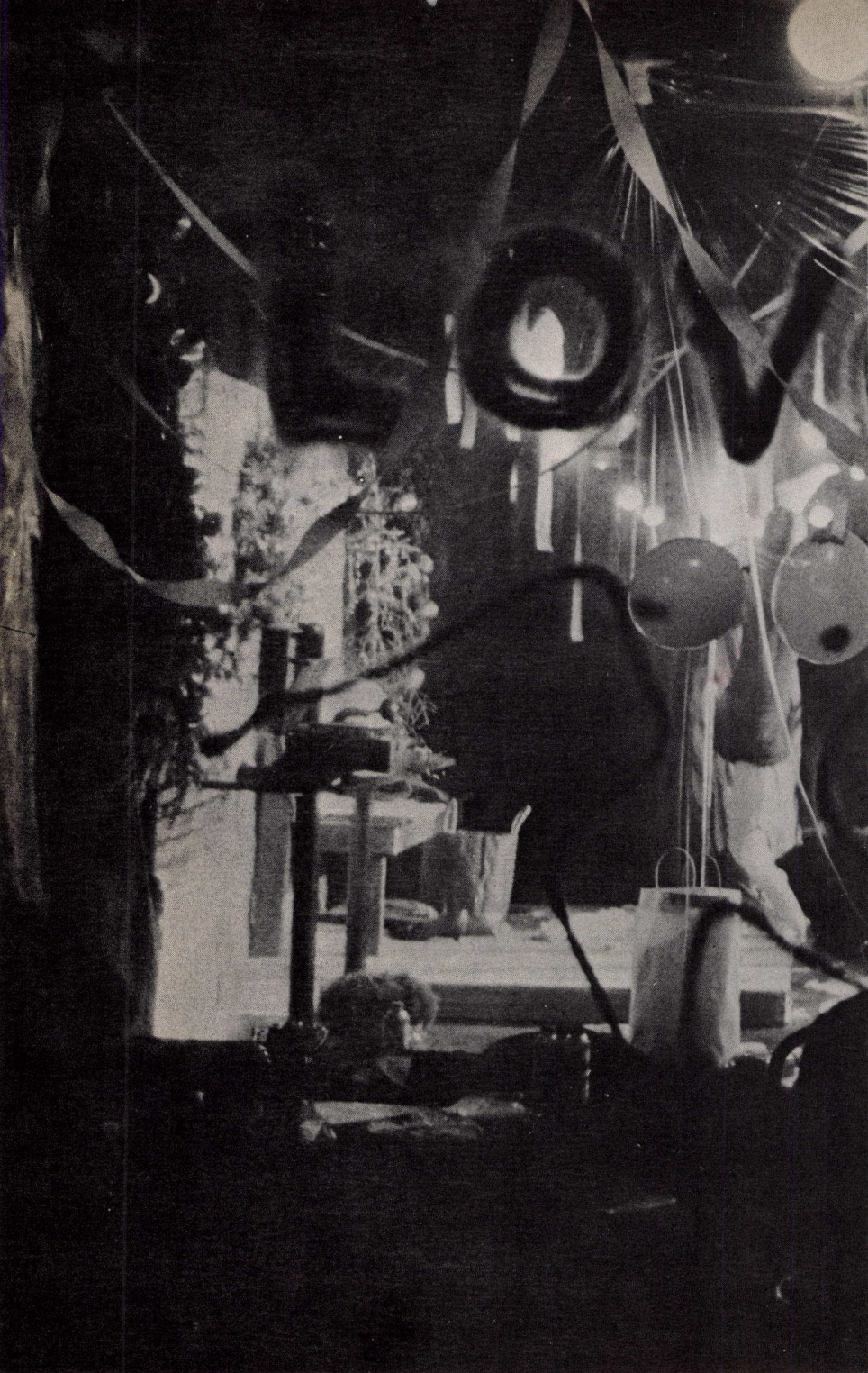
The wonderful thing about new free theater is that you cannot have a playbill. Spontaneous happenings are like this also—you cannot say ahead of time who will do what or what will take place. One must have something like an afterbill which is written up afterwards. This has long been a favorite thought of mine. Then the afterbill would be mailed to any person who had been in or at the performance and wanted a record of what had happened. It would include four or five blank pages on which the observer could write his own observations.

My milieu now is my needs, and my fun, and my wants, and the things that seem to indicate needing

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to be done next. I have long lists. To find a performance space or modest size industrial building, which will cost little, within which I could build an environment for a particular theater work and within which I could rehearse and work with a group of people around my idea for a total theater project. It would be much like a school and I would call it the Third Rail School of Happenings.

My initial idea to call my living quarters the Third Rail Gallery of Current Art came about when I was doing machine art. The accent then was on the meaning of the word "current" in terms of electricity and I wanted to do pieces that would generate more pieces and to find other people who worked with machinery. As I became less interested in machine art I came to think of "current" as having a highly contemporary nowness. I had so many pieces of art work by friends and books by friends and poems by friends that my house looked like an art gallery. I had always enjoyed the fact that people visiting me couldn't tell in many cases whether a thing was a work of art or a useful household object. Friends who knew very well what art is and isn't would even make jokes such as, "May I sit in this chair, or is it by George Brecht?" or "Can I put my cigarette out in this, or is it part of an assemblage?" Many times an assemblage-collage-construction might have a tin sardine can in it and the person visiting me would put a cigarette out in it without asking whether it was part of an art work or not. I would







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sometimes leave the cigarette in and sometimes take it out, depending on the spirit of the piece, but the exciting thing was that art and life were overlapping and interpenetrating in a way that stimulated me.

I realized that nationalism, with its unwieldy, unrealistic morals and hypocritical values, was crumbling. In its rise from the Renaissance nationalism carefully took art out of life and made it the establishment's private property. Now there are neo-Dada, found objects assemblage, collage, happenings, *musique concrète* sound collages—all are life things, life events becoming art, putting art back into life.

Left: Al Hansen obeys the command to fire in a Bill Meyer happening. Lower left: the lovely Elaine Summers, vanguard dancer, in a Hansen happening. Below: Phoebe Neville in Al Hansen's *The Gunboat Panay*, at the Third Rail Gallery, February 15th, 1965. Photos left: Peter Moore. Photo below: Terry Schutte.





People swarm in *The Gunboat Panay*. Left: a pigpile event. Below: a target shooter, a sullen realization, a snarling contest, and a prayer. Photos: Terry Schutte.

The ultimate is pop art everywhere, billboard art; Coney Island wins!

Coney Island is hardly in a state of decline even though William Freed, the great collector of Victorian amusement park antiques, has purchased the entire contents of Steeplechase Park prior to its renovation. One of the things I like about Coney Island is the sweet corn. I also like the sights and sounds and the man at Nathan's whose hands move so fast you don't realize how the frankfurter got on the plate. He also



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makes change without looking, which is thrilling to see. It is more fun to take a young lady to the beach at Coney Island in the winter because then one is taking part in a neo-realist spectacle and pageant of long stretches of water lapping at snow a foot deep. Empty trash cans mile on mile and boarded up Jewish card-playing-for-a-dollar parlors. There is a kind of art work in America called Coney Island Dada. This is the laughing machine that has been fixed and patched and repaired and refurbished with spare parts to the point where it looks like a cripple with a hot cigarette down his pants' front. All of the experimental artists who come to America make a beeline for Coney Island and Times Square—slot machines, fun rides, horror shows, sensorama, hit the bulls-eye, funny object stores—to stand behind the frames and be photographed as the man in the pop art airplane or car. I love these machines.

AL HANSEN'S STATE OF THE ONION MESSAGE

There is no plan for living; choices are classically subjective, irrational and emotional. Everything is by accident, an anarchous accident. My collage theater expresses this, springs from it, the images like beautiful mushroom machines springing from the mind-spore underground. A theater of contradiction and paradox, warmly absurd. And I feel my theater does not judge.

A throbbing, energy-full megalopolis as incredible

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as New York City requires its lousy educational system, traffic congestion, top heavy red tape government and graft. New York City is crammed to the gunnels with stock savvy, tax hip winners from everywhere, who don't do a thing about being made to carry the rest of the state on their backs.

We thrive on crisis, corruption; the revolutions are piling up on each other. From the poorest individual unit of this great pachinko game called democracy to the largest GM-like corporate entities, all is for private profit rather than for the good of everybody. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The incredible thing is that so many desperately poor people are . . . content! This is probably the worst charge that can be made against education. They say we are in the midst of an information explosion and that over 80% of all recorded scientists are alive today! Fantastic?

Human misery stems from the great sense of alienation from the natural order of the universe. Happenings, and indeed all other art, operate best in terms of an awareness of this natural order. This oneness is called, in Zen, *satori*. The causal mind considers the

During Hansen's *Baby Jane Goes West* Meredith Monk was apt to appear from anywhere, which was Bill Meyer's cue to start building. Photo: Terry Schutte.



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typical Zen hip parable as a nonsense joke. Rather than a rejection of reason, it is really a trip through the central process of reasoning.

I am interested in how things grow horns, tusks, fists, trees, canyons, national debts. My feeling about the happening is this: I would like to see the theater collage open and grow, blossom like a flower or a cabbage.

Photo: Peter Moore.



Appendix sample happenings by Hansen

SILVER CITY FOR ANDY WARHOL

Situation form builds an integral. That is to say, whenever I see something painted silver, I think of Andy Warhol. For instance, the heavy bicycle delivery trucks outside Gristede's anywhere, building fronts painted silver, doors, doorways. Something that is silver or chromium does not invoke him. There is nothing of Andy in coins, faucets, car adornments.

A can of silver paint must be splashed outside on the floor. Silver City is a place where everything is either very slow or very fast. It is like a tableau; it has a very special kind of time. It is different the way a memorial or a plaque is different from a church or union meeting hall.

Ritual is inferred but not practiced.

Things are silver. Things become silver.

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A girl lies in bed and writes a letter home. A girl dictates it to her. The bed is elevated and higher in back than in front in a stage prop way.

There may be dancers. There are projections.

A large form of a man is made with wood and cardboard. Hair is newspaper. Sunglasses . . . A giant Andy Warhol is made.

There are aircraft sounds, everyone is covered with news.

A couple has a conversation.

APPLAUSE (FOR CLAES OLDENBURG)

Go to a good-sized wood with two shopping bags full of toilet paper rolls, about fifteen rolls—no more than twenty-four (in fact, twenty's plenty)—and at least two friends—no more than five—and throw the rolls up into the treetops so the woods become festooned with toilet paper streamers. Some should go from tree to tree.

In the first performance the paper was yellow. In the second it was multicolored—purple, pink, yellow, white, lavender, blue. In the third it was all white. So far each performance has been unique and the results, the products of these experiments, stand out from each other in such a way that I find it hard to pick the one I like best.

CAR BIBBE

CAR ONE

(no lights on)

1. Enter car.
2. Toot horn 1x.
3. Count to forty.
4. Toot horn 2x.
5. Slam door 1x.
6. Toot horn 1x.
7. Open and close glove compartment.
8. Toot horn 3x.
9. Slam door 2x.
10. Toot horn 1x.
11. Raise and lower window (or reverse).
12. Count to forty.
13. Long horn blow.
14. Open and close glove compartment.
15. Exit car, go two cars away and tap on hood 3x.
16. Reenter car.
17. Blink lights 2x.
18. Toot horn 1x.
19. Blink lights 1x.
20. Lights on.
21. Count to five.
22. Lights off.
23. Toot horn 1x.
24. Play with lights—interior on, outside off, etc.—for a time.
25. Start motor.
26. Toot horn 2x, and race motor.
27. Blink lights 3x.
28. Motor off.

CAR TWO

(no lights on)

1. Knock on hood 2x.
2. Enter car.
3. Toot horn 3x.
4. Count to fifteen.
5. Toot horn 1x.
6. Slam door 1x.
7. Toot horn 3x.
8. Count to ten.
9. Open and close glove compartment 2x.
10. Toot horn 1x.
11. Slam door 1x.
12. Toot horn 2x.
13. Raise and lower window (or reverse).
14. Toot horn 3x.
15. Count to twenty.
16. Exit car, walk around it twice, reenter.
17. Open and close glove compartment.
18. Toot horn 4x.
19. Blink lights 1x.
20. Count to fifteen.
21. Play with lights.
22. Count to ten.
23. Toot horn 1x.
24. Start motor.
25. Blink lights 2x.
26. Race motor.
27. Toot horn 1x.
28. Blink lights 3x.
29. Slam door 2x.
30. Race motor again.
31. Motor off.
32. Blink lights 2x.

CAR THREE

1. Enter car.
2. Drive 100 yards away and face car towards main group.
3. Blink lights 1x.
4. Blink interior lights 2x.
5. Blink parking lights 1x.
6. Light cigarette.
7. Blink lights 2x.
8. Advance 10 yards to group.
9. Toot horn 3x.
10. Blink lights 1x.
11. Slam door 2x.
12. Lower and raise windows 2x.
13. Advance 20 yards to group.
14. Repeat list from 6 to 13.
15. Repeat entire list to 13.
16. Blowing horn triumphantly, return to position in group.
17. Toot horn 1x.
18. Blink lights 2x.
19. Slam door 3x.
20. Count to 20.
21. Toot horn 2x.
22. Blink lights 3x.
23. Slam door 1x.
24. Blink lights 5x.

CAR FOUR

1. Sit atop car.
2. Rap on roof with palm.
3. Enter car.
4. Count to forty.
5. Get in back seat.
6. Count to thirty.
7. Exit car, knock with palm of hand 1, 2, or 3x on hoods of any four cars.
8. Return to car and enter it.
9. Blink lights 4x.
10. Blink interior lights 2x.
11. Count to ten.
12. Blink lights 4x.
13. Toot horn 1x.
14. If a car drives into a tree, circle car and tree tooting horn raucously.
15. Return to place.
16. Improvise for a time being sure to have various amounts of silence between events.
17. Set fire to your car.

CAR FIVE

1. Drive around others 4x.
2. Position yourself with other cars.
3. Slam glove compartment 2x.
4. Toot horn 4x, 2x.
5. Blink lights 1x.
6. Toot horn 1x, 2x.
7. Start and race motor.
8. Blink lights 2x.
9. Improvise with lights and horn for a time.
10. Count to twenty.
11. Slam door 2x.
12. Slam glove compartment 1x.
13. Repeat from 3 through 12; do this 2x. Leave out 9.
14. Drive suddenly up over the dunes and into the sea.

CAR SIX

1. Enter car.
2. Open windows.
3. Yell loudly.
4. Toot horn 1x.
5. Count to twenty.
6. Toot horn 2x.
7. Slam door 1x.
8. Repeat list 4x.
9. Back car up twenty feet or so, do a figure eight.
10. Exit car.
11. Repeat list 1-8.
12. Drive your car into another without hurting occupants.
13. Back up, stop.
14. Get out of car.
15. Run away.

CAR SEVEN

1. Enter car through window.
2. Toot horn 2x.
3. Count to sixty.
4. Toot horn 1x.
5. Count to eighty.
6. Toot horn 1x.
7. Slam door 1x.
8. Start and race motor.
9. Toot horn 2x.
10. Slam door 1x.
11. Count to fifty.
12. Toot horn 1x.
13. Repeat list from 2; change all horn toots to light blinks.
14. Improvise for a time.
15. Leave car and observe.

CAR EIGHT

1. Enter car.
2. Blink lights 2x.
3. Toot horn 1x.
4. Blink lights 3x.
5. Toot horn 3x.
6. Slam door 1x.
7. Exit car, mount roof.
8. Keep sharp lookout and if one car runs into another, enter your car and ram him.
9. If the driver attempts to escape, run him down.
10. Return to position in group.
11. Roll up windows and lock doors so no one can prevent you from finishing piece.
12. Blink lights 2x.
13. Slam door 2x.
14. Open and close glove compartment.
15. Count to forty.
16. Resist arrest.
17. Slam doors 1x each.
18. Roll down windows.
19. Toot horn 3x.
20. Give yourself up to the proper authorities.

CAR NINE

1. Circle a car 3x, and enter your car.
2. Blink lights 3x.
3. Slam door 1x.
4. Blink interior lights 2x.
5. Count to forty.
6. Slam door 2x.
7. Blink lights 3x.
8. Toot horn 2x.
9. Count to twenty.
10. Blink lights 2x.
11. Toot horn 1x.
12. Slam door 1x.
13. Go talk to anyone for a minute or two.
14. Reenter car.
15. Blink lights 5x.
16. Toot horn 2x.
17. Blink interior lights 1x.
18. Count to sixty.
19. Leave car, join audience and observe remainder.

HI-HO BIBBE

A large painting classroom studio room with a high ceiling.

On a platform in the middle, a boy and girl face each other quietly through a plastic sheet that hangs along the long axis of their platform. One holds the silver skeleton of a pushbutton umbrella. The other holds a pushbutton umbrella in good condition. One of them makes gestures and the other imitates them. If the performers practice some intricate maneuvers and get used to each other it helps this part and makes it stronger.

The lighting is very soft; three dancers have been moving out from where they stood against the wall. They move so slowly, they don't seem to move. Many observers, intrigued by the monkeyshines on the platform, haven't noticed the dancers yet. The dancers travel in an arc from the wall past the platform to a far corner. As the first dancer nears the platform the lights go out and the film projectors come on. The dancers continue to move slowly across the room in their arc. As the films come on the umbrella mimes

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take paint spray cans and begin painting on the plastic sheet. The painting of each becomes the back of the others, slowly the layers build up and each painter is on his own again. Now projectors one and two go off and two and three come on, revealing a couple frozen at a table. The man silently counts to fifty and begins to break everything on the table with his hammer. The woman counts to eighty and does the same. The destruction of crockery is methodical and business-like, poker-faced. After they have been hammering their tableware to smithereens for a few minutes, the projectors are moved about the walls and ceiling. (The fuse box for some performance sites will maintain 8mm. projectors, whereas 16mm. would blow the fuses.)

1st performance	Pratt	Inst.	Fall	1960
2nd	"	"	Spring	1961
3rd	"	"	"	1961
4th	"	"	"	1962

HI-HO BIBBE JACK PAAR MOON

A large L-shaped platform in the center of a large, high ceilinged painting studio in the main building of Pratt Institute, Brooklyn. This platform had been created for a student Christmas party. A large papier mache Santa Claus, seven feet high, stood on it. Next to this statue, atop a stepladder, was an 8mm. movie projector. Chairs were hung from the ceiling in a far corner, creating a grotto. Some large packing cases of school equipment formed a mountain near the grotto. The audience was divided into three main groups. Thirty people in seats (they came early), fifty or sixty people on several large work tables. They were several evening school classes who were allowed to attend as their instructors wanted to see the happening. These instructors were the artists: Bob Tieman, Ed Ruda and Bob Tannen.

1962

ANAIS NIN

Based on these correspondences:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
						A	N	A	I	S		N	I	N
						1	14	1	9	19		14	9	14

This quartet for four, eight, sixteen or thirty-two performers uses the notations on the opposite page, arrived at by placing lines forward and backward and finally by dividing by rules and repeating for no other reason than making six rows, standard so the squares can be repeated. Each notation is written on a card. The four cards can be used by eight performers by making two copies of each. Each subsequent card is the first one turned to the next side. Four people can use one card if each starts in a different corner. NW plays across to the right. SW plays up vertically. SE plays from right to left. NE plays straight down vertically. Each plays second, then third rows, and so on, using the same system. It seems much like Bach and other old-fashioned music to me. I'm fascinated by the way the nines and fours and ones occur. Quartets I have tried: 1) bassoon, oboe, clarinet, alto recorder. 2) all toys—the sound of the wheels on a child's traction-driven auto, a sparkler, a child's roller tumbler toy, any wind-up walking device—preferably a cheap one. 3) all plucking instruments—banjo, mandolin, tiple or ukelele and samisen. 4) all drums—from small toy drums to African signal drums. A metronome or human conductor can serve as a time reference. The first digit in each case is the number of sounds and the second (or lower half of the fraction) is the number of seconds or beats.

Hansen: Anaís Nín (137)

NW

NE

#1

1/1	4/1	9/1	9/1	4/9	1/4
1/1	1/4	1/9	1/9	9/4	4/1
1/4	4/9	9/1	9/1	4/1	1/1
4/1	9/4	1/9	1/9	1/4	1/1
1/9	1/4	1/1	1/9	9/4	4/1
9/1	4/1	1/1	9/1	4/9	1/4

SW

SE

NW

NE

#2

9/1	9/1	4/1	4/1	1/1	1/1
4/1	1/4	9/4	4/9	1/4	4/1
1/1	1/1	1/9	9/1	1/9	9/1
9/1	1/9	1/9	9/1	1/9	9/1
4/9	9/4	1/4	4/1	9/4	4/9
1/4	4/1	1/1	1/1	4/1	1/4

SW

SE

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NW

NE

#3

1/4	4/9	9/1	1/1	4/1	9/1
4/1	9/4	1/9	1/1	1/4	1/9
1/1	1/4	1/9	1/9	9/4	4/1
1/1	4/1	9/1	9/1	4/9	1/4
4/1	9/4	1/9	1/9	1/4	1/1
1/4	4/9	9/1	9/1	4/1	1/1

SW

SE

NW

NE

#4

1/1	1/1	1/4	4/1	1/9	9/1
4/1	1/4	1/9	1/9	9/4	4/1
9/1	1/9	9/1	1/9	1/1	1/1
9/1	1/9	9/1	1/9	1/9	9/1
4/9	9/4	4/1	1/4	9/4	4/9
1/4	4/1	1/1	1/1	4/1	1/4

SW

SE

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