

# VISION

New York City



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# HARD BOP

TOM MARIONI

THIS IS THE WAY IT WORKS: THE ARTIST, A reporter, observes society and his environment, the character of the city or country he lives in, the people, everything. He integrates himself into his environment with the intensity of an animal in nature. The artist makes a gesture (a work of art), a philosophical statement. The work is virtually invisible to most of the world, at least the meat of it, the point of it. It is observed by a lower level of reporter, the media, and is simplified; that is, the subject of the work of art is taken and translated into theater, fashion, movies, window displays, advertising, magazines and TV. Eventually the public copies it in their lives, using the work as visual slang, and the artist is seen as having been ahead of his time and able to predict the future.

In the first issue, *California*, I got all my disappointment with museums and support systems off my chest. In the second issue I was more relaxed and discussed the art of Eastern Europe in a very personal style. Almost nobody outside Eastern Europe knows anything about the art in those countries, so I felt I could be more informal. However, in this third issue, *New York City*, I'm talking about art and artists everybody in the contemporary art world knows. A lot of the art magazines published in the world come out of New York, and most of the art discussed in them is from New York. So what you are getting here is a northern Californian artist's view of New York.

My descriptions of works are a simplification, and in some cases an over-simplification, of the content of the work. It is my assumption that the work of the artists mentioned in this issue is known to the majority of readers, as these artists have shown their works internationally and been written about in the art press. So I am reproducing mostly very small photos alongside the text, to serve as reminders of the work and function as a simplification, as does the text.

Stuart Davis used to listen to jazz while he painted. He was a New Yorker and his paintings reflected it. He was American painting, and David Smith was American sculpture. This was pre-war. I think the real link between Europe and America was Max Ernst.

Ernst one day punched a hole in the bottom of a tin can that was full of paint and hanging by a string. He whacked the can and let the paint drip onto a canvas on the floor as a gesture of surrealist automatic writing. Jackson Pollock saw this and developed it into a full-blown action painting, abstract expressionism, which along with jazz was the first true American art form—and Pollock became the father of American art.

This American New York art was anti-intellectual, physical painting, a direct record of the artist's body—or in the case of Willem deKooning, the artist's arm. By the early fifties the abstract expressionists had become superstars. The first time for American artists. New York became the marketplace. Artists began to study in New York instead of Europe.

Later on, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns became the link between action painting and pop art. Rauschenberg, who is basically a printmaker, introduced



a transfer system of commercially printed photos from magazines into his work. He would wet the pictures with turpentine and then rub the backside with a pencil, transferring the image (and also reversing it as in printing) onto paper, making the photo image very gesture-like. Later he used photo silk-screen images printed on canvas as elements in his paintings, then extended the idea of collage into three dimensions by painting on mattresses and incorporating actual objects into his paintings.

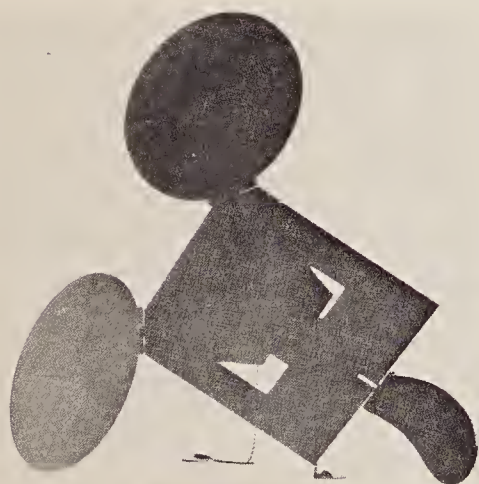
While Rauschenberg's work became three-dimensional, Jasper Johns used two-dimensional images such as flags, targets, numbers and letters as the subjects of his work. These images, like Rauschenberg's, were painterly, gestural and sketchy (still kind of expressionistic), but they used literal images of contemporary culture. Johns' paintings were defining the picture plane. No push/pull, all on the same plane. In introducing this kind of thinking he changed the nature of painting.

Pop art came out of Johns' subject matter and Rauschenberg's technique. The big three of pop art are Warhol, Lichtenstein and Oldenburg.

Andy Warhol exemplifies for me the New York culture of the sixties more than any other person. He has taken elements of the culture (Campbell Soup cans, grid paintings made up of photo images of products), simplified them and re-introduced them through the art gallery. By repeating the images many times he has driven home an advertising technique. His studio became "The Factory." Assistants made his paintings. Portraits of famous people and events in the news were photo silk-screened on canvas. Warhol established the corporate image for the artist. His work had departments: painting, rock and roll band, films, magazine, etc. His early films were real-time studies—a man eating a peach, a man sleeping for eight hours, a twenty-four hour film of the Empire State Building (showing the gradual changes of the shadows cast from the sunlight). This revolutionized the concept of visual art, a pre-video use of real-time consciousness, a study of slow transformation. I think this concept is the most significant part of his work. When he began films he suggested the end of painting, but in the last few years he has returned to painting. The later paintings are photo silk-screened on canvas, as are the earlier ones, but he has added the hand of the artist, some abstract expressionist-like strokes around the background—as in commercial photo portraiture. Warhol has become the twentieth-century Rembrandt, portrait painter of the rich and famous.

The key to Lichtenstein is parody. He translated the abstract expressionist brush stroke from a quick gesture to a blown-up screened photo image, black and white with no middle tones. This was the pictorial representation of an anti-intellectual movement. He has done parodies on other art styles (his latest paintings parody stripe painters, like Noland), but the brush-stroke paintings were the most biting. His first pop paintings of comic book characters mostly showed the translation of commercial printing technique into painting. Later his sculptures—mannikin heads, cups and saucers—had the screen dots painted on the objects as if they were shadows, translating the illusion of painting onto a three-dimensional object. And still later he moved into art deco style, chrome and glass sculptures. Lichtenstein and Stella to-





gether were probably responsible for the popularity of the return of the thirties streamlined look in fashion and furniture.

Claes Oldenburg came to New York from Sweden as a boy. He remembered how things look as a child when you are small. When he became big he made common everyday objects bigger and soft as in a child's view. Picasso, an obvious influence on Oldenburg, spent his entire life trying to paint like a child, to have the freedom of a child. Oldenburg sought not so much the child's freedom but the child's viewpoint, and he reports this seriously and playfully at the same time. His early works were sculptures of food. He made his studio into an environment (The Store) and opened it to the public to sell his sculptures. His works became so large in scale they turned into architectural monuments, the most giant only realized in drawings: noses made into tunnels, large alphabet letters built into the cityscape. A few have been realized as public sculpture—giant lipstick, icebag (the erotic nature of the soft sculptures is the most obvious fact of them), three-way plug. The three-way plug is corten steel and is partially buried in the ground as if it had fallen from the sky like a particle from a civilization overscaled to us. Another realized monumental work is the mouse (the animal he identifies with), a large, welded steel piece painted bright red in the tradition of David Smith. The ears are like film canisters on top of a movie camera; the mouse is the camera, the eye of the contemporary artist. Oldenburg was also one of the key people making happenings in New York; he was the only sculptor in the group.

Allan Kaprow was the inventor of the word "happenings" and was a pioneer in the visual art world. He made a commitment to happenings, a total art, and quit painting—unlike the other artists involved in the late fifties and early sixties (most of them made happenings more for fun than as a statement). Kaprow also did very early environmental works, like a gallery filled with rubber tires in 1961. In his happenings he would bring together friends to experience a total environment, under his direction, in an audience-participation, theater-like situation. Lately he has published small books as scripts for a few people to enact and experience tactile and psychological situations.

A parallel movement to happenings was the Fluxus artists, a group of Europeans and Americans who developed a world-wide communications network as part of their art, sending works through the mail. These artists, influenced by the dadaists and John Cage, were very oriented to performing experimental music, street theater and absurdist activities. The piano became a symbol, and people chopped up pianos or beat them with the carcasses of chickens for the sounds produced as well as the shock value and spectacular visual effect.

George Maciunas, a key member of the Fluxus group, organized shows and produced "flux kits," made up of small multiples and printed matter from the group. Maciunas performed a concert by nailing down every octave of a piano, a nail through each key, one at a time. He also sawed a piano into small pieces and sold the sections as a multiple.

To backtrack a little, there was another movement,



hard-edge, that Jasper Johns influenced. This time it was Johns' method more than his subject matter—from painted flag to painted stripes. Stella said, what you see is all there is, there isn't any other meaning. This attitude had (still has) great currency in New York, particularly among painters. Artists have said this about their work even if, on later reflection, they have found it not to be true.

Frank Stella was almost a child prodigy. A friend of mine said, "Stella is the only person I know of who started out as an artist and ended up as an art student." He showed several of his paintings at the Museum of Modern Art almost immediately after graduating from art school; this was in 1959. Although Barnett Newman and Ellsworth Kelly had already firmly established a kind of minimal hard-edged style of painting, Stella popularized it. He became a new hero to young artists. He turned the stretcher bars on their sides so the paintings would have thicker edges and stick out more from the wall, like objects. He made shaped canvases. The wall the painting hung on became the field and the image (shape) became the painting. Stella was cooking, and every two years he exhausted a series of paintings: first black, then silver bands; then triangular shapes jutting outside rectangular shapes, then a protractor series; circles, half-circles—each time bolder and bolder. He is now in the position of seeing his current paintings sold for less money than the work of ten years earlier when he was at the height of his creative ability. But he did have an influence, especially on painting, and on the popular culture in graphic design (super-graphics).

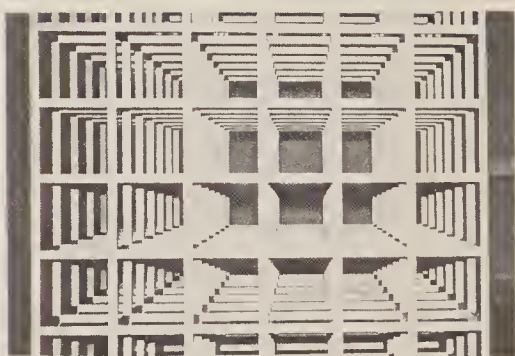
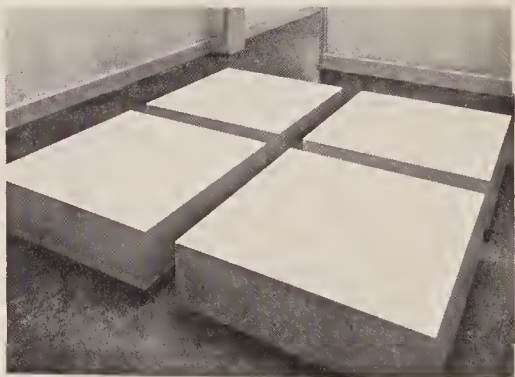
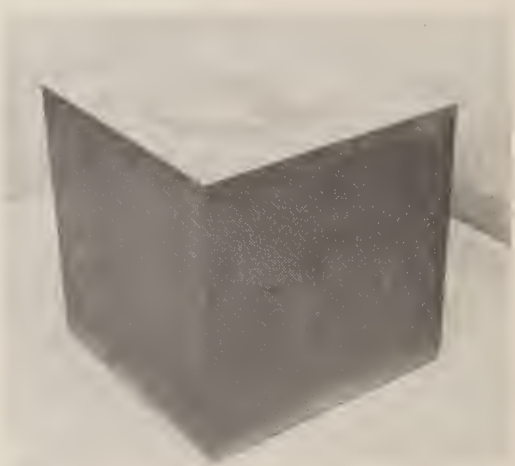
Up until 1962 sculpture had taken second place to painting. But the primary structure, mainly the cube, was to become the symbol for New York art in the sixties.

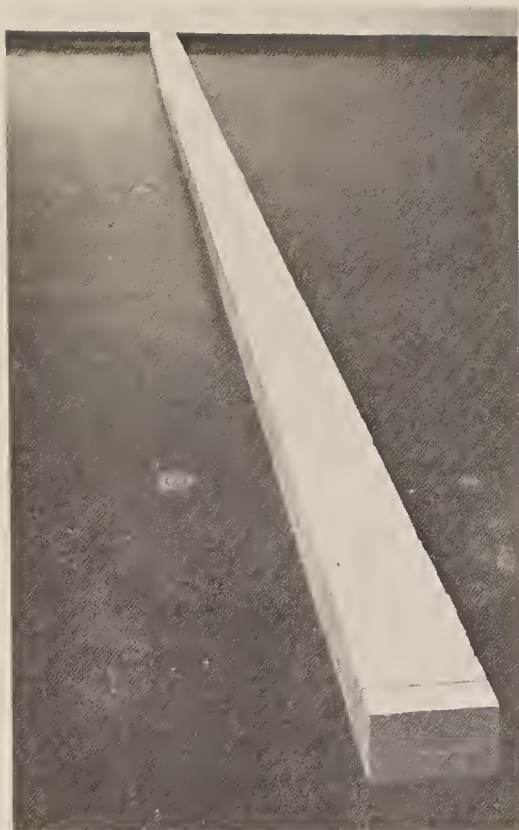
The philosophy was: the less there is to see, the more there is to say. Sculpture was no longer as described in the dictionary, carved or modeled; it was fabricated and constructed. In 1962 Tony Smith, architect and designer, ordered from a steel foundry a six-foot box welded of quarter-inch steel with the welds ground smooth, and had it delivered to the exhibition it was shown in. This action clearly explained that the hand of the artist was not necessary in the production of a work of art. It was instrumental in changing the thinking about the place of concept in art, although that kind of thinking had existed among artists already. The work is more important as a public statement of an attitude than as art work in itself.

Robert Morris reduced sculpture to its simplest form—geometric shapes painted medium gray. Some of them emitted light between two forms that were almost touching, like a door opened a crack, suggesting some life inside the architecture-like forms.

Sol LeWitt came to prominence in the early sixties as one of the leading minimal sculptors. He made sculptures to be looked through, not necessarily at, grids in three dimensions. Later they were done in series, using combinations of stacking possibilities. In the late sixties he began wall drawings with signaled for him a move away from object art into conceptual art. These drawings are usually executed by other people according to a descriptive plan. I will talk more about both Morris and LeWitt later.

Carl Andre was probably the most important sculptor

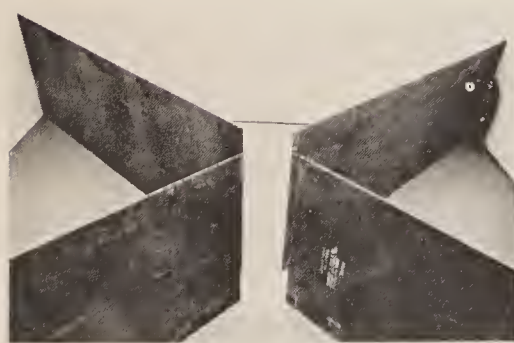




of the sixties. He selected building materials, bricks for example, and laid them side by side in a row like blocks. These sculptures could be assembled, disassembled, and reassembled as the same or another work. He established a recycling technique in art by re-using the same material over and over again to make new work. Last year the Tate Gallery in London bought an Andre work from ten years ago. The public (in newspaper editorials) was outraged by museum funds being spent for a bunch of bricks. They also could not understand why the bricks had to be sent from America instead of using English bricks. The director of the Tate Gallery seems incapable of explaining the content of the work to the public, and recently someone threw blue dye on the work and it had to be removed from display to be restored (!). Someone else in the night dumped a load of bricks on the steps of the gallery to protest this purchase. The public thinks if it doesn't look like art it isn't art. They look only for the familiar. A frog can only see small, bite-size moving objects, insects for instance, because it spends its life looking for food, and its brain blocks out everything else. "Someone stole the sculptures off the pedestals" was a comment by a member of the public in a show of minimal sculpture in 1962.



Dan Flavin took existing fluorescent lights and their fixtures and used them to make his sculptures. He can install a retrospective anywhere in the country without sending or bringing any work with him, just by going to the hardware store and buying the fixtures and installing them in the local museum. Although the fixtures hang on the wall like paintings, the work is sculpture—the work is the light, which extends out so many inches into the space and is a volume, an object you can pass your hand through. Interestingly, Flavin makes his work in editions of three, one for Europe, one for America, and one to keep. Of course the work can be put together again later, and dated at the time of conception.



Minimal art was, almost by definition, quiet and refined. But Richard Serra, a later minimalist, working with slab-like forms, became the last of the heavy-duty, aggressive sculptors in the tradition of David Smith. However, Smith's work was welded, constructed, whereas Serra's was created for particular spaces. It leaned, supported by use of gravity and by its own weight and position. The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, recently installed a Serra work in its sculpture garden, and embedded the base of the steel slabs in the ground, so that although the slabs touch each other they are no longer obviously supporting each other; this piece retreats in its philosophy to the era of David Smith. Serra's work has a great energy force on the spaces in which it is placed because of its sheer size, weight and materials. One work, which he created for the Pasadena Museum, was a large trunk of a tree sawed into sections, leaving the sawdust on the floor where they were cut. The sections were of such enormous dimensions they were overwhelming inside the gallery, dominating the space. Later, after the exhibition, the sections of cut tree were moved outdoors by the museum staff, where the work lost all sense of proportion. They eventually paid somebody to take it away. The sculpture was about the relationships of the objects within the space they were placed



in, and this work of art no longer existed when it was moved outdoors where its scale was lost.

Out of minimal art, a rejection of it—especially the early minimal art which generally disguised materials—came the style called antiform. Robert Morris, Barry Le Va, Bruce Nauman of California and Eva Hess, a German-born New Yorker, were the chief artists involved in it.

Eva Hess died a few years ago, but during her short career she had an influence on sculpture. Her materials, often arranged in rows or groups with an order, had an organic look because of their softness (fiberglass, rope, wire), and because she often relied on gravity to make the form. Her work became a symbol to many young women sculptors, and today you can see her influence especially in art schools all over the country.

Robert Morris, who had been the leading minimal sculptor, wrote an article for *Artforum* in the late sixties called "Antiform," and reproduced his new felt sculptures. This signaled the end of the primary structure and the beginning of a new freedom without restrictions on what materials a sculpture could be made of. A couple of years later there was another article in *Artforum*, written by Willoughby Sharp about Joseph Beuys. This revealed to America a great German artist who for a decade had been making sculpture out of "curious" materials, like fat and felt. Robert Morris, whose article had had the effect of changing the look of sculpture in New York, had been influenced by Beuys but had not acknowledged it. From that day on, after the Beuys article, Morris' reputation as an innovator was damaged.

In modern times, I think, there are basically two schools: the expressionists and the constructivists, and they usually don't agree with each other. Expressionists (whose art-hero is often Duchamp) say about the constructivists that they are tight-assed people without a soul making impersonal art. And the constructivists (who like Malevich a lot) say about the expressionists that they just jack off in public. Some people are borderline cases, but I think most artists fall into one of these two categories.

Barry Le Va went from being an expressionist to being a constructivist. In the early sixties he was a main influence in the antiform movement. His work was gestural, the arrangement of small pieces of material, usually felt, by chance or by manipulation with an object, like a broom; or by scattering. He also did an action, running back and forth in the gallery, slamming his body against each wall, leaving marks on the wall. These were very definitely expressionistic gestures. He then made a transition to formal art, doing works that combined the expressionist and constructivist positions. For the past few years he has been carefully arranging small pieces of material, usually wood, according to a worked-out system based on the dimensions of the gallery. He determines the placement of these small pieces by marking the points where intersecting lines and arcs overlap. These are worked out in preparatory drawings. The intersecting lines start from imagined points outside the gallery or under the floor. The lines then cross marks on one wall and the floor, continue across the gallery, and determine new marks on the opposite wall. The result looks almost the same as the scatter pieces, only cleaner. But they are



constructivist works. The change in approach by Le Va is the most interesting fact of his work for me.



*Accumulated Vision* (Separated Stages): *LENGTH RATIOS* Length and points (of either two, three, or four, individual configurations) separately relocated and projected from four positions of vision. (each position, not necessarily stationary, is located at a specific depth below floor level and within the boundaries designated by the surrounding gallery walls). Installation: Galerie Illeana Sonnabend, Paris, 1976.

The earlier work reflected a revolutionary time that the culture was going through in the late sixties. Now we are in a conservative, leveling-out time. There are no leaders in the country, or revolutionaries, even in art. Nothing new is happening. Established artists are retreating into their old styles, summarizing, cutting their hair short, keeping a low profile, wanting to be recognized in the small art community but not necessarily in the world at large.

In the late sixties several sculptors, some second generation minimal sculptors, began making project, land and earth art: Walter De Maria, Robert Smithson, Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Heiser, Jan Dibbets from Holland and Richard Long from England.

The earth art movement, called land art in Europe, was about moving art work outside the gallery into the landscape, a neutral, open place. It carried the importance of concept into a complete break from object art.

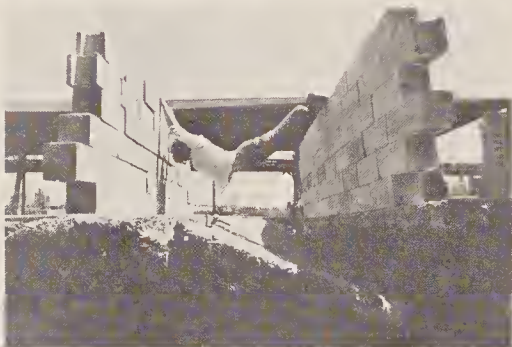


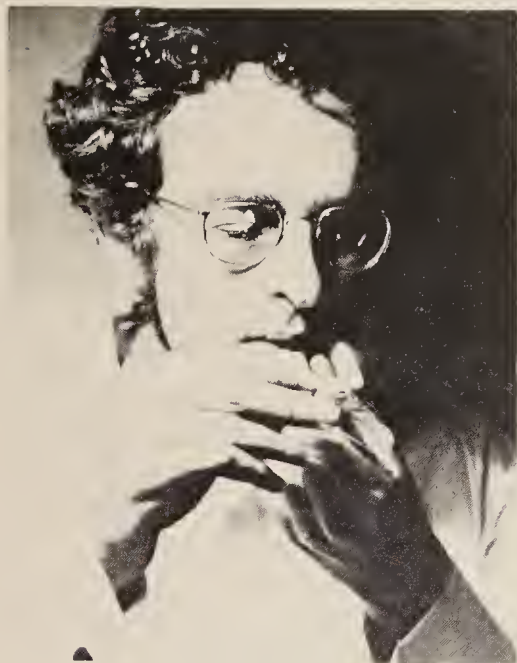
Michael Heiser, Robert Smithson, and Dennis Oppenheim were the three main artists working in the American landscape in the late sixties.

Heiser's work is the closest to traditional sculpture, in that it emphasizes form and scale. In one work he translated a "sketch" from a sidewalk in New York to the desert of Nevada. He dropped five wooden matches on the sidewalk, photographed the position they landed in, and enlarged this pattern in scale to look the same from an airplane. "Double Negative," his most famous work, involved cutting two enormous sections out of the sides of two hills facing each other.

Robert Smithson was for me the least interesting of the earth artists but one of the most interesting writers on the theory of art. He died in a plane crash in the line of duty, while searching out a site for a new work about three years ago.

Dennis Oppenheim became known as one of the leading earth artists in '67 and '68. Marking the surfaces of the earth, cutting rings in the snow in Maine, cutting wheat with a tractor in S curves in Holland, making corkscrew shapes with smoke from a skywriting airplane on the west coast, etc. In 1970 Oppenheim made an evolution in his work from the land to his body. For example, he ran full speed across a mud field, then made plaster casts of the footprints, condensing the distance and stacking them in a row in a gallery. In one work he used his body as a bridge between two walls, while in another his body is lying between two mounds of dirt so that the body is at rest in the valley between the two mounds. These two works were juxtaposed to each other in photographs. The next step for Oppenheim was combining the land and his body directly; he made a film of his stomach with stones on it—as he moved his muscles up and down the stones rolled off, looking like an earthquake propelled them. This use of his body as a field, as a landscape, was an interesting transition of art styles, from earth art to body art, which was a form of conceptual art (action or performance). Later Oppenheim learned to merchandise the documentation of his actions by combining texts, photos, maps, drawings, etc. in a kind of display package, and he has gained a reputation as the bargain basement artist of conceptual art. Like most other first generation conceptual artists in New York, he has stopped making performances. His new work is environmental, and shows himself as the detective, the lecturer, the magician, recaller, etc.





Situational, or environmental, art is art made for the place it is shown, physical space and often political and social position of the inviting institution taken into account. Happenings were situational, so is earth art, so is most conceptual art. Walter De Maria is the model situation artist, although it is difficult to further categorize him. In the middle sixties he did some drawings that were nearly blank, each sheet containing one word in pencil: "sun," "river," "field," etc. Then he began composing large-scale projects. "Art Yard," a work consisting only of text, described an event with bulldozers, bleachers for spectators. He also drew two lines in the desert as a proposal for two parallel walls, one mile long, to be built there. But his most famous work was the realized project of filling the Heiner Freidrich gallery in Munich in 1968 about halfway full of dirt. The statement accompanying this show read: "God has given us the earth and we have ignored it." Later on in the seventies when De Maria exhibited fewer and fewer projects, he kept to himself and became something of a mystery. Artists would speculate about what his next project would be—like one friend of mine who joked that De Maria's next work would be the stampeding of a herd of rhinos through Manhattan Island. De Maria's recent work is a series of pointed steel poles, about twenty feet high, erected in a pattern in the land to catch the lightning.

De Maria was given the cover and some inside pages of *Arts* magazine; he had his name in small type put on the cover and photos of himself enjoying some hash on the inside pages with no text. Another two-page spread, in *Artforum*, had his name repeated over and over again running across the page, superimposed on a photo of a landscape, like a chugging train, the train that thought he could; it read: WalterDeMariaWalterDeMariaWalterDeMariaWalterDeMaria. For his contribution to *Vision* he has selected special colored paper. It is a direct use of material in a publication, not a reproduction, making it an original art work. (Each issue of *Vision* has included an original work in this sense.)



By the early seventies, museums began to discover something they called “project art”—a non-portable art that had to be installed by the artist either in the museum or elsewhere. Christo, a Bulgarian-born artist who has lived in New York for ten years or more, first came to the art world’s attention at the 1968 *Dokumenta* where he showed a 28-story-high inflated plastic cylinder. He has since conceived such overwhelming projects that it was finally necessary for him to develop his own museum structure to manage his works. In 1969 he wrapped one million square feet of Australian coastline in plastic. In 1972 he stretched an orange nylon curtain across a canyon in Colorado. He hired a recognized curator, Jan Van der Marck, to direct the curtain project, and Peter Selz, former director of the University of California Art Museum, to curate his most recent work. This was a twenty-four-mile nylon fence, eighteen feet high, running through two counties in northern California and disappearing into the Pacific Ocean. This project cost him two million dollars and became a news event for its two-week duration in the San Francisco bay area. It was casually spoken about as Christo’s fence by people who never thought about art before. His name is like Picasso to the general public in northern California. The project became an all-compassing social art work. There were helicopter rides over the work, farmers sold barbecued chicken, home-baked pies and Christo souvenirs along the road. At one point the white fence cut half-way through a small town between the general store and a restaurant, with an opening for the main road, making the town like a large theater set with a stage curtain. And all the residents, tourists and highway patrol (directing traffic) became the actors. Christo hired his own police force, made up of art students, to protect the work. He has a staff for each project the size of a large museum: legal department, security people, installers, preparators, publicity department, etc. He is, above all, a business artist, a corporate artist. He has raised literally millions to realize projects that have no function other than their own process.

Christo calls himself a process artist, to emphasize that the process of creating the work—in all its physical, social and psychological aspects—is more important than the product. This is also a way of talking about conceptual art.

The break from object art started with the Fluxus artists and happenings, but these included dance, theater, music, literature, the same as the dada movement. Also like dada, the Fluxus events were done by a band of iconoclasts, and were a rejection of the visual art world, an offshoot. The conceptual art of the late sixties evolved naturally out of the traditions of art as they were being explored and extended. The immediate past has demonstrated that the art is not necessarily the artist’s hand; it is the artist’s idea, or concept. If this is true, then originality (as well as craft) is important, just as it is important to a creative scientist.

The conceptual art movement that was established by 1970 has now become the art of the seventies. Basically, conceptual art is an idea-oriented situation not directed at the production of static objects. There are three main categories: systems, language and action. In systems to



produce visually an explanation of a process developed in an orderly way, leaving exposed the method and materials used for its execution. In language to produce visual images through the use of language, to use language as a material to form an idea. In action to produce an activity that the audience experiences at the moment of its creation, to transmit the intelligence of the artist directly to others, using real time as a material.

The systems area of conceptual art includes Sol LeWitt, Steve Reich, Barry Le Va, Hans Haacke, and, to a lesser degree, Mel Bochner and Dorothea Rockburne. This area is the most product-oriented and conservative of conceptual art. The artist works with a concept, devising the execution of his work according to a plan (system). In most cases the work of these artists is situational.

Sol LeWitt's major work at this time is drawing directly on walls, although he also produces prints and drawings on paper as realizations of his ideas. His drawings sometimes suggest literal images like diagrams for astronomy or cubist painting, but they are carried out according to a pre-formed plan; for example, the one illustrated uses "all two-part combinations of arcs from corners and sides, straight, not-straight and broken lines." Another work is lines "not long, not straight and not touching"; another is the location of a point on the surface with many preparatory marks and lines to find such a point. All preparation, including a written description of the plan, is incorporated into the work. Nothing is hidden or erased in LeWitt's work, not even mistakes (like two lines touching when the plan says they should not touch). These are left and become a part of the work. They don't destroy the concept because these are not computer drawings, but human drawings. LeWitt has worked on all types of irregular wall surfaces. He incorporates the architecture of the gallery into his master plan. In his work prepared for this issue of *Vision*, he is showing the wall drawings of his neighborhood.



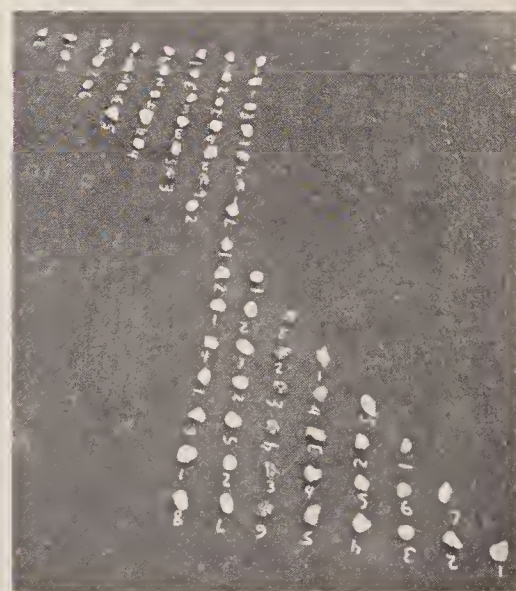


Steve Reich is a composer of music, but because he deals with sound as a material he presents his work in many art galleries. He introduced into modern music the concept of “phasing”: the slow progressive transformation of instruments out of synchronization into sync. Originally this was done with tape loops played at slightly different speeds, so that at one point they were all together (in phase). This scientific-like experiment influenced performance art, especially in putting forth the idea of transformation by slow change—once the conditions are set up, the change is inevitable.

Dorothea Rockburne was in the early seventies working with oil-stained paper environmentally, by running the paper works around corners and onto the floor, maintaining a painter’s eye and not making sculpture works. She has made “drawings that make themselves” by folding the paper and drawing lines where the edge stops; or using carbon paper pinned to the wall, marking the paper, transferring the lines to the wall, and folding the paper back again, exposing the line. Paper became her primary material. I think no other artist before her used drawing as the major act of art and brought it to the status of painting. About two years ago she turned to painting on canvas, preparing raw linen with the traditional coatings of the Renaissance, using glue, sizing, etc., rather than paint—using raw materials with no illusions.



Mel Bochner visually describes the principles of painting and sculpture through the use of basic materials such as stones, walnut shells, pennies, matchsticks, chalklines. Like Johns, he finds numbers beautiful. He has made artworks that explain the theory of relativity, a basic modern sculpture principle. The work illustrated here is “principles of detachment.” Stones on the floor with numbers on them reflect one another but not in a mirror reversal. The inversion is one triangle rotated and flipped over on its back to form a second triangle. His materials are so common that he can pick them up anyplace and create environmental works. His earliest conceptual art works were done directly on the wall; he was probably the first conceptual artist to work on the wall. While his work in the past basically explained sculpture, now, since '73, it explains painting. He paints colored geometric shapes on the walls of a gallery; a single work cannot be seen all at once because of its width, and each painted section can only relate to all the others through memory.





Hans Haacke originally worked with ecological systems, plants and animals. In one work, for example, he introduced a sprinkler system into a small section of a normally dry forest to demonstrate the far-reaching changes caused by introducing a man-made system into nature. In 1970 he moved to social and political systems. His show at the Guggenheim Museum in 1971 included documentation, with names and photos, of slums and slum-lords, one of whom was associated with the museum. The show was canceled, and the curator, Edward Fry, who organized it was fired, after defending Haacke's right to show the entire range of his systems uncensored.

Two years ago for an exhibition in Germany, "Project," Haacke documented the history, including the sale and resale, of a classical painting owned by the host museum. This work of Haacke's was excluded from the show. Daniel Buren, a French artist also invited to exhibit, was outraged at this treatment of Haacke. Buren uses sections of paper or cloth with awning-type stripes as his signature, which he integrates into the urban landscape. After pasting one wall in the corridor with so many sections of vertical stripes the size of easel paintings, he continued the collage idea by pasting smaller photographs of the excluded Haacke piece on top of each of his sections. The museum then proceeded to paste white pieces of paper over the Haacke reproductions that were over the Buren pieces, defacing the art work and so unintentionally continuing the collage one step further.

Daniel Buren was invited to make a work for this issue of *Vision* to give a non-New Yorker's view of New York City. He has exhibited many times in New York, but lives in Paris.

Les Levine, an artist who also works with social and political material, once could have been called a systems artist. In 1969 he filled a vacant lot with plastic curved-module shapes and removed them a few at a time, every day for a month, to reveal the vacant lot. The accompanying poster read, "You get more with Les," a pun on the popular phrase, "less is more," used to explain minimalism. Since that time he has been moving fast and changing his materials often, so it appears that he has a short attention span and doesn't have a definitive style. He opened a restaurant about six years ago specializing in Irish, Jewish, and Canadian cuisine. The restaurant had closed-circuit TV. He has presented characters (himself in make-up): one in black-face (a parody on the new black consciousness); an Arab (after the oil embargo); a Chinese wearing his official government uniform—horn-rimmed glasses, suit and tie (after friendly relations with China). He has been making videotapes of comedy-parodies of the contemporary art world. He acts as a reporter-educator, and considers himself a "media artist." He steps on some toes and because of the parody in his work and his blatant use of publicity (the posters for his last show, illustrated in the work he did for *Vision*, saturated Soho), he has gained the reputation of being a wise-guy whizz kid.

Artists working in language, the most radical area of conceptual art, have carried minimalist thinking, a subtraction of material, to the point of no object at all. The subject and properties of the art are suggested through



the use of language. The visual nature of the art is provided by the viewer, who uses the artist's language as a starting point for his own illumination. The art language movement has suggested to some people that "conceptual art isn't visual," but all visual art is visual, including all conceptual art. It is true that there are a few people who call themselves language artists and they write (but are not writers as anyone who reads the work can tell), producing pages of text which is not visual (it is often Marxist rhetoric). But there are also visual artists who use language (like DeMaria or Bruce Nauman), and there are language artists who work visually, like Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner.

Robert Barry, originally a painter, continually reduced his work to the point of invisibility. He is the ultimate invisible artist and for me the most successful language artist. He was the originator of the much-copied idea "for my show the gallery will be closed." He also showed FM radio waves, naturally invisible, overhead in a gallery, yet defined them on a wall label in such a way as to create a picture in the mind of the observer. When he stopped painting he said that he discarded the idea that art is necessarily something to look at. This quote by Barry sums up his philosophy: "The sound of my carrier wave pieces is only a clue to an entire environment, only a means to make people aware." He is a teacher and once assigned his class to conceive of a work that would not be known to anyone outside the class, and added the condition that if information on the work leaked out the work would cease to exist. One time he presented all the known words introduced into the English language during the sixteenth century. Many word pieces are presented in the form of slide projections. In the above example the words were in red, changing every few seconds. He has presented in a show, "All the things that exist that are not known to me." Even though his works are usually invisible, he is without question a visual artist.

Lawrence Weiner in 1968 ran strings between stakes driven into the ground and these strings were cut by irate people. He then realized that his piece did not have to exist, that its effect had been in suggesting it. After doing several works involving the removal of something—like a section of a gallery wall or a square from a rug in use, Weiner began proposing situations with words. These usually explained that it was not necessary to make the works, once we were made aware of them. One of these works was, for example, "An object tossed from one country to another." Two others were: "A rubber ball thrown at the sea. A rubber ball thrown on the sea." Several years ago Weiner moved to Amsterdam, setting up residence, and because of the liberal government was able to take advantage of a financial subsidy to artists. This move suggested, like the move to Europe of several jazz musicians in the fifties and sixties, a dissatisfaction with the place innovative art has in the American culture. Naturally in the most capitalistic culture in the world an art form like conceptual art that is hard to market will not be easily accepted. Art based on ideas has more acceptance in Europe where museum curators in general are more scholarly and less involved with commercial gallery connections. Weiner's move to Holland I viewed as an art work.

The third area of conceptual art, action, is also called performance art or performance sculpture. The primary activity for this is not in New York but in Dusseldorf, San Francisco, Rome and many parts of Eastern Europe. Three main figures for this art in New York are Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, and William Wegman. Recently performance art in New York has become a popular form of inexpensive entertainment used in galleries and the Whitney Museum, but because of the dominance of important dancers there, it gets mixed up with other art forms.

Action conceptual art is the activity of an artist working, carrying out research using materials that include the passage of time. An audience may observe this activity, like a group of medical students observing an operation in the round. The art is not participatory as in happenings. The art is not a repeat from a script as in theater. It is not a piece of real life—the artist's role in society is to observe real life and report on it poetically. If the movement of his materials is sure and honest, the work becomes a beautiful gesture. If he is pretending, acting out, he is doing a piece of theater and not a work of sculpture.

Vito Acconci came into visual art by way of literature. Originally a recognized poet in the esoteric literary world, he became the leading figure in this country of the body art movement, using his body as the field and portions of his body as material for making actions that gave deep psychological revelations into personality. His works have also introduced into the art world literary and theatrical elements. In 1972 in an exhibition organized on a pier he spent several nights alone at the end of the pier revealing secrets about himself to people who would come out there one at a time. For the Software show he spent his time in the museum invading the eighteen-inch space, the invisible barrier, people have around themselves. For the Information show he had all his mail forwarded to the museum and put on a table every day. He made an action involving making eye contact with each person in the audience. He made a learning piece, playing a record of Leadbelly's a little at a time, over and over, singing along with it to an audience until he had learned the entire song. His most famous work, because of an article in *Artforum*, was the planting of his seed through masturbation under a false wedge-shaped floor in the Sonnabend Gallery while fantasizing about the people walking above him on the slanted floor. In a way, he is out of place in the New York art world where the majority of the art produced is cool and constructivist. But the honesty in his work and his lack of fear of making a fool out of himself is, for me, the key to a great artist. Now that performance art has reached academic proportions, artists like Acconci have stopped making performances or actions. Acconci's last several works have been environmental, often using slide projections, tape recordings, and video.

A tool used by many action conceptual artists is video, a whole area by itself, used more and more by visual artists. There have been many attempts to publish and market artists' videotapes, first (in the late '60s) by the German dealer, Gerry Schum, who committed suicide a few years ago. Some New York galleries sell video cas-



settes and some art collectors have playback decks attached to their television sets. Most major museums now have video equipment, thanks to the promotion of the medium by David Ross of the Long Beach Museum.

But the most obvious use of artists' videotapes is to broadcast them, and cable TV. seems a fertile ground. The astute art journalist for *Newsweek*, Douglas Davis, is a video artist who has pioneered the use of cable television, broadcasting over Manhattan Cable. Davis has been instrumental in creating Cable Soho, which is just coming into existence, and plans regular broadcasts of video art. Davis uses the medium directly, as an educational tool. In one tape he works with the intimacy of the medium, inviting the viewers to place their hands against his hands pressed against their TV. screens.

Video is an intimate medium, one-to-one. It is different from film, which is shown in a darkened theater to many people, the image and light projected from behind the viewer to the screen. Video is seen in a lighted room (preferably a home or a bar), and the image is from inside the TV., projected out toward the viewer. Also, video is immediate, both for the viewer, who can turn it on (or off) anytime, and for the artist working with it. It can be seen at the same time it is recorded and can be replayed immediately. The tape is inexpensive and can be re-used, creating the opportunity for real-time use without regard for lost footage as in film.

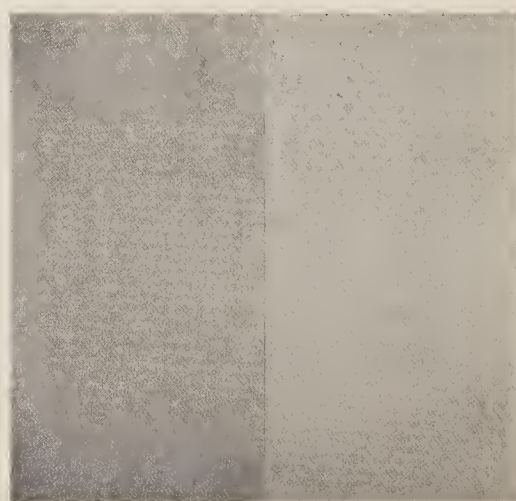
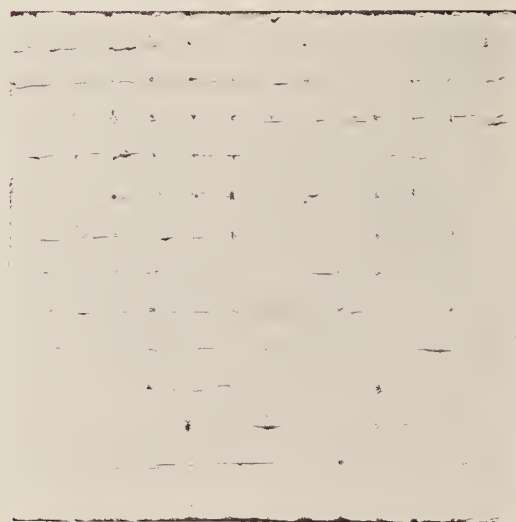
William Wegman is an action artist who uses video as his major medium. He came to New York from California (is still included in shows of California art out here), but has lived in New York for about five years and made his reputation there. He began by making environmental situations, two side-by-side almost the same, designed so that you could find the difference. These were sculptural, about the relationship of two objects, two environments, and were designed for the still camera. Lately he has been using a video camera to record comic situations, using his dog (Man Ray), trying to teach him tricks. The tapes are about learning, but the deadpan, uncomprehending look of the dog makes them funny.

Conceptual artists, whether they work in systems, language, or action, are usually sculptors. This is still an age of sculpture, and every five years someone proves painting is dead, but then some painters come along and revitalize it.

Robert Ryman is the ultimate perfectionist (after Kelly). His own signature is made with as much care as the work. His paintings, usually made from white material or painted white, are simple, elegant pieces of purity, presented without fanfare or frames. He will design his paintings, sometimes, to fit the gallery where they are to be shown, keeping the scale just right.

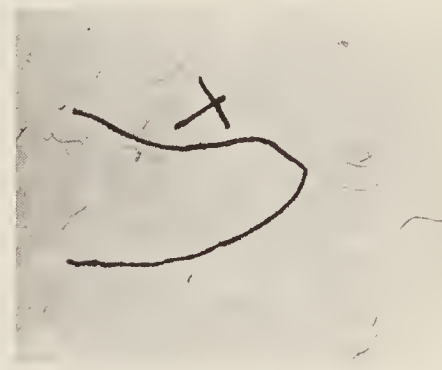
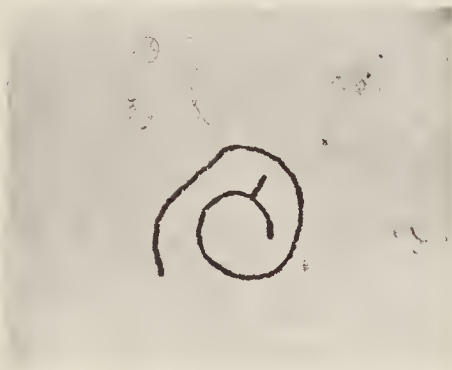
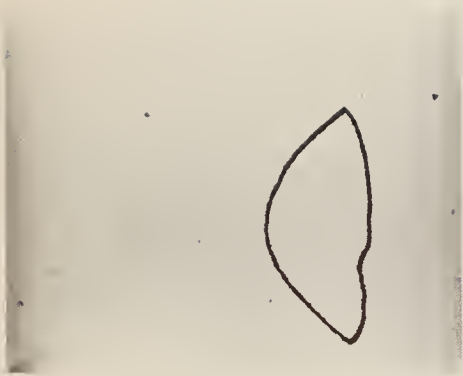
Brice Marden is a good old-fashioned painter in the tradition of Rothko. He brings painterly concerns to their logical conclusion by building up layer on layer of wax paint to create tactile, physical slabs of paint, sheets of subdued color or gray, usually in sections of two or three. While these works don't necessarily evolve art any further, they are comforting and quieting.

Robert Mangold uses geometric shapes, sometimes imperfect, perfectly presented in the least interesting way possible. His work is deliberately plain, yet it always



retains balance. "His approach involves the fusion of extremes—the assertion of an impassive surface and an almost invisible atmospheric haze," wrote Lucy Lippard about Mangold in her book, *Changing*.

Joel Fisher is a young artist whose work has been shown as painting and sculpture at the same time, and reflects an attitude of quiet and modesty. He makes paper, using sometimes his own clothes or hair. At first he simply showed the paper, hanging on the wall like paintings or stacked like a piece of sculpture. Lately he has done a series in which he selected one prominent hair that had been formed by chance in the paper, and copied it with pencil, close to the original, enlarging it and giving an incredible sense of depth. The surface drawing shape seems to be projected from the smaller organic version imbedded inside the paper. A collection of these drawings comprises his alphabet.



Chuck Close's work summarizes a lot of styles in art. He paints according to a system of grids, pre-determined as in systems conceptual art. (His paintings disguise his method of working, but his prints and drawings demonstrate it.) Like an action artist he works ritualistically, so many hours a day, on a tight schedule, working scientifically so close to the surface that the whole is not seen until the entire grid is filled in. He uses a pop art manner of reproducing, in essence, commercial color printing processes, layer on layer of four basic printing colors, with no blending, creating a realistic portrait. These portraits are faces the size of your body when you stand in front of them. Up close, your body experiences them in an architectural scale, like coming up to a wall or a door—similar to the way large-scale minimal sculpture is experienced. It was fascinating to me when I first saw Chuck Close's work, that a painting of this scale draws you up to it, and at close range is pulsating, while it functions with photographic realism from across the room.

"His genius was of such excellence that there was nothing in nature, mother of all and prime mover of the heavens' continuous circling, that he with his stylus and with the pen or with the brush could not paint so that it seemed, not like unto it, but rather that very thing itself; so that many times men's visual sense was deceived by the things he made, believing real that which was painted."\*

All the art in this text is part of history. New York has been the center of art for a quarter of a century. But because of world-wide intercommunication the art that is most characteristic of its own region is the most valid art today. The new art does not imitate New York.

When the Whitney Annual became an art school show, and the Modern adopted the old Met's policy of only showing "dead" artists, and Birdland turned into a topless discotheque—this signaled to me the decline of New York City as Babylon.

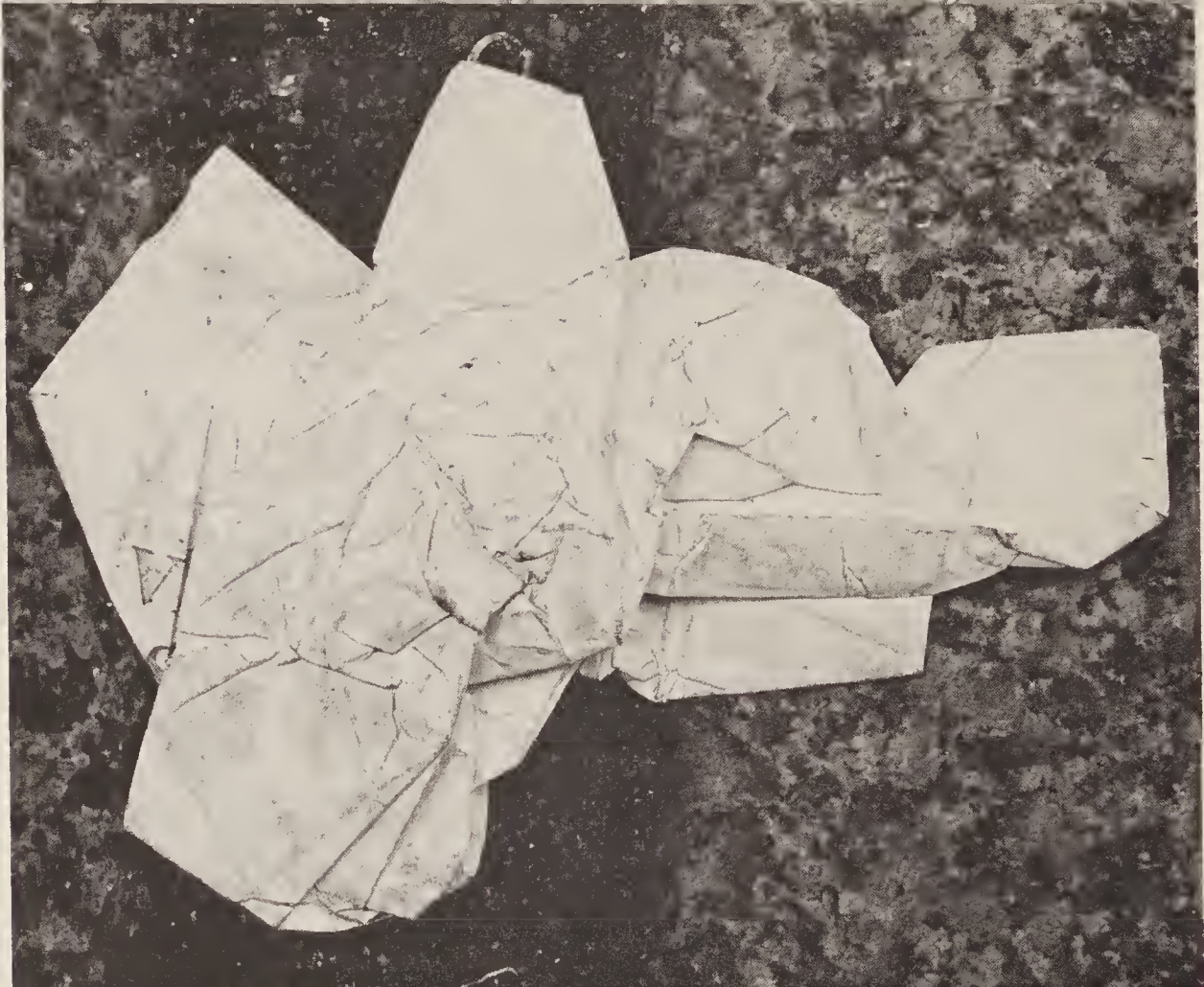
\*Boccaccio describing Giotto in the *Decameron*

Claes  
Oldenburg  
Collecting  
Ray guns  
in New York.











# SATISFACTION

\*All transactions, excepting dialog in program, are to be verbally silent, or extremely minimal. For parts 1 and 2, persons C and D carry out elsewhere same plan as A and B.

1

\*A, telephoning B, saying:  
this is ———

B, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

B, telephoning A, asking:  
are you thinking of me

A, replying: unh-hunh  
(or)  
unh-unh

hanging up

A, telephoning B, saying:  
I was thinking of you

B, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

B telephoning A, asking:  
do you know how much  
I think of you

A, replying: unh-hunh  
(or)  
unh-unh

hanging up

A, telephoning B, saying:  
you must be thinking of me

B, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

2

A (with B) saying to B:

praise me

(or)

look at me

(or)

comfort me

(or)

feed me

(or)

kiss me

(or)

bathe me

showing how

B, answering: unh-hunh

(or)

unh-unh

complying if agreeable

A, repeating request

or choosing another

B, answering

complying or not

till options are exhausted

3

C and D (with A and B) saying to A:

praise B

(or)

look at B

(or)

comfort B

showing how

A, answering: unh-hunh

(or)

unh-unh

complying if agreeable

C and D, nodding or shaking heads

C and D, repeating request

or choosing another

A, answering

complying or not

C and D, nodding or shaking heads

till options are exhausted

. . . . .

C and D, saying to B:

feed A

(or)

kiss A

(or)

bathe A

showing how

B, answering: unh-hunh

(or)

unh-unh

complying if agreeable

C and D, nodding or shaking heads

C and D, repeating request

or choosing another

B, answering

complying or not

C and D, nodding or shaking heads

till options are exhausted

4

C, telephoning A, saying:  
this is \_\_\_\_\_

A, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

C, again telephoning A, asking:  
did you like me

A, replying: unh-hunh  
(or)  
unh-unh

hanging up

C, again telephoning A, saying:  
I like you

A, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

. . . .

D, telephoning B, saying:  
this is \_\_\_\_\_

B, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

D, again telephoning B, asking:  
did you understand me

B, replying: unh-hunh  
(or)  
unh-unh

hanging up

D, again telephoning B, saying:  
I am really for you

B, replying: unh-hunh  
hanging up

Ordinarily, we want and manage to get a certain amount of attention from the world all of our lives. The kind, manner and quantity may change, but in any case it's attention. It follows that others want attention from us. A sort of acknowledgement-economics is involved, a trade-off, usually with a profit motive called selfishness. We would like (unconsciously of course) to get more than we give.

Sometimes, this economics gets turned around through social training and guilt, and we try to get attention for giving much more attention than we seem to receive. But gaining by losing can be as transcendent and tender an experience as being endlessly served. It's a question of how much one throws oneself into it. Martyrs and tyrants are satisfaction experts.

Most of us move between these poles, getting a little, giving a little. We engage in an economics of relative stinginess.

How we negotiate the trading is interesting. Needs are expressed blatantly or indirectly. Subtle bargaining takes place without words. Real or imagined inequities are renegotiated by exacting sanctions or overbestowing compensations. Feelings flow.

In this Activity, four persons carry out a program of stereotyped moves in which they may receive and give attentions. Directly and indirectly. But, although simple enough on the surface, the moves are maximally ambiguous. When person A telephones person B and says, leadingly, "you must be thinking of me" and B replies "unh-hunh" and hangs up, this could mean anything. The tone of voice each uses could convey warmth or coolness; and the hanging up of the phone could signify a put-down or an enthusiastic anticipation of the moment the two will soon meet in the next part of the piece. The program calls for exaggerated forms of attention-getting and giving but within this framework A and B can manipulate covertly, even for mutual benefit.

Similarly, when the situation becomes socialized by the added presence of C and D (who also need attentions but are engaged, apparently, in arranging only B's attentions to A), the question of who is benefiting from whom, and in what way, comes up. That is, there are always choices: choices of type of attention, choices to accept or reject it, and choices of interpretation and the spirit in which it is made. Each choice provokes a question of motive and yield.

If C and D can manage to act harmoniously and can communicate it (this is uncertain), then when they suggest (command?) (request?) (state?) that A, for instance, is to kiss B, this may be embarrassing to A or B, or both of them, in which case C and D may appear to be insensitive do-gooders. If A declines for whatever reasons, C and D (and even B) may take this as a rejection *or a relief*.

Further, since C and D must first demonstrate just how A is to kiss B, this could be an emotional issue for them. If both of them kiss B, B could feel a bit overwhelmed, the situation might reduce to a silly comedy, and A's possibly genuine wish to kiss B could feel awkward or impossible. But it could also turn out to be an expression of warm affection between all parties. At this point in the piece, awareness of their absurd positions in a routine which both protects them from real life while revealing it abundantly, could unite them in a common irony.

Thus when C and D nod or shake their heads following A's negative or positive response to their demonstration, such movements not only signify approval and disapproval; they can be read as amazement, disbelief, a cue for some action, or disappointment. The whole Activity is structured within these potentially unclear signals because it is assumed that other signals not in the program will be quite clear.

In the last part of the Activity, C and D telephone A and B respectively, soliciting affection in a way that A and B did of each other in the first part—presumably to be reassured that they had treated A and B kindly and were appreciated. The short responses they get might be chilling but the inuendos of voice and pace could change abruptness into coded pleasure. In any event none of this can be forecast; the participants make the reality for which the program is a scaffold.

"Satisfaction" was carried out in New York City by four groups of four, using their everyday environments, in April of 1976. It was sponsored by the M. L. D'Arc Gallery, N.Y.

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**Allan Kaprow—4/76**

Note: Photo illustrations which normally appear linked to texts such as this, have been eliminated due to space restrictions. If the piece were properly laid-out, twenty pages would have been necessary.









ART CIRCUIT

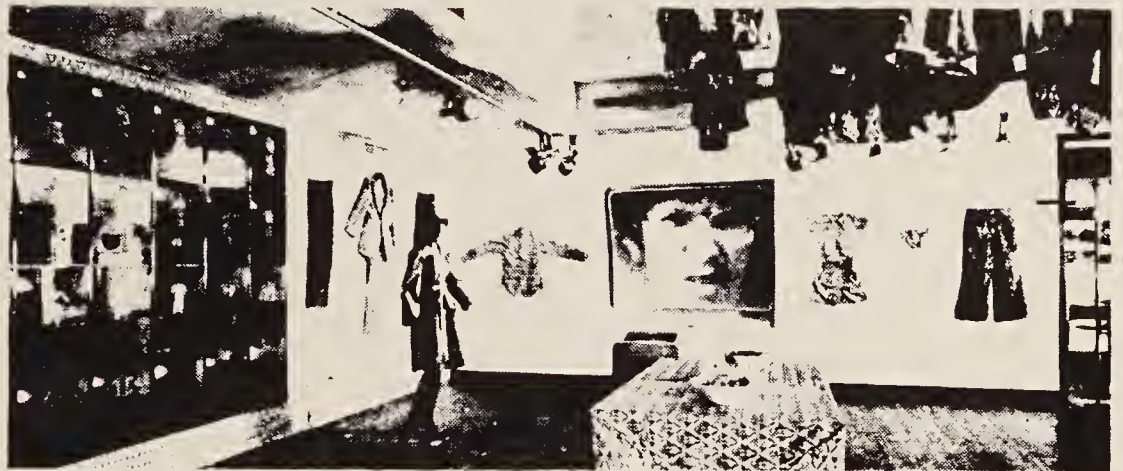
*Les Levine takes on the minimalists*

Les Levine — whose early work was such a departure from art trends that the phrase "conceptual art" had to be invented to describe it — is an artist on a crusade. He believes art is becoming increasingly esoteric and aristocratic, operating on a level that is out of reach for the public. His show at D'Arc Gallery (a new gallery at 15 East 57th St.) is partly a comment on the death of modern art styles and partly a satire on minimalist art, which he blames for many of the art world's woes.

Whether or not the satire on minimalism is deserved, Levine's exhibit has a breathtaking range and a colorful diversity. His exhibit, "What can the federal government do for you, 76 billion times," involves some 400 separate pieces and an unending video tape. Most of the pieces are some form of apparel — suits, dresses, skirts, pants, panties, scarves and bras, among other items — with the question "What can the federal government do for you?" silk-screened on each.

Levine's idea is to go in the opposite direction of the minimalists by looking for essences in the detailed, diversified facets of our wardrobes. By working with wardrobes, he has chosen the antithesis of the minimalist forms of solid canvases and geometric designs. Levine says he would like to tell the minimalists, "You guys keep this up and there won't be any art left."

Levine says one of the ways to bring art out of minimalism is to work with forms that are most ac-



*Les Levine's D'Arc Gallery exhibit in 400 pieces*

cessible to the public — which is why he works with clothes and video tape. "Minimalism has become mean," says Levine. "It has become self-centered and un-giving. The minimalists have found a language to talk with among themselves that leaves everyone else out."

The first conceptual art that Levine exhibited was entitled "Profit Systems" — which appeared in 1966. Levine created the work by purchasing a block of common stock and selling it a year later, using the profit and loss figures as the art work. His art was described then as "conceptual" because it involved ideas rather than objects. Levine now says he is in the process of combining ideas and objects; in his words, he is using objects "to absorb conceptual art."

Two other exhibits of Levine's at

the D'Arc are "We are still alive" and "During the first moment of your Death: Remember." The first is a photographic and video-tape view of Eskimo life in Canada; the second is a satire on the state of abstract art. "The first moment" is set in a room lit only by candlelight and containing variations on 13 pieces of an artist's clothing. William Burroughs narrates Levine's adaptation of the Tibetan Book of the Dead on tape, while a vision of a couple in sexual embrace appears on a mirror. The effect is too ominous to draw a smile, and yet there is a thoughtful humor in the way the death scene is planned. According to Levine, anyone who interprets the work as anti-art is misinformed. "I just want to ask if art has ceased to be a device for developing human consciousness."

— CHRISTOPHER SHARP



## *The joker is wild-eyed*

By RICKI FULMAN

It seems like a joke at first. The shiny red poster promoting artist Les Levine's newest exhibit, "What Can The Federal Government Do For You?" highlights a life-size photo of Levine's face.

But something is distorted. Instead of the artist's own blue eyes, the eyes are Oriental (actually they're the eyes of Levine's Japanese wife). The effect is to make the artist look like a Japanese businessman.

It's typical of Levine's tricks. They amuse while they make a point. The eye switch is the artist's statement that U.S. politics has reached the ridiculous.

"Politicians have come to believe that in order to get elected they have to go to the Orient," he says. "They're totally out of touch with their constituents."

The exhibit, on view at the M.L. D'Arc Gallery, 15 E. 57 St. through March 31, at first looks like a dramatization of Levine's oddball humor.

An enormous room is filled with 400 articles of clothing of all shapes, fabrics, and colors, meant for men, women and children. Called "federal" clothes, they share one thing in common — they are all patterned over and over with the question "What Can the Federal Government Do For You?" Mannequins dressed in the clothes stand in different corners, asking the same question (without moving their lips). A large screen projects interviews with 76 people describing what they would like from the government.

Levine says the exhibit cost him \$12,000 to assemble, and is slated to travel around the country until the election. "I think the

Federal Government has made us its prisoners, he said.

"Whomever we vote for doesn't change a thing. The government could serve me better by doing less."

In this bicentennial election year, he said he'd like to see people think more seriously about the failure of government and its constant lies. "At least if they would say we're in trouble we'd be getting somewhere."

If people wore these clothes, Levine believes, or asked what the government could do for them, they would feel more connected to each other.

Levine will sell his designs at \$200 apiece, which entitles a buyer to manufacture them, if he wishes.

Other Levine exhibits are also on view at the M.L. D'Arc Gallery, including one titled: "During the first moment of your death: remember," which presents a ritual on the death of art styles and a 30-minute taped statement written by Levine and read by writer William S. Burroughs.

While the voice discusses the death of certain art styles and the need to create new ones that are more meaningful and less commercial, on a large mirror flashes an occasional shot of a couple in sexual union to illustrate the rebirth of art and idea of life-giving.

This all takes place in a room lit only by candlelight, with a clothesline on one side. Thirteen pieces of the artist's clothing hang from it. They are wet, dripping into three stainless steel troughs. They are the clothes he wore on the day he decided to give up his attachment to a certain art style.

The exhibits are open to the public, free of charge, and can be viewed daily, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.















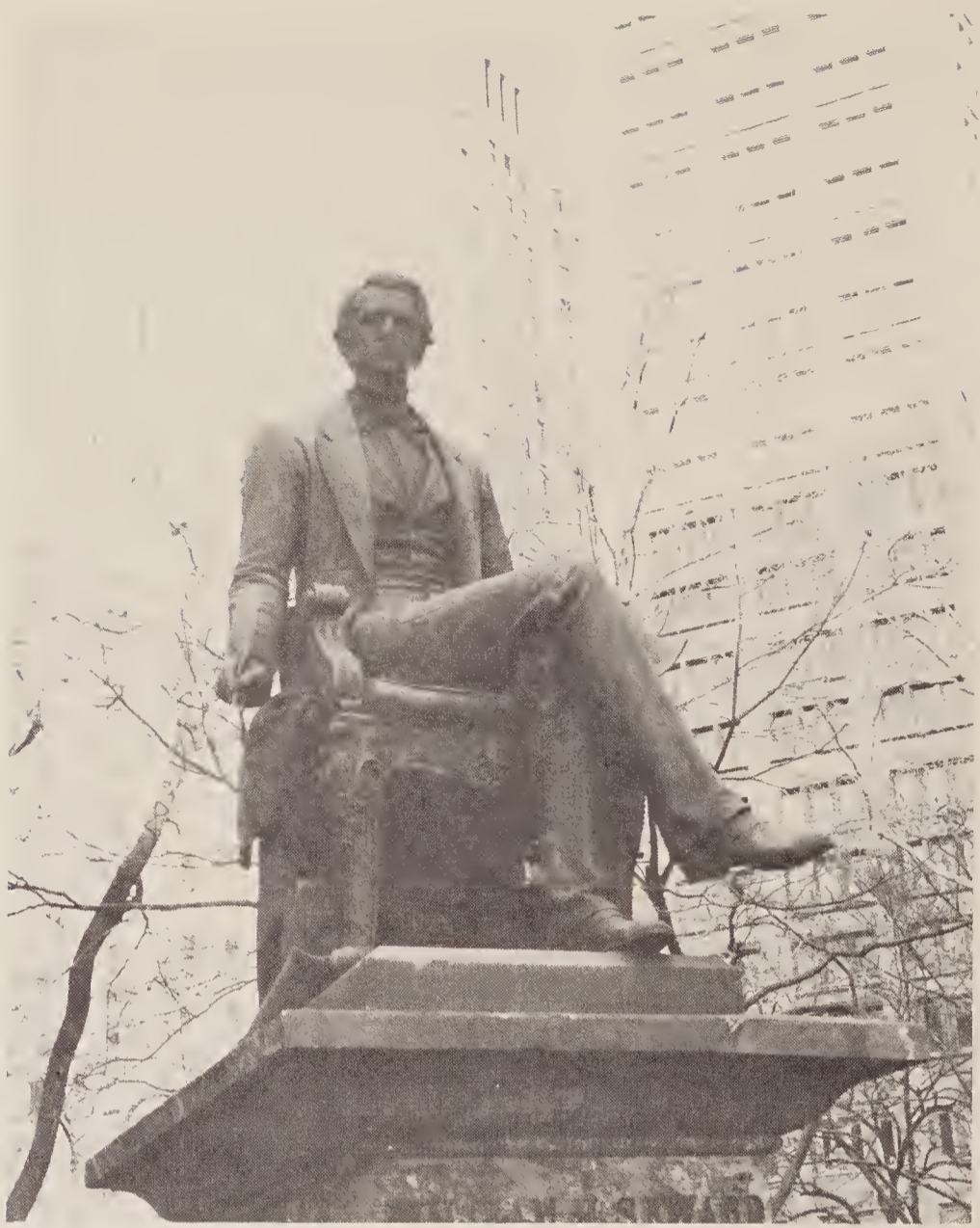
WALTER DE MARIA





Photo/souvenir "Ballet in Manhattan," Ballet No. 6, "Central Park," 5 dancers, papers black and white, New York, June 5, 1975.

All the photos are taken by Daniel Buren.



Photo/souvenir Statue on Madison Square Park, New York, March 1976.



Photo/souvenir 14 East 23rd Street, New York, January 1976.



Photo/souvenir vertical stripes white and blue on a statue in  
Central Park, New York, October 1970.



Photo/souvenir 13½ Bleecker Street, vertical stripes white and violet, New York October 1970 (visible till May 1973).





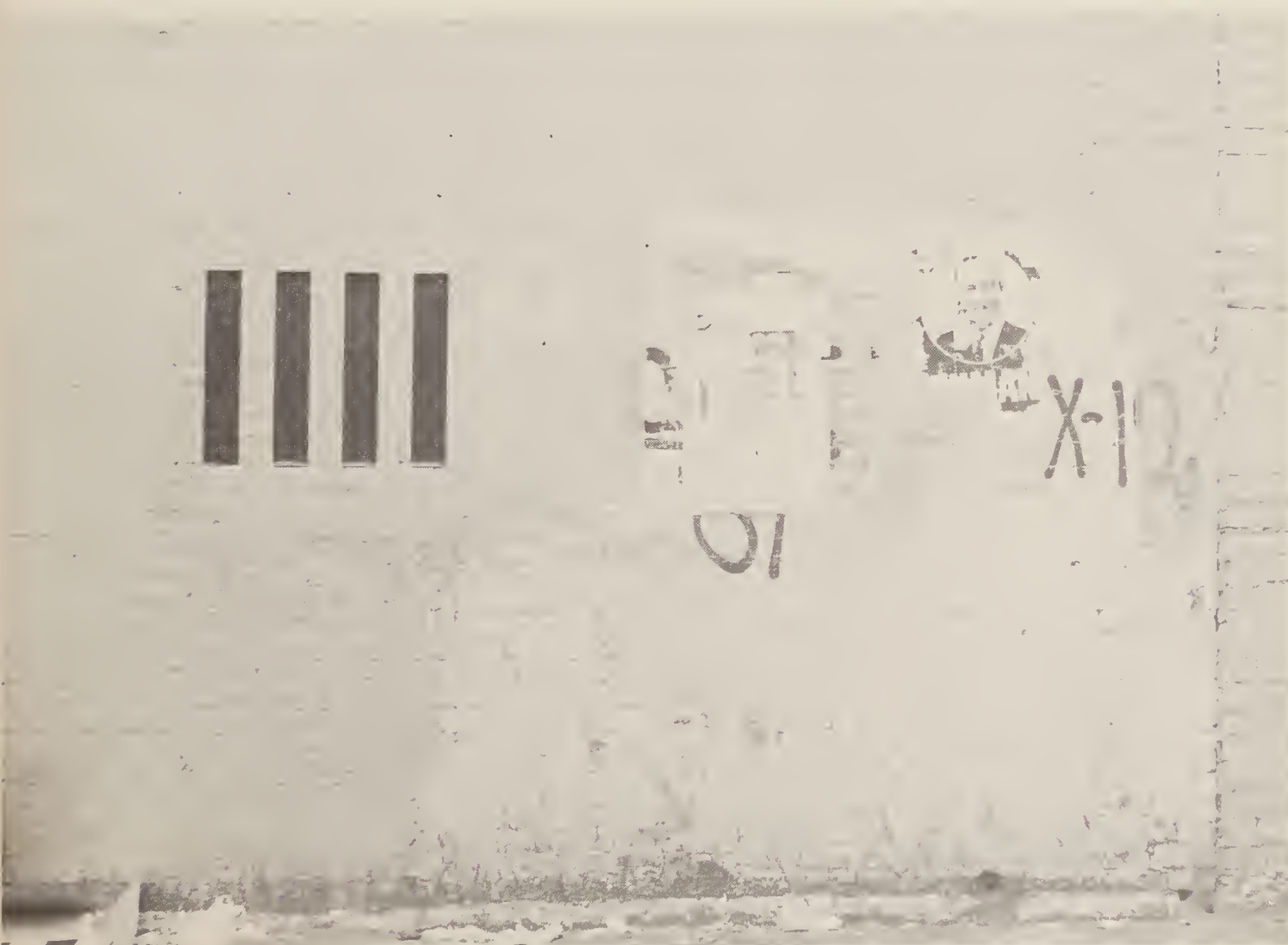
Photo/souvenir The Iron Building, New York, March 1976.



Photo/souvenir the World Trade Center from the top of the Clock Tower building, New York, March 1976.



Photo/souvenir "Within and Beyond the Frame"  
outside part of the work crossing West Broadway from the 4th floor at  
the John Weber Gallery, New York, October 1973.



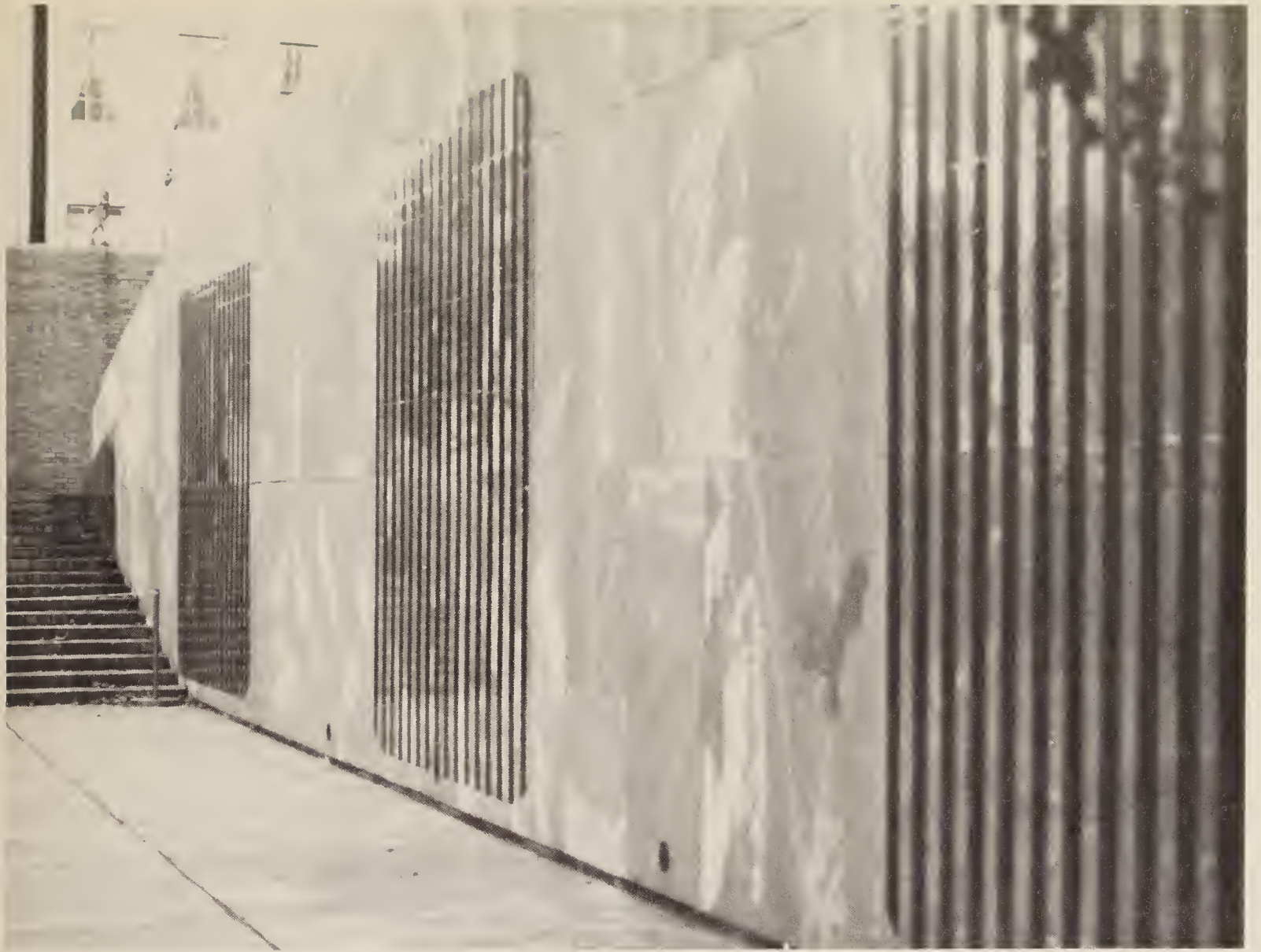
Transparent and black stripe on a yellow wall in Lafayette Street, New York, October 1974.



Photo/souvenir "The Wonder Wheel," Coney Island (white and orange vertical stripes), New York, May 1973.



Photo/souvenir vertical white and orange stripes on West Broadway, New York, May 1973.



Photo/souvenir "From and Off the Windows," vertical black stripes serigraphed on transparent paper glued on the marble wall of the garden of the MOMA, New York, October 1974 till January 1975.



Photo/souvenir "From and off the windows," fragmented piece on a billboard, corner of Canal and Lafayette, New York City, visible from October 1970 till June 1975.

August 26, 1974

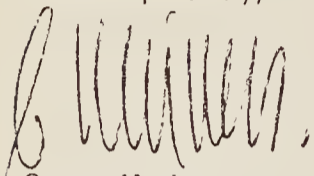
Mr. Louis J. Lefkowitz  
Attorney General of New York State  
Albany, N.Y.

Dear Sir;

I can easily understand why fresh out of school attorneys at your New York City office are given the easy and rewarding task of harassing artists. Artists traditionally have always been easy game, first to the police, then the buildings department, now the condominium section of your department. These artists have been paying off every conceivable department; to get renovation plans approved, to obtain certificates of occupancy, permits for electric meters, permits for public assembly, even to have garbage picked up, and I doubt they are going to rush paying off more for approval of prospectuses, more lawyers fees and the like, especially since your department does have the right to waive the requirement for small cooperatives to file formal offerings.

I wonder if your department is aware of the consequences such irresponsible harassment will cause. For the past 6 years, the area bounded by Houston and Canal streets, New York City, (originally named Hells Hundred Acres) has undergone considerable improvement, without any cost to taxpayers and without harming anyone, primarily because of renovation of buildings bought by groups of artists. All such obstruction from your department could achieve, is to stop improvement of the entire area, letting individual landlords keep the buildings in the same dilapidated and neglected condition as they have done for the past 100 years.

Yours respectfully,



George Maciunas  
349 West Broadway  
New York, 10013

cc to:

Mr. Mark Tipperman, assistant attorney general, 2 World Trade Center, New York City,  
Hon. Mayor Beame, City Hall, New York City  
Hon. Governor Wilson, Albany, N.Y.



I have included some of my correspondence with the New York State Attorney General, which will be included in a kit I am producing, that will include masks for disguises, postcards mailed from strange places (to confuse him about my whereabouts), plans of my fortress and escape routes (to avoid arrest) etc.

December 12, 1974

Attorney General of New York State,  
2 World Trade Center  
New York, N.Y. 10047

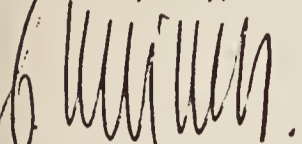
Gentlemen;

I have an extra sensory perception that you are trying to communicate with me. Instead of writing to me directly you seem to be attempting to reach me by harassing my friends and relatives. I thought your office was slightly above such Gestapo techniques. If however I am mistaken, then you should maybe set 80 Wooster street building on fire in order to smoke me out. Or, on the other hand, you should simply write to me, something you should have tried before embarking on these absurd round about approaches. I will try to cooperate and supply you with whatever information you require. I suspect however, that information is not what you desire.

You have been supplied already with various documents regarding 141 Wooster street and Good Deal Realty Corp. which you never bothered to read or even look at, since you requested for same documents again and again.

Unlike yourselves, I am very busy doing work and can not waste time playing lawyers games. I will try to cooperate only after I have been convinced that you have information gathering purpose and not that of harassment for the sake of harassment.

Yours very truly,



George Maciunas  
80 Wooster street  
New York, N.Y. 10012

tel: (212) 966-6689



January 11, 1975

Mr. Lawrence F. Ravetz  
Deputy Assistant Attorney General  
State of New York  
Department of Law  
2 World Trade Center  
New York, N.Y. 10047

Dear Sir;

In my letter of December 12, 1975, I suggested that you request me in writing whatever information you required and I promised to cooperate if your request seemed to have a purpose other than that of harassment for the sake of harassment.

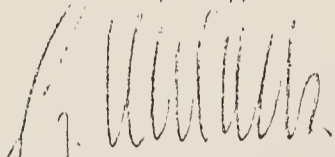
Since that time you performed miserably. All I got is a message with your telephone number. I still do not know what information you seek. I do know your telephone number, but I knew that before.

Meanwhile you continue your useless and disgraceful harassment tactics. The three hour torture of my sister (who has absolutely no information) and your threat to torture my 73 year old and ailing mother is ample proof of your contemptible intentions.

You also gave another proof of your total lack of interest in the information you suppose to gather by asking my sister for the name of the bank used by Good Deal Realty Corp. If you took the trouble to read the documents I submitted to you regarding 141 Wooster st. you would have known the name of the bank. There is also no need to ask my sister, my mother or my uncle for my hat size or how frequently I take haircuts. They would not know, but I will give this to you: my hat size 23" (large), collar size - 15½, I weigh 160lbs, I take haircuts once every month, I do not hang around bars, my favorite hang out is my own room, I do not smoke, I do not drink, I do not have money, or bank accounts, or gold bars hidden under my mattress, yes, my room has windows, you can climb down the fire escape (do you intend to break through them?), The schools I attended are: Hastings-on-Hudson, Cooper Union school of Architecture, Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Institute of Fine Arts (NYU) in New York City, I travelled a lot in the past and will in the future, I earn my living by doing architectural and graphic design, and selling my art (could send you samples in the future), I spend about 2½ dollars per day for food, I take Adrenocorticotropin for my asthma condition every three days, my medical records are at Roosevelt Hospital and USAF hospital in Wiesbaden, F.R. of G. Any more questions?

So far you have not convinced me of your information gathering purpose. In fact your scandalous behaviour and failure to read the information submitted to you convinced me beyond any doubt, that your only purpose like that of many other government officials is to extract a bribe from me.

Yours very truly,



George Maciunas  
80 Wooster st.  
New York, N.Y. 10012

cc. to: Mr. Louis J. Lefkowitz, attorney General, Albany, N.Y.  
Mr. David Clurman, Director, Bureau of Securities and Public Financing  
Mr. Carey, Governor, State of New York, Albany, N.Y.

April 1, 1975

Mr. Lawrence F. Ravetz  
Deputy Assistant Attorney General  
State of New York  
Department of Law  
2 World Trade Center  
New York, N.Y. 10047

Dear Sir;

Your so called "investigation" begins to resemble a blindfolded man on a street swinging a large club and hitting lamp posts firehydrants, cats, dogs, parked cars, windows and sometimes a passerby, but never hitting the target which is not even in the street.

Since you are obviously running out of persons to harass, I include some names and their phones. At least these names resemble mine, and that is saying more than trying to subpoena seagulls and other birds.

Machuca	595-2761	Mak Cheuk Ping	673-3242	Macanas	725-8030
Macinnis	689-7607	Makarushka	595-6099	Mao Chun Fan	666-2841
Machinas	533-6937	Ma Chung Ming	227-7867	Matunas	686-7354
Maciukas	595-2765	Ma Sin Kan	477-4093	McCannon	879-4965

And when you are through with them, try these

Bing Ng	226-2538	Rose Stolen	865-4191	Buddy Zzzyp	861-2008
Yip Yiek	737-8575	Yan on Ying	431-3447	Shmule Yahn	929-3093

I would also like to take this opportunity to offer a proposition:

I would gladly cooperate and show respect to your investigation and your department if you could show me how the Attorney General has indicted and convicted Dairy Lea Milk Co. for having diluted millions of gallons of milk with water. Proof of such action would dispel the impression I seem to have that the prime concern of your department is to harass as many people as possible so as to create new clients for many colleagues of your profession as possible.

I also wish to advise you to teach the neanderthal men in your employ some manners. You should warn them of the dangers in impersonating police officers (which they are not), wrecking various doors, destroying property and assaulting various persons. They should be told that they can attempt to break doors only in the presence of police officers, and possibly possessing a bulldozer or bazooka, since otherwise they will succeed only in breaking their own bones.

It seems incredible that you should continue these Gestapo like and futile methods costing the taxpayers a great deal of money when a simple polite letter would have brought the results you seek.

Yours very truly,



George Maciunas  
80 Wooster street (till April 15th, 1975)  
New York, N.Y. 10012

cc. to: Mr. Louis J. Lefkowitz, attorney General, Albany, N.Y.  
Mr. David Clurman, Director, Bureau of Securities and Public Financing





Carl Andre, New York Works, 1958-1960. Photographed by Hollis Frampton.



A24



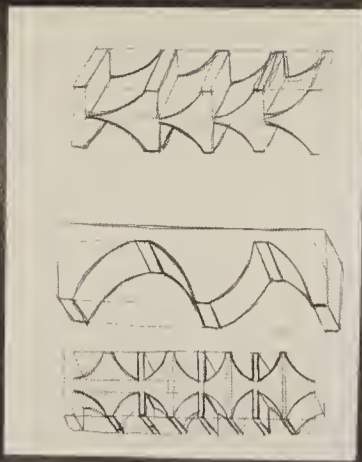
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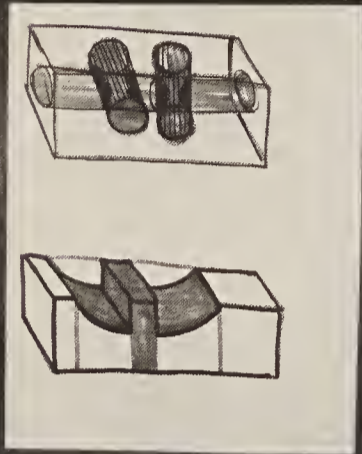
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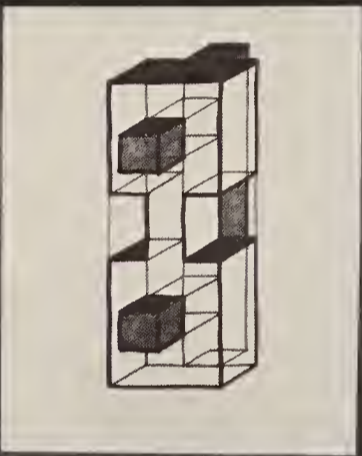
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A29



A31↓



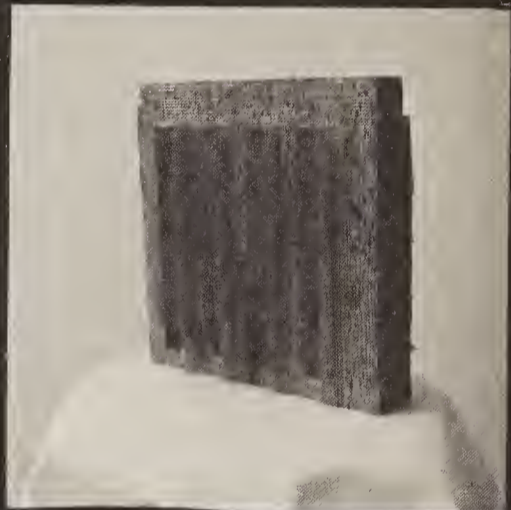
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A33



A35↓



A34

Carl Andre, New York Works, 1958-1960. Photographed by Hollis Frampton.



A66



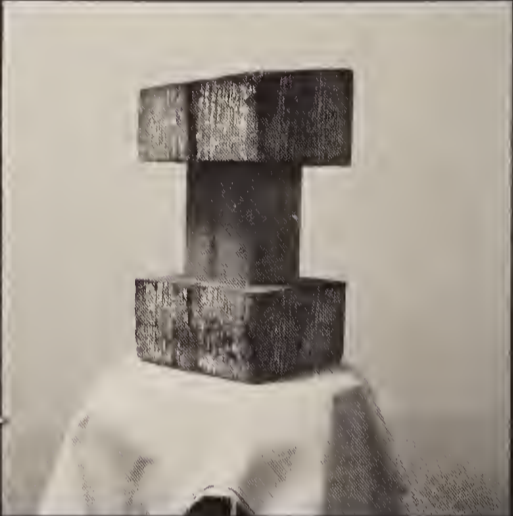
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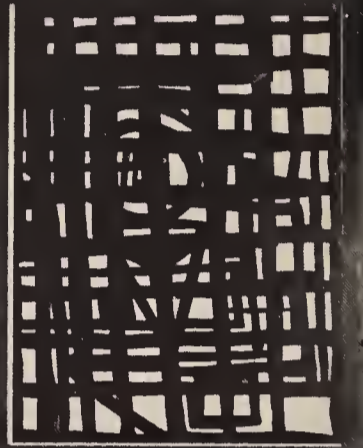
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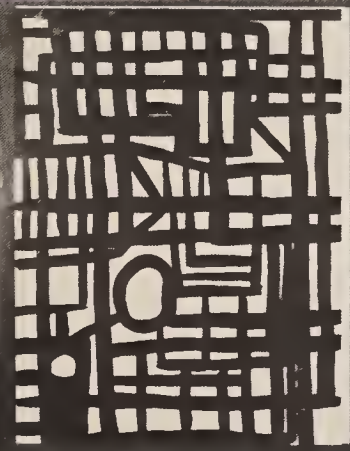


A73

CarlAndre, New York Works, 1958-1960. Photographed by Hollis Frampton.

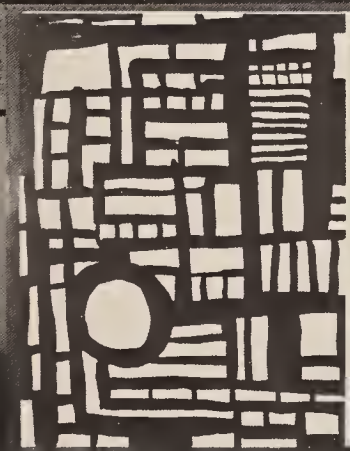


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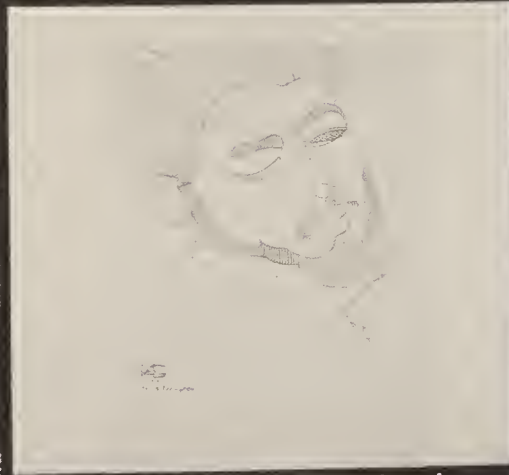


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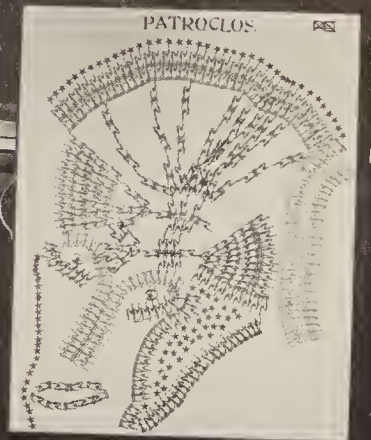
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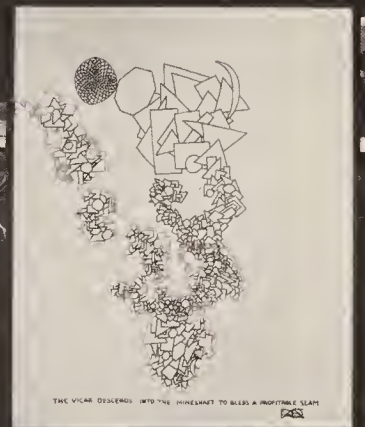


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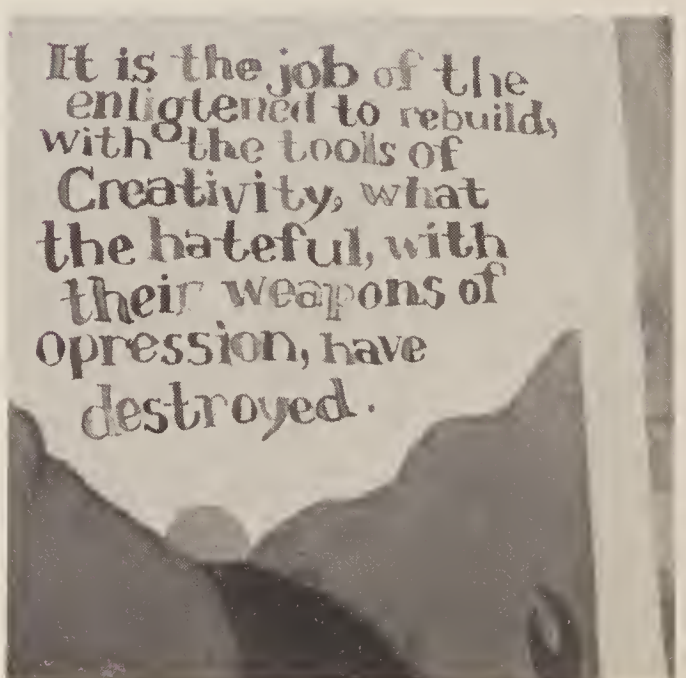
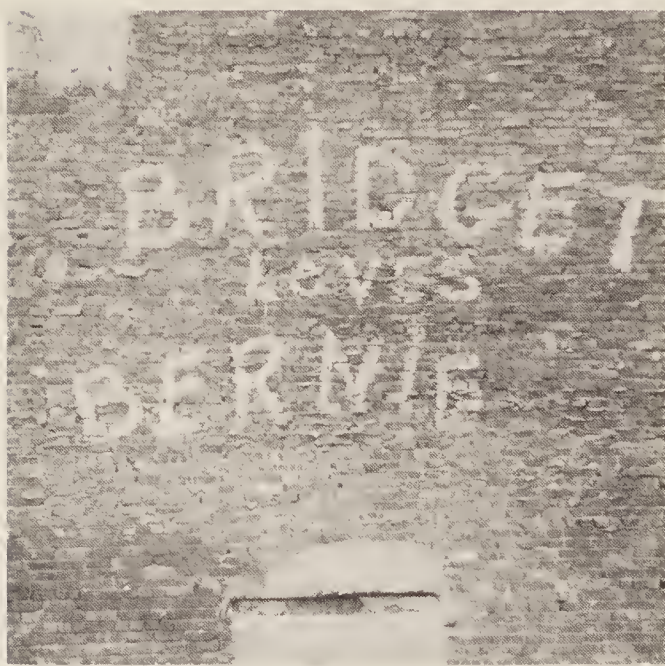
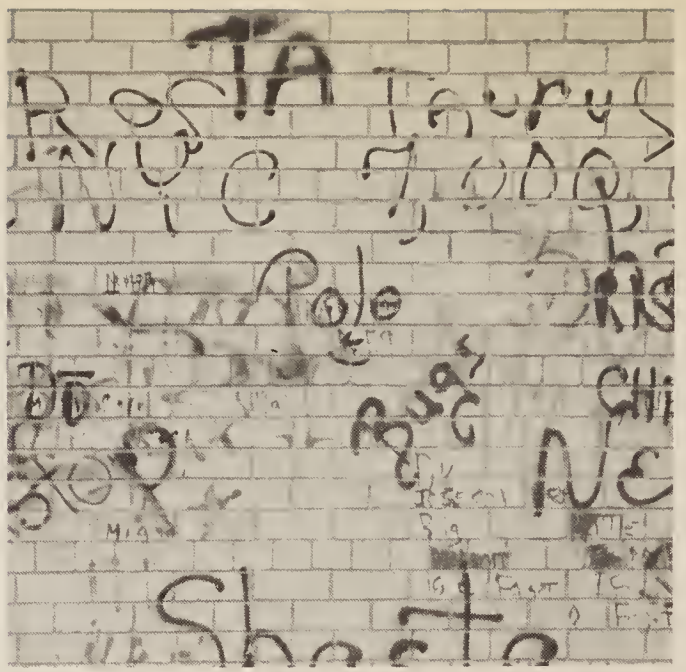


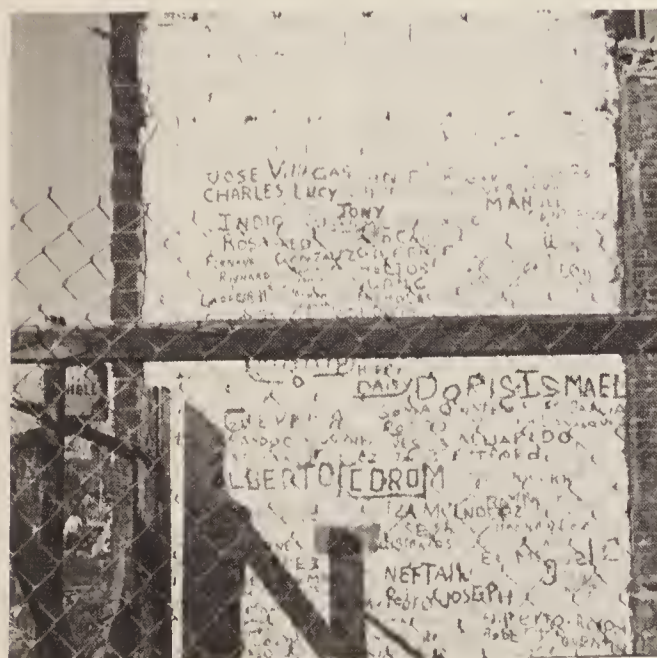
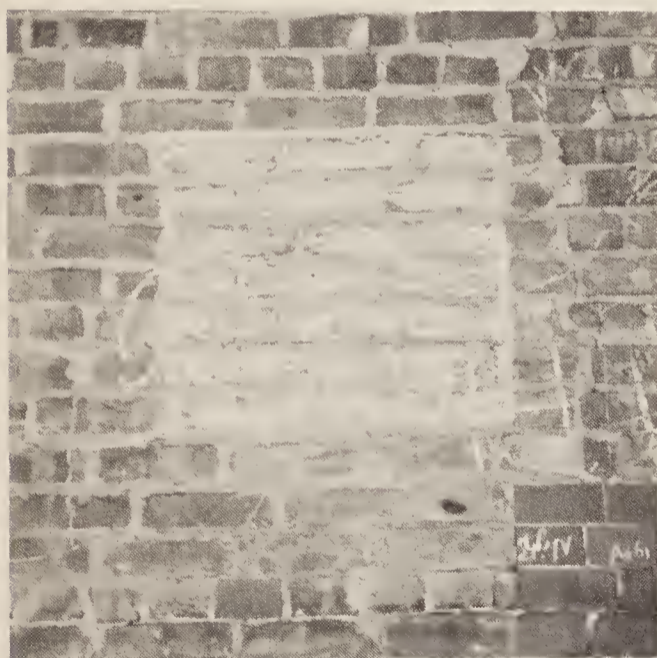
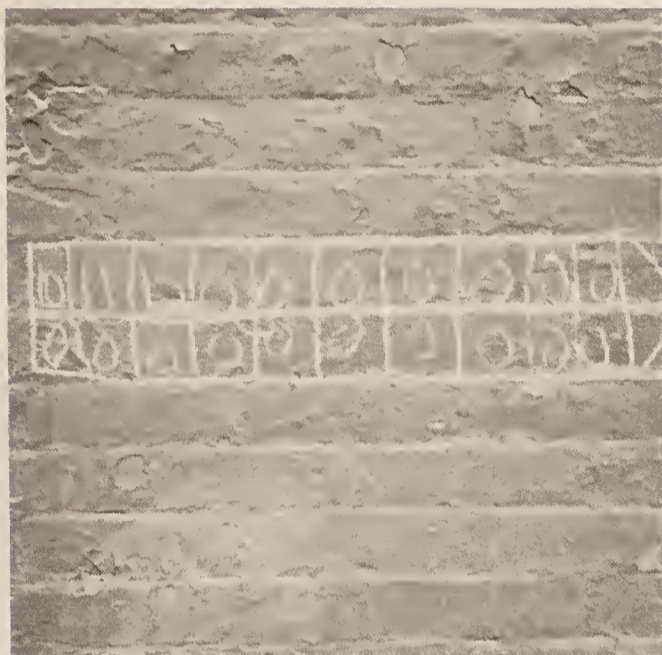


Carl Andre, New York Works, 1958-1960. Photographed by Hollis Frampton.

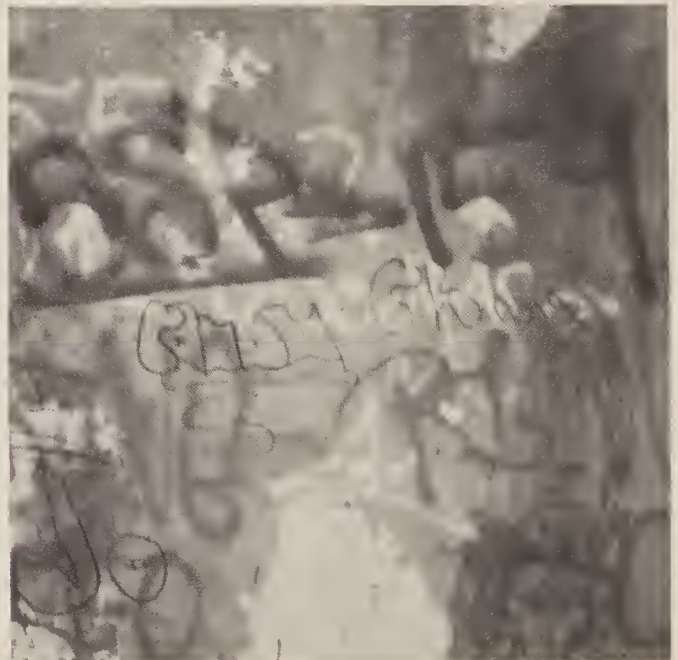
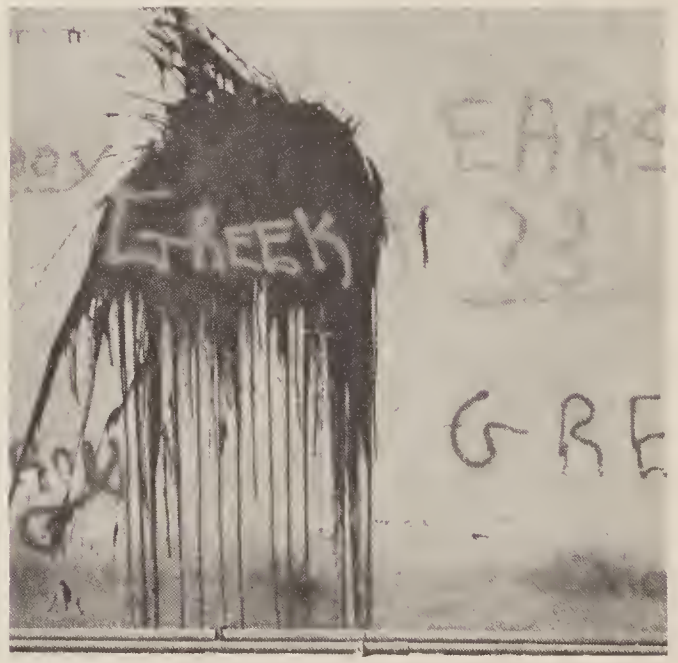
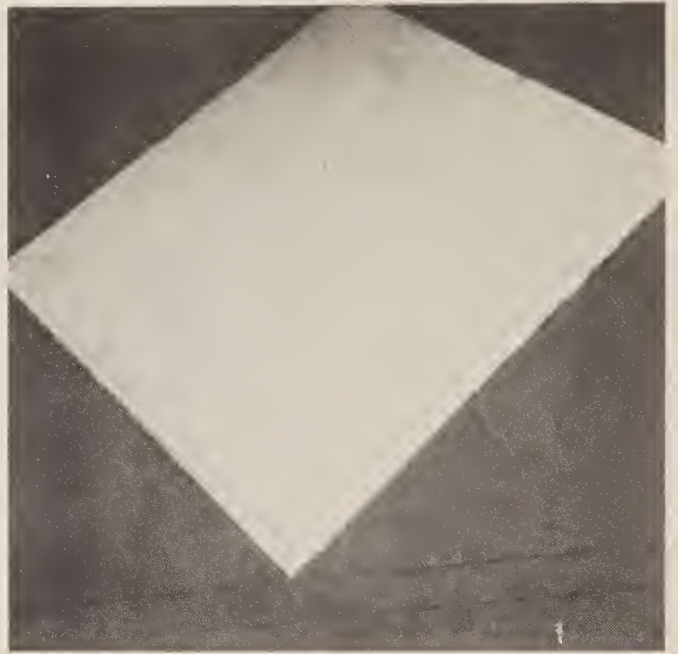
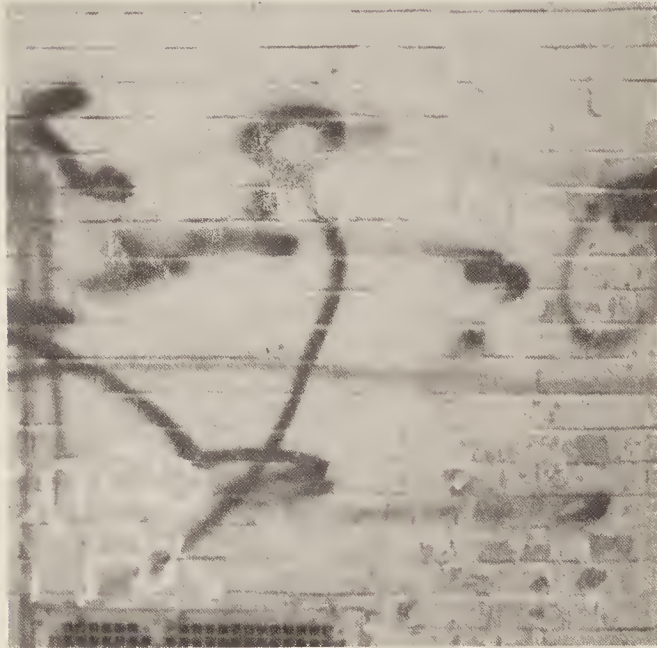


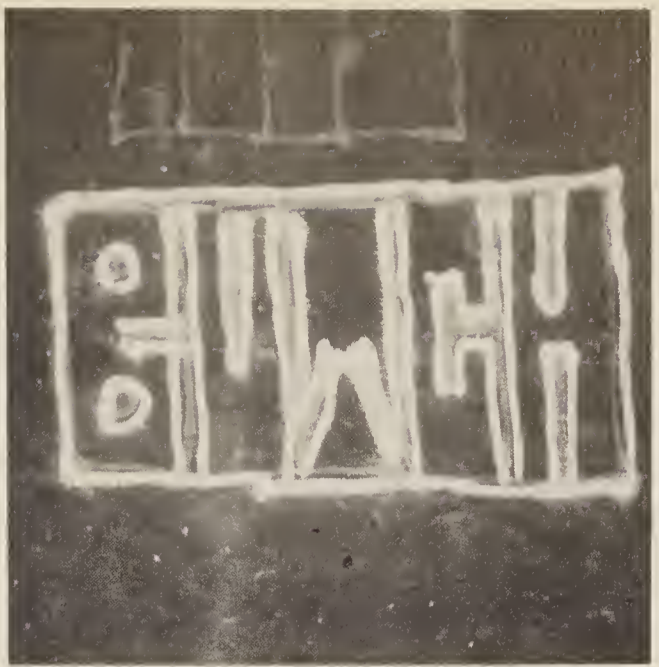
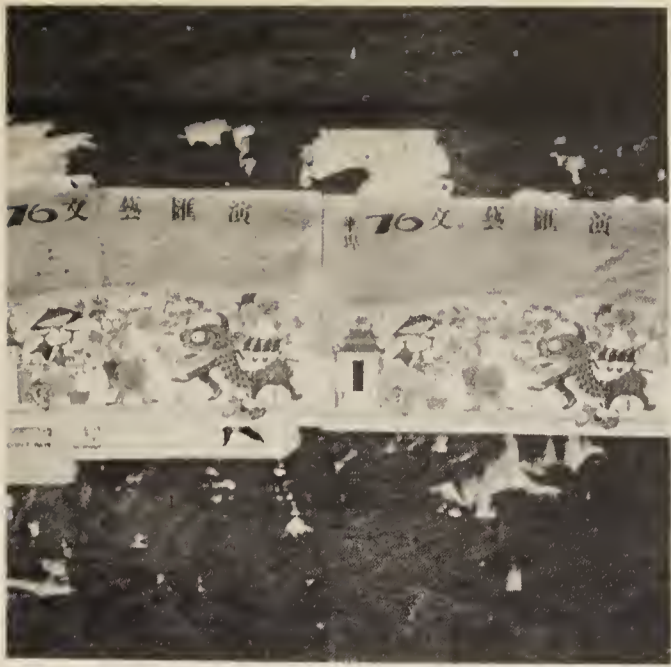
Carl Andre, New York Works, 1958-1960. Photographed by Hollis Frampton.

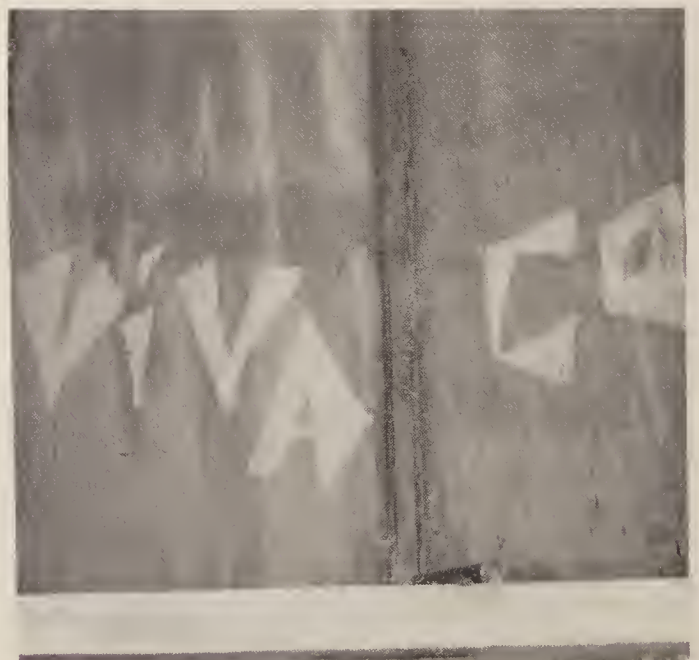
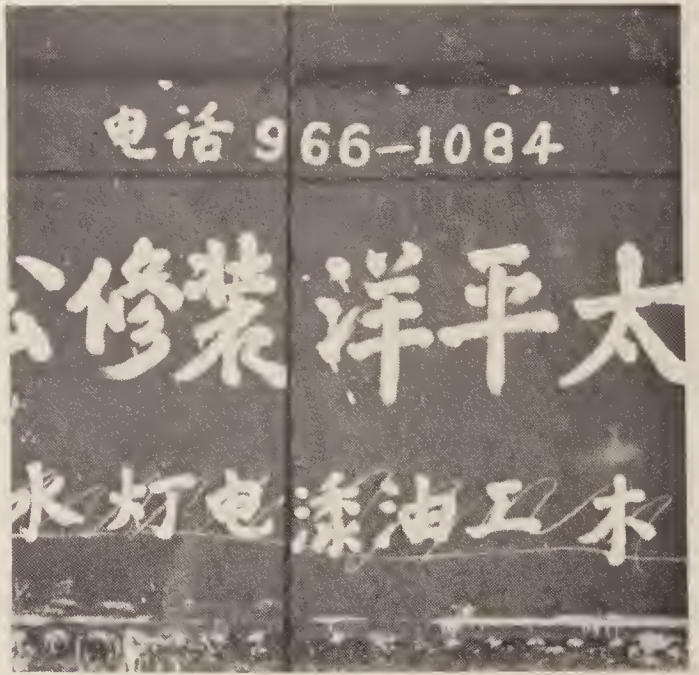
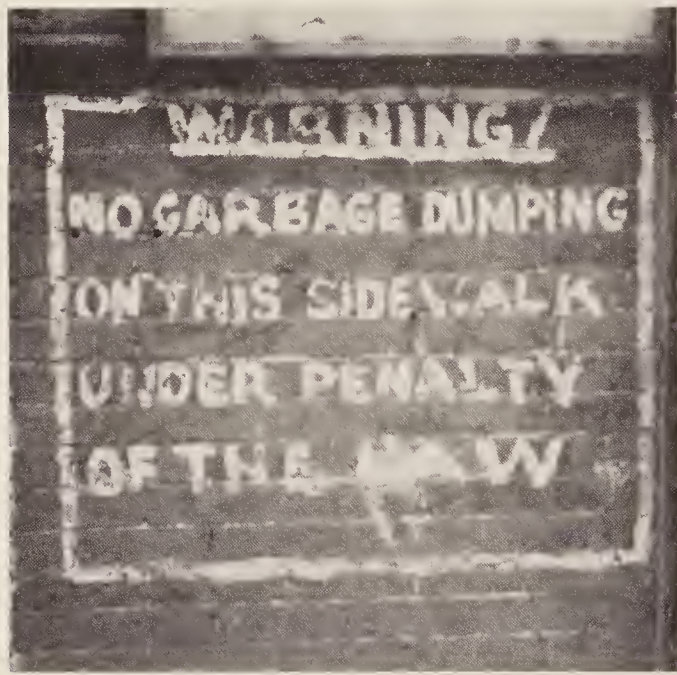
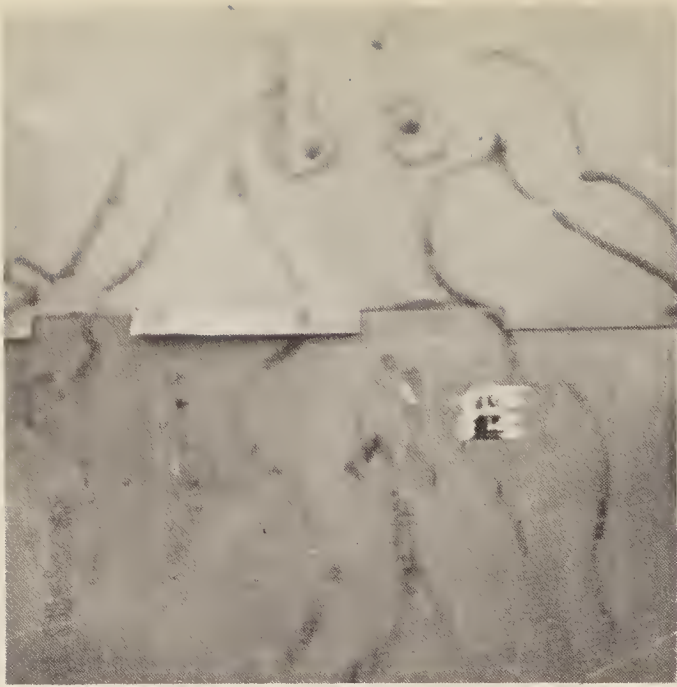


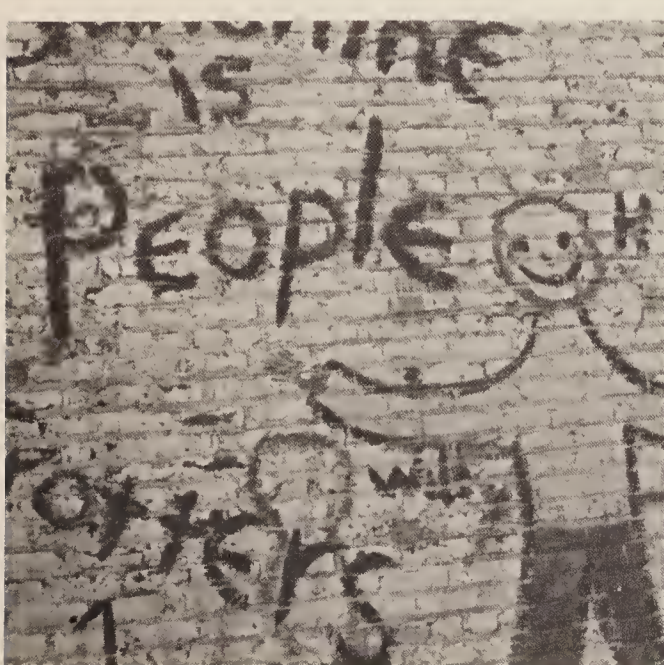
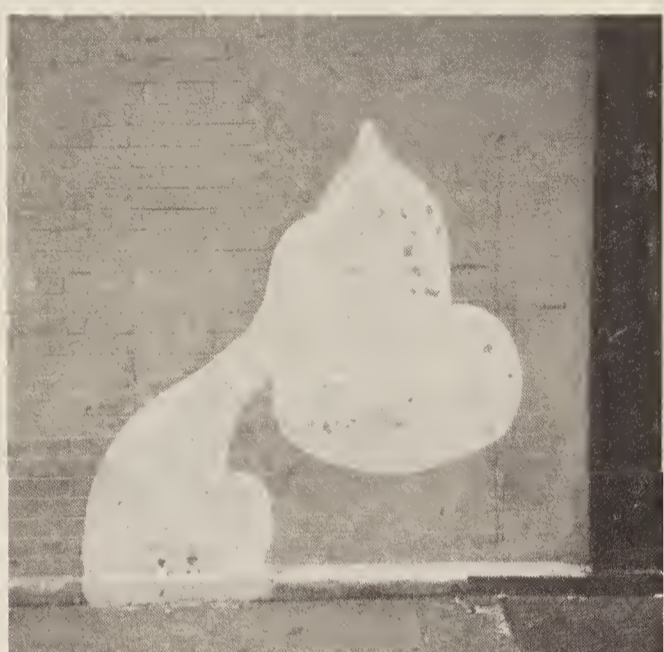












# Mobil

## When Rawleigh Warner became Mobil's chairman, we revamped our entire approach to public relations

### FAREWELL TO THE LOW PROFILE

The American people have hated oil companies ever since the days of the Standard Oil Trust. Today, I'm pleased to report that this hate has been extended to all big business. Executives across the land are wringing their hands over the recent Harris poll reporting that trust in major U.S. companies is at an all time low.

But oil companies are certainly still tops on the public hate list. Some of you may have read The Seven Sisters, Tony Sampson's new book which lumps us all together except for a few warts and other minor disfigurements that are distinguishing marks.

True, we are all in the same business -- oil -- but the family resemblance ends there. We think we don't look alike, or think alike, let alone act alike. We don't even like each other. But who believes this? Nobody -- except for a handful of truly enlightened individuals who, if you twist their arms in private, might admit that Mobil is a little bit different. And all of them seem to be employed by oil companies.

I say "Vive la difference" no matter how "patite" it is -- because this is exactly what we set out to do six long years ago.

In 1969, when Rawleigh Warner became Mobil's chairman, we revamped our entire approach to public relations, and adopted a new program with two goals in mind:

1. to distinguish Mobil from other large corporations and from other oil companies, and
2. to build a reputation as an outspoken responsible company concerned about our energy future and major social issues.

- 2 -

Two modest but different tools were selected to implement these objectives: Masterpiece Theatre on public television, and Op-Ed ads in the New York Times.

We went sailing merrily along, when in October 1973 the Arab embargo was declared, followed by price increases, gasoline lines and big profits (which lasted for a year only). But the American consumer wrapped up the shortage and prices and profits in a neat package labeled "conspiracy," and we were in big trouble.

So we started to dig out from under, regroup, reform, and reorganize. As we saw it, we faced two related problems -- a monumental credibility gap, and a growing energy supply gap. To bridge the supply problem, we had to convince our critics that our recommendations for a national energy policy were sound.

What I want to show you now is our present program, which grew out of the "energy crisis" of 1973-74, and is still changing and developing as we try to get over the message -- that, in a real sense, the crisis is still with us and we as a nation will be in serious danger till we solve it.

I'm glad to be able to share our experience with you, although I hope you don't have to live through it yourselves.

(TDM LIGHTS)

(1) Mobil's public relations programs have bid farewell forever to the low profile. This can't be all bad, because in recent months we even received a few kudos.

(2) The Wall Street Journal seems to agree -- and even Tony Sampson said Mobil is the "most extrovert," "the most aggressive" and "the most sophisticated" of the oil companies. This is probably because half of our PR executives are women!

# Mobil

**These programs build enough acceptance  
to allow us to get tough on substantive issues.  
Public broadcasting is the keystone**

- 4 -

We're also active in commercial television. By deliberate policy, we don't sponsor run-of-the-mill TV shows. Instead, we present our own high-caliber specials, and restrict our advertising to them. Spot advertising of ideas just didn't work for us, but "specials" give us the right framework for what we have to say.

You may have seen some of our programs, like (14) Ceremonies in Dark Old Men with the Negro Ensemble Company, (15) Queen of the Stardust Ballroom with Maureen Stapleton, and (16) Moon for the Misbegotten.

From the beginning, (17) we have actively promoted our television programs; especially with theatrical posters, many of which you have just seen. We also put together carefully-designed press kits (18), with photographs and releases. All shows get additional publicity through flyers (19), as well as heavy newspaper, magazine, and television advertising.

All this work was, and still is, done in-house, with great attention paid to graphics. These active campaigns not only promote the shows, but get across Mobil's concern for good programming on television.

There are dozens of other projects that help us build our "goodwill umbrella." Things like (20) "Summargarden" -- giving the New York Museum of Modern Art money to open its sculpture garden free on summer weekend evenings.

- 3 -

(3) Let me begin with our "goodwill umbrella," as I call it. These programs, we think, build enough acceptance to allow us to get tough on substantive issues.

Public broadcasting is the keystone. The best known of our PBS programs is (4) Masterpiece Theatre, with Alistair Cooke. We're proud of Masterpiece Theatre because it has helped rescue TV from the desert of mindless shows which still take up so much time on the airwaves. But it has also helped us achieve one of our major objectives -- to make Mobil stand out among oil companies as different. And, in doing this, we have created an audience of opinion leaders who may be more disposed to listen to our viewpoint on energy issues.

Some of our more popular shows have been (5) Elizabeth R, (6) Vienna 1905, and, of course, (7) Upstairs Downstairs.

This season we are offering (8) Shoulder to Shoulder, about women's battle for the right to vote in England at the turn of the century (9) The Way It Was, a nostalgic program of sports highlights soon to be in its second season, and (10) The Ascent of Man, Dr. Jacob Bronowski's personal survey of human achievement.

Also new this fall is Classic Theatre (11). PBS stations across the nation are now running a series of 13 famous plays, such as "Mrs. Warren's Profession" (12), "Candide, and Macbeth," among others, (13), all with excellent casts.

Mobil is PBS' largest single supporter. We have such high visibility -- now two evenings a week -- that we often get credit from people for programs underwritten by Exxon, Xerox and others.

# Mobil

**A city-wide jump-rope contest.  
This gets even more publicity than  
Senator Jackson and his "obscene profits."**

- 5 -

Another community program, (21) in New York is the Double Dutch Tournament, a city-wide jump-rope contest for girls aged 10 - 14, run by a local police precinct. This gets even more publicity than Senator Jackson and his "obscene profits".

We are sponsoring (22) "Twelve Days of Christmas" again this year, a series of free concerts at the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.

Mobil also underwrites National Town Meeting (23). This forum for discussion of major public issues, also at the Kennedy Center has attracted a lot of attention and several members of Congress have taken part in debates.

We have many other "goodwill" programs, but these will give you the basic idea. We think we're adding some gaiety and sparkle to American life. And we're also helping ourselves get a hearing with opinion-leaders for what we have to say.

National Town Meeting, for example, (24) not only provides a forum for debates, but dramatizes the fact that there are some ideas that can be debated but can't be discussed on TV -- which leads me to tell you something about Mobil's "access" problems.

When Mobil stopped advertising products in June 1973, we prepared a series of "idea" commercials on energy. We had these ready when the embargo hit in 1973. We wanted to get them on the air to combat the skimpy and inaccurate TV coverage that told millions of Americans what to think about the oil situation.

- 6 -

(25) Well, it didn't work. No way -- the networks turned us down cold, even when we offered to pay for equal time for rebuttal by our opponents! The TV networks told us that all editorial content must be under the control of their own news journalists.

Mobil has kept up this battle for access to the airwaves. We've even gained some converts -- government officials and even broadcasters who now believe that people with something important to say should be able to say it on TV. And we've made some strange allies -- like the Sierra Club which disagrees with us a lot but also felt that it was being denied the chance to get its message across.

(26) We also have a lot of the public with us. We ran this newspaper ad describing our problems in getting access to television for a relatively innocuous commercial on offshore drilling and asking readers what they thought about it. We got over 2,000 replies, mostly favoring our right to get our message across on the air.

Unable to broadcast idea ads, we turned to documentary commercials (27) that use real people on location talking about their jobs. We shot commercials in (28) Iran and Sumatra, and (29) Alaska and the North Sea. We also produce these in-house.

These commercials, each two or three minutes long, are (30) aired before or after network "specials" or during "intermissions."

# Mobil

**We aimed at the movers and shakers in many fields,  
including businessmen, city and state officials . . . the media**

- 7 -

Obviously, since we can't put idea commercials on television, we have to rely to a great extent on newspaper and magazine ads to get our message across.

Mobil is best known for its Op-Ed ads (31), always a quarter page in The New York Times. At the height of the energy crisis, we ran these ads in as many as 100 newspapers. Right now, they are running in the six major U.S. metropolitan newspapers every week. (32)

From the outset, we have used Op-Ed space to discuss sensitive and controversial topics. The majority of the ads are on energy issues (33), such as the Alaska pipeline, the need to find more oil and gas, superports and supertankers, the risks of increased dependence on foreign sources of oil. We also use the space to discuss public issues (34), such as the need for mass transportation, or to publicize community projects and our own "goodwill" programs. We write 52 of these every year.

We know from the many letters we get that readers pay attention to what we say, even when they disagree with us. (35) And here's a booklet put out by The Wall Street Journal as an example to other companies of how they can advertise. We hope others will join us.

We think it's ridiculous and dangerous that the U.S. still doesn't have a national energy policy -- two full years after the embargo began!

- 8 -

Last fall, we launched a major campaign on this subject (36) with a full page ad -- "An Energy Manifesto" -- in 50 newspapers. We followed up with two ads a week, side by side, addressed to specific topics -- natural gas regulation, offshore drilling, the outlook for alternate sources, the need for energy growth, and summarized our discussion with another full page ad in late December.

At the conclusion of the campaign, we reprinted the entire series as an oversize booklet (37), "Toward A National Energy Policy" and mailed it to everyone who had requested reprints. So far, we have over 10,000 requests for the booklets, many for large quantities, and hundreds of letters on the ads, about 80 percent favorable to our point of view.

Paralleling (38) these ads, we applied the same theme to a series of ads placed in national magazines. The copy is shorter, punchier, and accentuated with dramatic black-and-white graphics. The common angle for all of these ads is our call for action now on a National Energy Policy -- in what we hoped would be a Year of Energy Action. We then put them in booklet form (39) and we distributed 250,000 copies.

As well as popularizing the message that we need an energy policy, we have also elaborated on it in a series of booklets (41) which has just been completed. For this purpose, we aimed at the movers and shakers in many fields, including businessmen, city and state officials, environmentalists, labor leaders, professors of economics and political science, security analysts, and -- last but not least -- the media.



# Mobil

**We've got our top brass out on the road.  
We put them through J. Walter Thompson's charm school  
before they went out**

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(41) We are now distributing copies in slip cases to members of Congress -- we're still optimistic enough to believe that we can get our message across to some people in Washington -- before the "Year of Energy Action" creaks to an unhappy close.

(42) We've also tried to alert the public and the Congress with full-page newspaper ads. (43) Here are our recommendations to Congress on the decontrol of oil prices -- another instance where Mobil does not see eye to eye with the rest of the oil industry.

While we've cut down on the number of newspapers in which we publish Op-Ed ads, we're now beginning a real push with our Observations Column (44). Observations is patterned on the signed newspaper column. It has a flexible format, basically six or seven items. It talks about energy. (45) It talks about people doing things for themselves, instead of letting big government run the show. It uses woodcuts and cartoons (46). As you can see (47), the overall look of the column is varied and interesting. We run them in 43 newspapers, usually on Sundays. The response has been encouraging.

I've now talked about our "goodwill umbrella" and our ways of getting our message across, mainly in print. Now I want to get back to television again, to show you some of the ways in which we have been able to use the medium.

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Mainly, we've got our top brass out on the road, appearing on TV talk shows and debates. We put them through J. Walter Thompson's charm school before they went out, and they've learned their lessons well. Here's Rawleigh Warner (48) Mobil's chairman, in a debate on offshore drilling, and one of our vice presidents, Dayton Clewell (49), on the same topic. In all, we have half a dozen executives traveling around the country all the time.

And here's our secret weapon -- or not-so-secret any more -- Judi Hampton (50), our consumer affairs specialist. Judi tours the country several times a year, talking about energy conservation and major energy issues, including offshore drilling. Her last tour covered 20 cities: she appeared on 64 TV talk shows on news programs, and on 57 radio programs. Somewhere along the line, she also squeezed in 20 newspaper interviews!

Let me also tell you about editorial replies. (51) Sometimes, when local TV stations blasted the oil industry during the embargo period, they asked us if we wanted to reply. Now, we not only reply when asked, but we record TV editorials and send out replies when we think we can score points. They have had a high percentage of success; some have been aired as many as eight times in a day.

Speaking about radio -- which I haven't done up to now -- I should add that we have radio programs paralleling all our television work (52). Not only have we sponsored entertainment programs on radio -- including nostalgic shows -- and presented hard-hitting commercials, but we've also used it very creatively to get across our ideas on energy. We've introduced a monthly

# Mobil

## We also commissioned 13 major American artists to paint their visions of America

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Consumer Radio series which mixes consumer tips with hard energy information, and we also plan to adapt the Observations column to radio -- complete with sound effects. Finally, we also have a very effective method for sending out news dispatches to radio stations across the country, thus making sure that radio news directors have access to our side of the story.

While we've played around in the exciting world of television and idea advertising, we haven't neglected the traditional PR jobs -- responding to queries, putting out an Annual Report (53), quarterly reports to shareholders, and an employee newspaper (54), Mobil World.

We also produce more than our share of executive speeches, position papers, and Congressional testimony. And we've added some imaginative new publications to our regular list. I'll just mention a few: (55), The Language of Oil, which turned out to be a best-seller. Basically, it's just a glossary of oil terms, simply defined. But it's proving useful to media people, and to people in government, and we've had a lot of requests for it. This is (56) Mobil and Society, describing Mobil's concept of its social responsibility, and (57), a simple, broadbrush review of the energy supply outlook, distributed to over 100,000 people.

Finally, let me give you a preview of one of the most ambitious projects we've ever undertaken -- Mobil's contribution to the American Bicentennial celebration. We are underwriting a major exhibition of post-war American posters, organized by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C. (58).

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We also commissioned 13 major American artists, (59) to paint their visions of America. These 13 paintings have been reproduced in a limited, signed edition of prints that will be collectors items. (60) They will also be available to the general public as posters. After an American tour, the exhibition will travel to major museums in Europe. I urge you to see it, preferably in Paris.

LIGHTS UP

I think we've made some progress. We have established some credibility for ourselves in Washington; we have built up a constituency of people who recognize that we are different; we have established a leadership position in oil industry communications, and we have established a policy of speaking out on the issues.

Obviously, there is still a long way to go. Congress persists in thinking that battering the big oil companies is preferable to taking hard decisions on energy. But we're still optimists -- or else we wouldn't be in this business. We do think that the media understands our viewpointa better than it did. We also think that the American people are ahead of their elected representatives on some aspects of the energy situation, like the need to drill offshore to find new oil reserves.

So we'll keep pushing ahead, trying new ways to get the message across. We like what we do, we have fun, it's exciting, and it's good to have a chance to tell people about it. Thanks for having me.

###

Facsimile of *Advance Copy*: Raymond D'Argenio (Manager, Public Relations, Mobil Oil Corp.) "Farewell to The Low Profile", address to the Eastern Annual Conference of the American Association of Advertising Agencies, Waldorf Astoria, New York, November 18, 1975

WITH A RELATION TO THE VARIOUS  
THINGS BROUGHT TO LIGHT:

HAVING BEEN LAID BARE  
(                    ) LAID BARE  
(                    ) BARE

HAVING BEEN LAID OPEN  
(                    ) LAID OPEN  
(                    ) OPEN

HAVING BEEN LAID ON  
(                    ) LAID ON  
(                    ) ON

[WITHIN THE REALM OF ILLUMINATION]

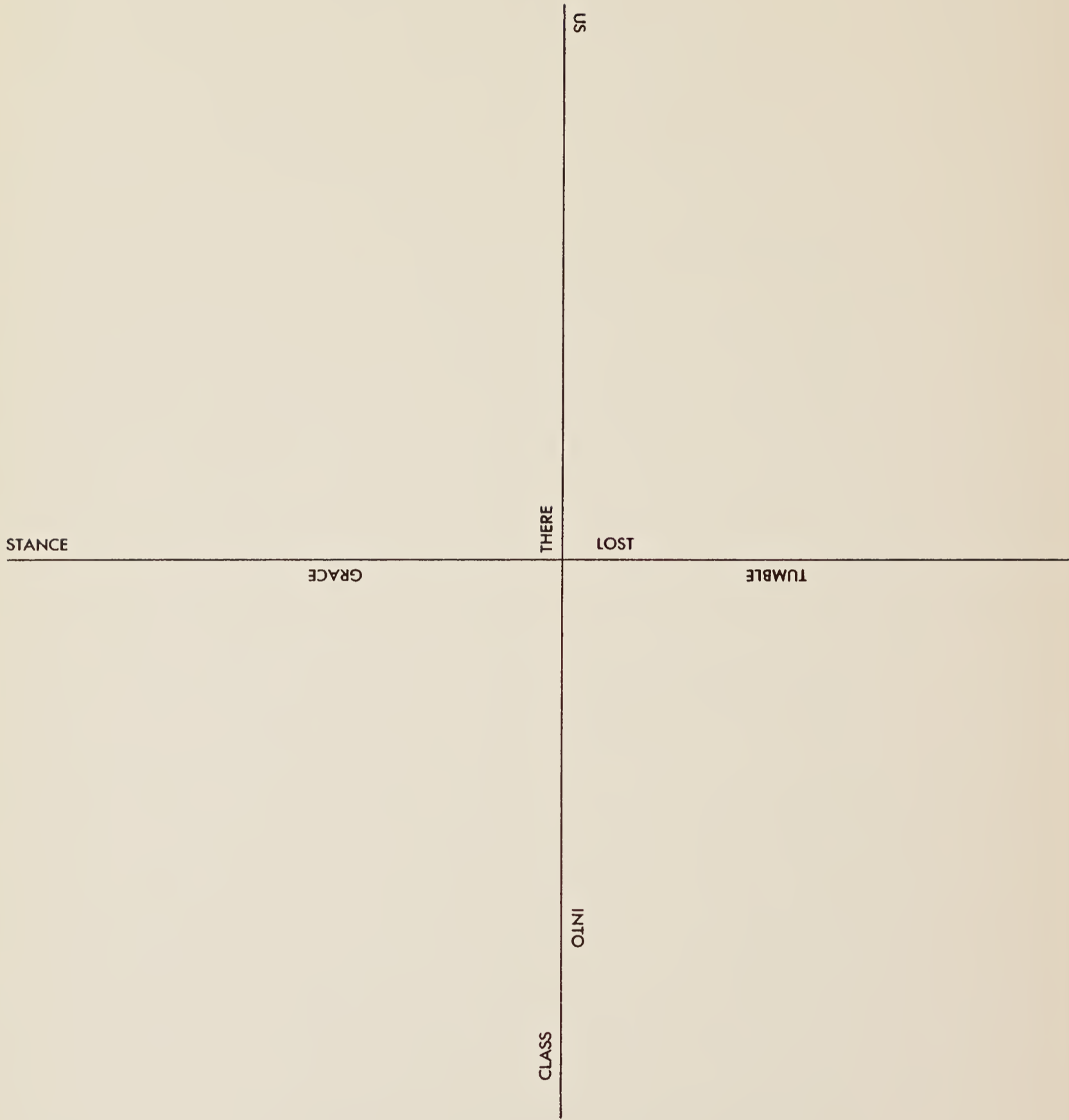
WITH A RELATION TO THE VARIOUS  
THINGS BROUGHT TO LIGHT:

HAVING BEEN LAID BARE  
(                    ) LAID BARE  
(                    ) BARE

HAVING BEEN LAID OPEN  
(                    ) LAID OPEN  
(                    ) OPEN

HAVING BEEN LAIN ON  
(                    ) LAIN ON  
(                    ) ON

[PERHAPS WITHIN THE REALM OF ILLUMINATION]



FINISH

WAY

SING

LEVEL

TOP

FORWARD

ALTER

ODD



RAGE

REST

STORY N1110

OVER

REPEAT

RIGHT

MENTAL

LOOK

UNTIL

UNDERNEATH

ERROR

POINT OBJECT

WOOD

LOVELY

THEN

OFTEN

PUSH

PRIVATE

GUESS

EXPLAIN

HIT

GONE

EXAMINE SWYG

REMEMBERED

END

EASY

DEPEND

ME

TITLE

A series of five drawings ranging in image size from 2 1/6" to 108"x84", constructed of dots with 164 dots in the smallest and 104,072 dots in the largest.

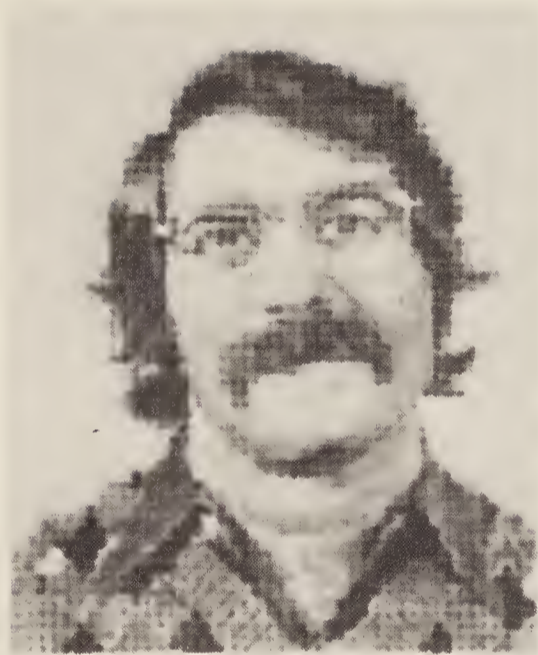
Chuck Close



"Robert—164", ink on paper, 1974, collection Robert Feldman, New York.



"Robert—616", ink on paper, 1974, collection Robert Feldman, New York.

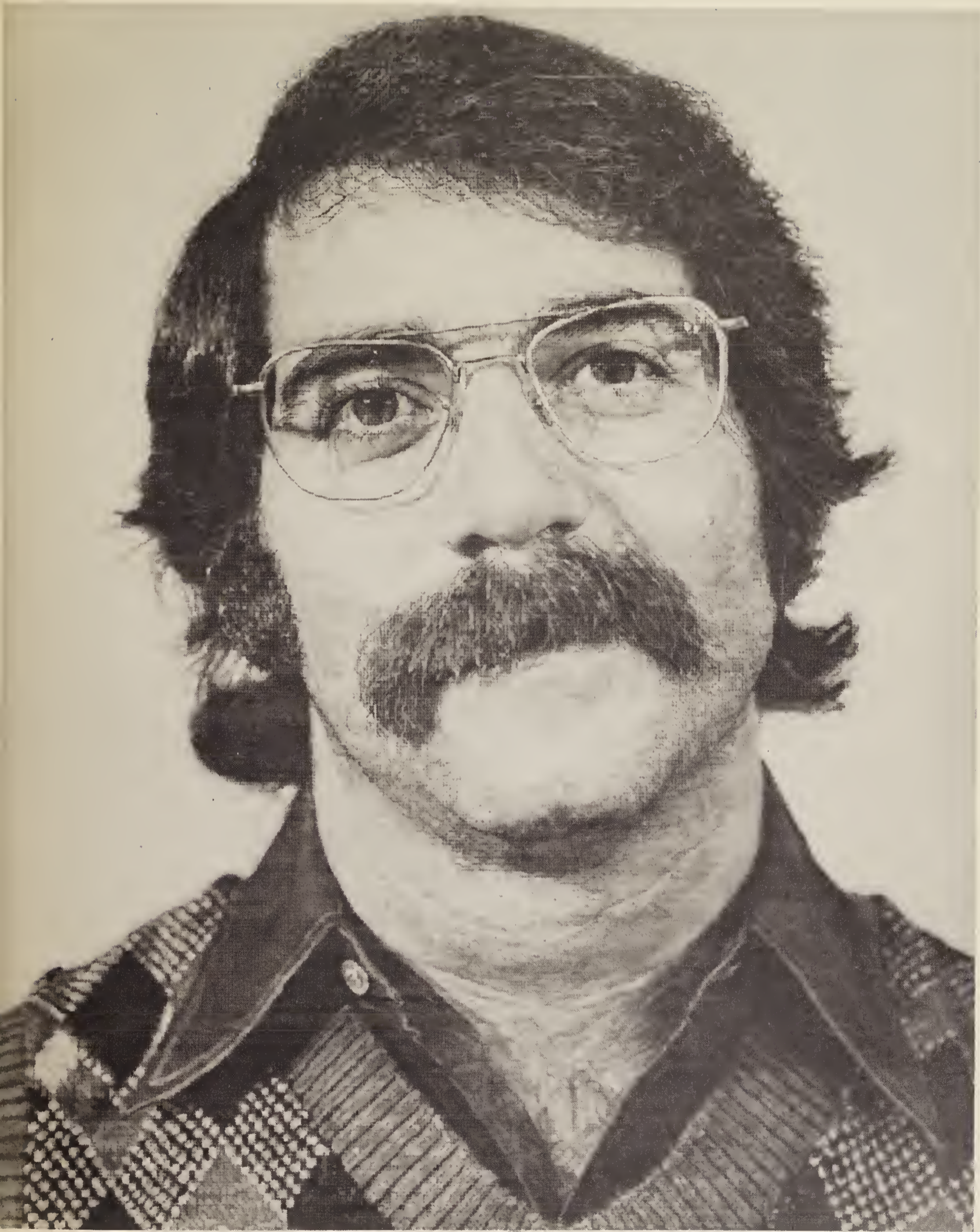


"Robert—2464", ink on paper, 1974, collection Robert Feldman, New York.





"Robert—9856", ink on paper, 1964, collection Robert Feldman, New York.



"Robert—104,072", ink on canvas, 1975-76, collection Museum of Modern Art, New York.



SCENE 1: THE NEW YORK DEPOSIT. *The scene is elsewhere, anywhere; the scene shifts from city to city. There—the box-like object is dropped into place as if from nowhere. (It's as if it were left here when no one was looking, as if it must have been here forever.)*



*This is your land, your home-ground: you are the non-New Yorkers. You stumble upon the box, you walk around it, you sniff it out, you scratch your heads, you hesitate, you shrug your shoulders, you leave it alone and go away, you can't get it out of your minds, you come back, you find it again, you're relieved that it's still around.*



*This is our baby: we are the New York artists. We don't appear in this scene; we're back where we started. Because we remain in place, we can form a block: from our base of operations, we send out a decoy, send up a screen. (See? the block is only on paper.)*

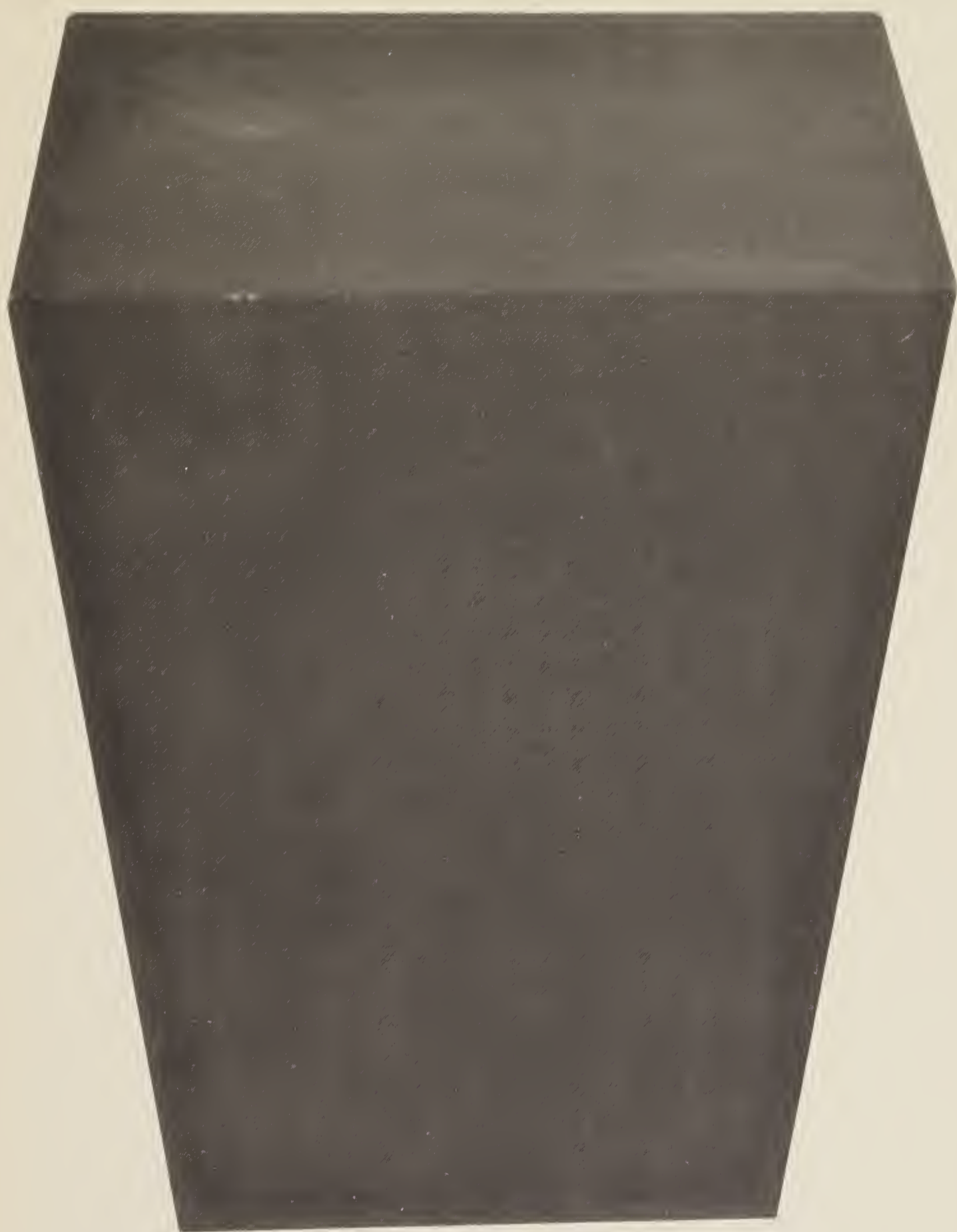


*So we need to believe that you're talking about us; we need you to prove that there's something here. (You were waiting for this all the time—waiting for some object like this, waiting for a sign. After all, the country's too big, you're too far away, we're closer to Europe and have something there to fall back on, you feel left out, you want in. If New York hadn't come to you, you would have had to invent it.)*



*The box talks: "They told us to shape, they told us to form, they told us to build." No, you're hearing things, you're too eager to want the word; we're too smart to talk—you'll do the talking for us. You protest; to protect yourselves, you repeat over and over: "We are not responsible for what we say." (But we never expected you to be; we wouldn't let you be.)*





●

SCENE 2: THE NEW YORK HOLE. *This is behind the scenes, back in New York. You can't see us, we're in the ark; we've learned to dig ourselves into a corner here; having learned that, we can use the corner to advance our education—it's as if we've set up a secret classroom, under the premises. (We come here, on schedule, to go over our ground, rehearse our position.)*

●

*We, the New York artists, make a pact here: we agree to be in New York, we agree that we need to be here. Once we've decided that, we have to keep believing—we're forced to believe that there's an actual world here in which to be. So we agree to make our world (business world, social world); together, we find a place to rest our heads.*

●

*All the while, we're not that dumb; we can see through it. So we allow ourselves to criticize our world, break our illusion; that's the way we keep ourselves interested, keep ourselves going. (For example: here we are, letting you see the skeletons in our closet—our habits are an open book here.) Of course, we have an ulterior motive; if our illusions can stand up to the test (and they'd better, or we'd be nowhere), then the form of those illusions is built up into a solid—the result is our gift to you, the block we presented in Scene 1.*

●

*So there we go, back and forth, out again in again; on a ground as shaky as that, each of us needs security. So, from various individual points, we come together here; each of us agrees to respect—or, at least, take for granted—the position of the others (each of us, while scorning the work of the others, admits that work has a value that makes it available to scorn). Each of us, then, has his or her place; each of us maintains the place of the others.*

●

*Now that we've gotten the benefits of community, we can leave that community in the background; separately we can rise up again, we can go up into the spotlight. After all, once we've taken the trouble to make a world, we have to keep it in existence as an art world; we have to preserve the tradition of "individual artist"—we have to get from that world what's coming to us. One after another we say: "To each his own"—"To the victor belongs the spoils." (We can breathe together only so long; each of us saves for himself or herself the last gasp of individualism.)*

●



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SCENE 3: THE NEW YORK LEEWAY. *The scene remains underground; the scene stretches now, down streets, across the city. This is a scene for the future; it's as if, at this very moment, construction has begun on a series of underground tunnels, designed to connect building to building.*

●

*We have a dream. We can't talk about it now (we claim this is still top secret), but you can hear mutterings: ". . . art-world connected to other worlds . . . get to the bottom of it . . . surprise attack . . . move the ground out from under their feet . . . tear down . . . blow up . . ."*

●

*Or, if that fails (or, if the idea of it is too far over our heads), we can use the tunnel as an escape route, out of New York. Some of us can get out when the rest of us aren't looking. (We have to believe that the rest of us would care; otherwise, there's nothing to escape from.)*

●

*Once we've escaped, we see that there's nowhere to go. We've done our job too well: we've established the New York art world as a model—the art world is the same all over. So we come crawling back, through the tunnel; after a required time of anonymity, we can pop up again, blend in as before. (We say: "At least New York is the real thing—a fake worth living for.")*

●

*Even if we can't use the tunnel, it's fun to have around. Look: we'd be walking above ground when, suddenly, we'd hit a crack, slip through, slide over. So that's what New York is: not a haven but a place to pass through, a base to go out from—a base to bring something back to before going out once again. (We say: "We take what we can get.") We don't have a New York style: we only share in a version of encyclopedism. To live in New York, then, is to become a ghost (but the ghost has its physical effect, you can touch it—the block we left you in Scene 1); when we stand up to be counted, we're running: "You can't catch me."*

●









