Feed Your Head: Conceptual Art and The American Counterculture

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Abstract

This thesis provides a historically contextual account of American conceptual art of the Sixties, examining it in relation to the concurrent counterculture. It challenges the notion that conceptual art was entirely autonomous and self-referential by identifying an interconnection between its origins and concerns and those of this era-defining socio-cultural phenomenon. It synthesizes histories and theories of conceptual art with those of the counterculture, with particular focus on Californian conceptual practices. This includes the work of Tom Marioni and the activities of his Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA) in San Francisco, John Baldessari, Terry Fox, Allen Ruppersberg and Barbara T. Smith. Whilst acknowledging regionally distinct aspects of West Coast conceptualism, it dismantles its artificially imposed separation from 'orthodox' East Coast practices, positing an expanded definition of conceptual art's terms based on the intrinsic utopian impulses it shared with the activities of the counterculture.

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Introduction

Conceptual Art, Art of the (Countercultural) Sixties?

> *...It is impossible to understand…without understanding the sixties, and [to] appreciate Conceptual Art for what it was: the art of the Vietnam War era.*
>
> Joseph Kosuth, *1975.*[1]

In 1975 Joseph Kosuth stated that conceptual art should be understood, and appreciated as, the art of the Sixties—the era overshadowed by the American Vietnam War, and popular opposition to it, as well as a broader growth of anti-establishment sentiment. In spite of this much-quoted assertion, made by one of conceptual art's key players, American conceptual practices of this era have largely been considered at something of a remove from their wider socio-historical context. That is to say, conceptual art's origins and concerns have frequently been portrayed as self-referential, with its radical critique of tradition largely understood as confined to the domain of art itself.[2] Thus, in the majority of accounts, references to the burst of countercultural activity which occurred alongside its development have tended to function merely as additional background colour, where they appear at all. The intent of this thesis is instead to re-read the conceptual project in direct relation to the American counterculture, identifying its impetus and the underlying utopianism of its impulses as fundamentally interconnected with those of this era-defining, socio-cultural phenomenon.

Throughout this thesis, I deploy the term counterculture to refer to a broad, pervasive set of shifts in American attitudes and values. This is counter to

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[1] Joseph Kosuth, "1975" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 345.

[2] See: Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (1990): 105-143; Blake Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), xxxviii-lii.

both contemporary critical and popular portrayals that presented the phenomenon merely as a fashionable form of youth-led rebellion, stimulated by the increased affluence of the era.[3] Historians have framed the challenges the counterculture posed to the mainstream establishment, via its proliferation of alternative forms of culture, communities, modes of living, and even models of consciousness, as a partial response to the increased escalation of the American Vietnam War.[4] However, in spite of its connection with the anti-war movement, and other 'calls to resist Illegitimate forms of authority,' the counterculture was distinct from other more traditional forms of political activism.[5] This includes labour and student movements, as well as the emergent New Left. Consequentially, much like conceptual art, its activities have largely been understood as apolitical in nature.[6] However, whilst not explicitly *about* politics, as social theorist Julie Stephens has argued, by virtue of this seeming apoliticism, its activities have the potential to be viewed as politically charged statements of resistance. [7] This is an argument I will extend to conceptual art itself.

This thesis focuses on American conceptual practices of the Sixties, that is a period extending the decade's strict chronological bounds, with a particular emphasis on works dating from the later 1960s, to mid-1970s.[8] This leaning towards the decade's turn is partially intended as a challenge to the discourse of failure that surrounds conceptual art and the counterculture alike, at this particular historical juncture. From as early as October 1967,

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[3] Many of the first histories of the counterculture presented it as the youthful 'revolt of the unoppressed': Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971); Frank Musgrove, *Ecstasy and Holiness: Counter Culture and the Open Society* (London: Methuen, 1974).

[4] Jameson identifies the Vietnam War as one of the 'third world beginnings' of the "first world 60s," in both "countercultural terms—drugs and rock—or in the political terms…" Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," *Social Tex*t 9/10 (1984): 180.

[5] RESIST, "A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority," *New York Review of Books*, Oct, 12, 1967, 7.

[6] Note, for example, the dismissive distinction proposed by Jameson (see above) Ibid, 180.

[7] Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[8] The 'long' sixties generally refer to period spanning the mid-1950s-mid-1970s, although its exact dates are contested, see for example the conflicting dates/catalysts proposed by: Jameson,"Periodizing the 60s." Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

months after heralding its arrival, the mainstream press proclaimed the counterculture's demise. In response to trend-following 'plastic' hippies, speed and LSD-addled 'freaks,' as well as outbreaks of venereal disease, hepatitis and various in-group conflicts, *Time* magazine posed the question "where have all the flowers gone?"[9] This narrative of failure originated not only from outside critique, but also from those within, who began to re-consider its initial utopian promise. *Time* called attention to the San Francisco Diggers' recent death of hippie parade, a mock funeral held on the streets of Haight-Ashbury, citing this as evidence of a growing internal malaise. Blake Stimson asserts that convictions about conceptual art's radial potential were equally fleeting, pointing to critical re-evaluations made by practitioners and influential figures, such as critic Lucy Lippard and conceptual curator and dealer Seth Siegelaub, in the early 1970s.[10]

This discourse of failure has been perpetuated by art historians, such as Stimson, as well as historians of the counterculture, and can be understood as part of a grand mythic narrative frequently referred to as the 'death of the Sixties'—a myth notably sustained via pop representations of the era.[11] In short, this narrative has centred around a supposed end to the optimism thought to characterise the early 1960s, with its spirit of idealism and hopeful naiveté frequently contrasted with the darker, more cynical, and even violent undertones associated with the succeeding decade. My position, however, is that neither conceptual art nor the effects of the counterculture failed, nor did either come to an abrupt end in 1969, but rather continued to evolve and develop. The continued use of the term conceptual art (albeit deployed with divergent meanings and implications) can be cited as evidence of this. Numerous artists were still identifying their practice as conceptual, and

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[9] "Youth: The Hippies." Article, *Time*, July 07, 1967, accessed Jan 25, 2016 http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,899555,00.html; "Hippies: Where have all the Flowers Gone?" *Time*, Oct 13, 1967, accessed June 22, 2016 http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,837367,00.html

[10] Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art," xlii-xliii.

[11] Note popular histories/biopics that dramatize the end of the Sixties as a 'generation devour[ed] in an orgy of violence and drugs.' A. E. Hotchner, *Blown Away: Rolling Stones and the Death of the Sixties* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

engaging with this term, well into the 1970s. Not to mention a number of widely regarded conceptual exhibitions occurred after this date. Similarly, in the case of the counterculture, *Time* misunderstood the purposes of the Diggers' hippie funeral. It was intended as a rejection of negative media portrayals, and as a stance against the invasion of Haight-Ashbury with tourists and businessmen, as well as other infringements on the counterculture's radical, anti-establishment ideals.[12] Thus, rather than an indicator of its demise, the period of critical self-questioning that occurred in the late 1960s can be seen as indicative of a continued commitment and investment in both movements' core, radical objectives. In spite of the divergent pathways and approaches this critical re-evaluation fostered, my contention is that it is possible to trace a continuous set of impulses back to conceptualism's earliest origins; as I explore in my first chapter, this is possible by recognising its inherently utopian engagement with notions of impossibility and ephemerality.

My dual aims are to provide this contextualising account of conceptual art, and to shift focus away from the still dominant emphasis on New York, to the understudied practices of the American West Coast. These aims are inter-related. This is due to the region's more immediate connections with the counterculture, in terms of its geographic proximity to key centres of activity, such as San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, but also the way in which a number of its practitioners explicitly used countercultural ideas and modes of thinking as a basis for their conceptual inquiries. Placing greater emphasis on Californian production also serves to draw attention to an alternative set of conceptual practices, as well as the work of a number of relatively critically overlooked figures, including Tom Marioni, Terry Fox and Barbara T. Smith. Crucially, however, this focus on the West Coast is not exclusive. My intent is not to construct a separate history of Californian conceptualism (as I go on to discuss, this has already been attempted), but instead to account for the

[12] For an extended account: Bradford D. Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street: Politics and Public Performance in 1960s America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 114-117.

significance of its existence, using it as a means through which to re-consider our understanding of conceptual art as a whole. Thus, whilst my project acknowledges regional distinctions it fundamentally seeks to collapse them, in an effort to challenge and re-define conceptual art's established terms.

My chief methodological approach has been to synthesize the histories and theories of conceptual art with those of the counterculture. My project is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing not only on contemporaneous art writing and art historical texts, but also American social and cultural histories. Thus, I aim to make a dual intervention, additionally contributing to the growth of countercultural scholarship, a field of study offering a sustained critical analysis of a phenomenon frequently cast as the colourful backdrop to more earnest-seeming endeavours, such as the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War movements. In addition to examining accounts of countercultural activities and the writings of influential figures, I explore how countercultural thoughts and attitudes were expressed, within what is now understood as Sixties' popular culture (in spite of its original 'counter' cultural stance). My intent is to unpack the extent to which countercultural ideas and values filtered through (and were arguably eventually subsumed into) the mainstream American consciousness.

My thesis has also been informed by primary archival research, as well as conversations with key figures—artists, curators and studio assistants. During the second and third year of my research, I spent a number of weeks consulting archive collections at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, Berkeley Art Museum, and the San Francisco Historical Society. Their holdings include artists' papers, as well as those of influential collectors and dealers, collections of countercultural ephemera, and institutional archives, such as those pertaining to the Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA), held at Berkeley.[13] This permitted greater insight into overlaps between conceptual and countercultural activities, as well as conceptual activities in a more

[13] The short form 'MOCA,' was used more frequently by founder Tom Marioni, thus it appears in this format throughout the thesis.

general sense: works, exhibitions, collaborative relationships, and via interviews and artists' papers, how artists framed and understood their particular conceptual approach. Due to limited in-depth secondary sources on Californian practices, this return to primary materials was particularly vital.

Accounting for the Dominance of the East Coast

The term conceptual art is generally understood to refer to a specific set of practices centred primarily on East Coast production. There are a number of reasons for this. New York has long been perceived as America's creative nucleus, having been the location of a number of historic art movements and moments of cultural importance. It is also home to many of America's major schools and art institutions. Of particular note to conceptual art's origins are Hunter College and the School of Visual Arts (SVA). Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner and Robert Barry studied at the former for varying periods, and Kosuth and Sol LeWitt at the latter; in 1966 the SVA was also the location of Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art*, regarded by many as one of the first conceptual art exhibitions. In terms of large-scale institutions, in the early 1960s LeWitt and a number of other figures associated with Minimalism and conceptual art, including Lippard, worked and came into contact with one another at the Museum of Modern Art. Smaller galleries such as The Dwan Gallery, Paula Cooper Gallery, and Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art, were also influential in promoting conceptual art in its nascent form. [14]

As has been well-documented, Siegelaub was a particular force in conceptual art's development. Despite becoming a "curator-at-large" organising conceptual exhibitions across the U.S., Canada and Europe after his galley's closure in 1966, Siegelaub remained chiefly involved with a particular group

[14] Dwan was one of the first dealers to operate on both coasts, see: James Meyer, *Dwan Gallery: Los Angeles to New York, 1959-1971* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2016).

of artists associated with the New York scene.[15] As Alexander Alberro highlights in *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity,* Siegelaub's astute business and marketing practices played a vital role in ensuring even the most ephemeral artworks remained commercially viable and left behind a tangible legacy.[16] In introducing and effectively promoting a specific group of American conceptualists to a wider global audience, Siegelaub thus contributed to New York conceptualism's subsequent dominance.

The art historical emphasis on East Coast conceptualism is not merely a consequence of regional bias, however. Artists working outside this region have not been excluded per se, but rather American conceptual practices have predominately been understood in terms defined by those based in New York. This is partially due to their direct engagement with art criticism and theory. LeWitt and Kosuth were two of the most notable and influential adopters of this practice of critical self-reflection. Kosuth's 1969 "Art After Philosophy," and LeWitt's 1967 "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (and his later 1969, "Sentences") are widely considered to be conceptual art's seminal [sic] texts, and the ideas they articulate have greatly informed art historical discussions of the art form as a whole.[17] In particular, as I shall assert, Benjamin Buchloh's highly influential 1990 attack on conceptualism, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," is, in reality, primarily a critique of the particular theoretical position expressed by Kosuth, extrapolated and applied to conceptual art in its entirety.[18]

The proximity of new sympathetic publishing outlets facilitated the dissemination of these artists' ideas, along with those of their New York

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[15] "Curator-at-large" was used by Kosuth to refer to Siegelaub's practice of curating exhibitions which "existed no *place* (other than in the catalogue)." Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy: Part II," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 175.
[16] Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (London: MIT Press, 2003).
[17] Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy;" Sol Le Witt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 12-17; Sol Le Witt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 106-109.
[18] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969."

contemporaries. Many of these publications became internationally significant. *Artforum*, initially founded in San Francisco in order to draw attention to art in California, re-located to New York in 1967. LeWitt famously begins "Paragraphs" with a nod to the then-editor Philip Leider and his assertion that the artist is no longer to be perceived as, "a kind of ape that has to be explained by the civilised critic."[19] The critical press was less receptive toward Californian conceptualists. Exhibitions in the region were occasionally included in the listings section of national art publications, while the response of the local mainstream press was often hostile, if not entirely dismissive, as surviving correspondence between MOCA director Tom Marioni and the editors of the *San Francisco Chronicle* attests.[20] The New-York based *Avalanche,* founded in 1970*,* was a notable exception, providing coverage of MOCA exhibitions, as well as occasional interviews with key West Coast figures.[21]

The lack of critical attention to Californian practices has been perpetuated by the continued re-printing of the same canonical texts. For example, Alberro and Stimson's *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* includes contributions from European (with particular emphasis on the British members of Art & Language) and Latin American conceptualists, alongside the usual American suspects—but tellingly no statements issued by Marioni relating to MOCA, nor any interviews with John Baldessari, Allen Ruppersberg, or Terry Fox. The anthology's short concluding section on the histories of conceptual art features a reprint of Buchloh's essay, as well as essays by Jeff Wall and Charles Harrison.[22] All three were initially published within a three-year

[19] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,"12.
[20] Note art critic Frankenstein's letter to Marioni stating: "the trouble hereabouts is that people don't take you seriously." Letter from Alfred V Frankenstein to Tom Marioni, July 8, 1973, box 46, folder 5, 1995.46.5.1a-b, MOCA Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley.
[21] See for example: Terry Fox, interviewed by Willoughby Sharp, "Terry Fox: I wanted to have my mood affect their looks," in T*erry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 252-256.
[22] Jeff Wall, Dan Graham's Kammerspeil," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 504-513; Charles Harrison, "Conceptual Art and Critical Judgement," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 538-545.

period (1989-91) and arrive at a similarly pessimistic verdict, ultimately championing art's return to pictorialism following the supposed decline of the conceptual approach—critical positions, again, largely informed by a particular understanding of what this approach was. The inclusion of these essays notably support the same dismissive conclusions reached by Stimson in his oddly negative opening examination of conceptual art's (failed) "promise."[23]

Whilst doing an excellent job of highlighting conceptual art's multiple points of origin and divergent strands, Peter Osborne's vast survey text for *Conceptual Art* makes a similar omission to Alberro and Stimson's anthology.[24] Osborne's division of conceptual art's 'narrative' into several discreet categories arguably reflects an attempt to account for its major—or rather most well-known—theoretical positions. "Process, System, Series," emphasises the connection between nascent conceptualism and Minimalism, and reflects the approach advocated by artists such as Mel Bochner and LeWitt; "Word and Sign" charts conceptual art's 'linguistic turn,' the understanding of art-as-linguistic-proposition avowed by Kosuth, Weiner, the transatlantic collective Art & Language, and others. However, Osborne makes few references to Californian practices, neither slotting them into existing categories, nor proposing a new alternative one. Also of particular relevance to this project, is "Politics and Ideology." In addition to discussing the work of feminist artists Martha Rosler and Mary Kelly, Osborne provides an extended discussion of Latin American practices. As in other survey texts from this period, Osborne highlights the way in which Brazilian artists, Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and Cildo Meireles, utilized conceptual and participatory approaches as a subversive but coded means of expressing political dissent. This argument bears great similarity to the notion of conceptual art as an expression of resistance-via-refusal that I intend to propose here—yet curiously, the new understanding of conceptualism potentially brought about

[23] Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art."
[24] Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, (London: Phaidon, 2002).

by greater scholarly attention to these practices has seemingly gone unacknowledged. The seeming implication of this is that conceptual art is only understood as protest when made by the 'other,' that is, *not* the white, American, men of hegemonic conceptualism. Whilst this doubling of female and non-Western conceptualists' otherness is in itself problematic, it also fails to acknowledge the majority male, white, middle-class demographics of the counterculture.[25]

The West is the Best: 'Momentous Events from a Local Point of View'[26]

Whilst the West Coast has often been underrepresented within large-scale surveys of conceptual art, there have been efforts to remedy this, particularly in the past few years. Pre-dating more recent attempts to recover West Coast practices are Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong's *Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art* (1980) and Suzanne Foley's *Space/Time/Sound—Conceptual Art in the San Francisco Bay Area: The 1970s* (1981), published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name, held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.[27] However, the bulk of focused scholarship on the West Coast was published after 2011, coinciding with the realisation of the Getty-led *Pacific Standard Time* (PST) initiative. PST's first programme ran in conjunction with cultural institutions across Southern California (and thus references to Bay Area practices were still relatively limited), and focused on regional art production dating from 1945-80, with much emphasis placed on conceptual and performance practices of the late 1960s-70s.[28] Although the initiative successfully helped to re-construct histories of West Coast practices, as well as the region's

[25] It is this make-up that informed the critiques of: Musgrove, *Ecstasy and Holiness*; Keniston, *Youth and Dissent.*

[26] Connie Butler, "This is Art—These People are Artists: Pacific Standard Time, Conceptual Art, and Other Momentous Events from a Local Point of View," *Art Journal* 71, no. 1 (2012): 40.

[27] Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong, eds., *Performance Anthology: Source Book of California Performance Art* (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press, 1989.); Suzanne Foley, *Space/Time/Sound—Conceptual Art in the San Francisco Bay Area: The 1970s* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1981).

[28] See: Constance M. Lewallen and Karen Moss, eds., *State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

alternative art-spaces, inevitably the majority of its publications were institutionally and curatorially-led. That is to say, they focused on historic moments of importance for key institutions (such as the activities that took place at Pomona Art College, from 1969-73),[29] or were designed to accompany large scale survey exhibitions.[30] The latter's emphasis on breadth left scope for further critical analysis of individual artists and works.

Whilst the importance of the research facilitated by the Getty cannot be understated, one could argue that in its construction of a set of alternative, regionally-focused histories, it has (however inadvertently) re-inscribed the supposed separateness of the East and West Coasts—and potentially one might venture, done little to challenge the mythic notion of their rivalry. In spite of raising the profile of a number of overlooked Californian artists, there has been little attempt, since the first PST publications in 2011, to consider how their once neglected practices potentially alter our understanding of conceptual art as a whole.[31] In other words, they have yet to be assimilated into the dominant art historical narratives of what we might term conceptualism 'proper'—or, more appropriately, brought to bear on these pre-existing histories, so as to renegotiate precisely what 'conceptual art' means. It is worth highlighting that there may still be a degree of resistance to the notion that such an endeavour is even of value. As Sam Thorne observed in an article on PST for *Frieze*, many of the initial responses to the initiative seemingly expressed an entrenched scepticism about California's worth as a site of art historical investigation, with some critics going so far as to dismiss it as merely a grand exercise in institutional self-promotion and/or regional boosterism. Thorne, however, argued against such claims,

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[29] Rebecca McGrew and Glenn Phillips, eds., *It Happened at Pomona: Art at the Edge of Los Angeles 1969-1973* (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2011).
[30] Rebecca Peabody et al (eds.), *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art, 1945-1980* (LA: Getty, 2011); Paul Schimmel and Lisa Gabrielle Mark, eds., *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981* (London: Prestel, 2011).
[31] As Butler observes, PST often privileged lesser-known artists over those with international reputations, e.g. Ruscha and Baldessari. This potentially furthered a sense of regional separateness, re-enforcing the notion that once an artist is successful they are no longer defined by their regional identity. This has problematic implications for those who remain 'regional' artists. Butler, "This is Art,"40.

concluding that the project represented, "a long-due counterweight to the centrifugal pull of New York in accounts of postwar art in the US." He also suggested that it would inevitably take time for its full impact to be felt.[32] In its attempt to extend this body of research on Californian production, this thesis contributes to —what will hopefully turn out to be—the first wave of "post-PST" conceptual art scholarship.[33]

'Countercultural Art?' or Art-of-the-counterculture

By the same stroke as conceptual art's de-contextualisation, accounts of the relationship between art and the American counterculture have predominately been confined to practices directly related to countercultural activities. 'Countercultural art' is thus often used to refer to psychedelic painting and print, festival posters and album art, made by artists such as Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, Bonnie MacLean, Stanley Mouse & Alton Kelley, and Wes Wilson—all figures associated with San Francisco; to psychedelia in its broader sense, experimental film-making, liquid light shows, and the creation of multisensory environments designed to supplement the LSD experience; and art produced within countercultural communes/live-in artistic communities—including their architecture. It has also been used in relation to the era's underground press and 'comix' scene.[34]

Coinciding with the wave of PST scholarship, but led by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner published *West of Center* (2011), an edited volume on art and counterculture, which took a more expansive approach to 'countercultural art.'[35] In addition to the practices described above, *West of Center* also took into consideration art that blurred the (perhaps artificially imposed) boundary between

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[32] Sam Thorne and Stacey Allan, "Pacific Standard Time," *Frieze,* Jan 1, 2012, accessed June 22, 2016 https://frieze.com/article/pacific-standard-time
[33] Thorne posits this notion of pre- and post-PST. Thorne and Allan, "Pacific Standard Time."
[34] Christoph Grunenberg, *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era* (London: Tate 2005); Ted Owen and Denise Dickson, *High Art: A History of the Psychedelic Poster* (London: Sanctuary Publishing, 1999); Patrick Rosenkranz, *Rebel Visions: Underground Comix: The Underground Comix Revolution 1963-1975* (Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2006).
[35] Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner eds., *West of Center: Art and The Countercultural Experiment in America, 1965-1977* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

countercultural actions and avant-garde artistic gestures. The text featured essays on environmental art, such as the works of Helen and Newton Harrison, and communal performance workshops led by choreographers, such as Anna and Lawrence Halprin's "Experiments in Environment," held at rural retreats from 1966-8.[36] However, in spite of the editors' attempt to explore the blurring of 'high art' with countercultural activity, *West of Center* still ultimately insists on the existence of "countercultural art" as a distinct and separate category. Despite the promising inclusion of a foreword written by Lippard, only obvious examples of the intersection between art and counterculture are discussed. For example, works that literally took place within communes, or had overt political content, a fact that overlooks the anti-disciplinary nature of countercultural protests.

Where *West of Center* examined artists' overt engagement with countercultural activities, my intention is to consider the extent to which the countercultural phenomenon at large influenced, or found expression in, contemporaneous art practices. My approach shares an affinity with two subsequent publications: Andrew Blauvelt's edited volume *Hippie Modernism* (2015) and James Nisbet's *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems in Art of the 1960s and 1970s* (2014).[37] *Hippie Modernism* goes further than *West of Center*, in terms of its treatment of the counterculture as a larger phenomenon, rather than a set of discrete activities and/or practices. It interrogates countercultural thought, and the ways in which it contributed to experimental models of education, architecture, technology, design (or anti-design), and politics, proposed during the period. Adopting a similar approach, but with more exclusive focus on the impact on artistic production, Nisbet explores concepts of central importance to countercultural thinking.

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[36] Amanda Boetzkes, Techniques of Survival: The Harrisons and the Environmental Countercultural; Eva J. Friedberg, "Collective Movement Anna and Lawrence Halprin's Joint Workshops," in *West of Center: Art and The Countercultural Experiment in America, 1965-1977,* edited by (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). 23-42; 307-324.

[37] Andrew Blauvelt ed., *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2015); James Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems in Art of the 1960s and 1970s* (London: The MIT Press, 2014).

These include shared energy, vibrations and communal dynamics, as fostered by a new 'whole earth' mentality, the history and implications of which I examine during the course of this thesis. His account elucidates the underlying countercultural impulses of Minimalism's transition into Land Art, as well as the contemporaneous artistic interest in eco-systems and environments. For example, he examines Allan Kaprow's Environments in relation to similar psychedelic practices. Perhaps more importantly, he highlights the simultaneous development of the environmental movement, cybernetics, and continued growth of corporate capital in 1960s America (which *Hippie Modernism* also touches on), facilitating an expanded definition of ecological art—one not exclusively dealing with environmental concerns, but more broadly with systems of energy, information and communication exchange.

Although Nisbet's discussion includes references to conceptual practices, they are not his principle focus. Thus, whilst many of the concepts he highlights are of direct relevance to the understanding of countercultural thinking outlined here, they were angled in a specific direction—towards its ecological underpinnings, albeit in the expanded sense he proposed. His account does not discuss the counterculture in terms of the notion of resistance-via-refusal, that is, as an expression of politically-charged apolticism. This is of central importance to my contextual re-reading of sixties American conceptualism.

This is the End? Buchloh's "Conceptual Art 1962-1969."

Despite attempts to expand art historical accounts of the sixties, scholarship on conceptual art has remained indebted to Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's 1990 essay, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions." In the essay, Buchloh emphasises the objective, systematic, procedural approach of early 'orthodox' conceptualism, positing

that it was characteristic of the administrative age in which it emerged.[38] From nascent forms, including Sol LeWitt's proto-conceptual 'structures,' he charts conceptualism's transition from its purported emphasis on the elimination of subjectivity and aesthetics, towards the direction of its methods on institutional critique. Despite its influence, Buchloh's complex essay contains a number of ambiguities, and contradictions, as well as an overwhelming bias towards the East Coast. In order to move beyond Buchloh and avoid constructing what could problematically be seen as an additional but separate, regionally-focused side-history, it is therefore necessary to critique his position directly, as well as its ongoing legacy.

Writing close to thirty years ago, Benjamin Buchloh begins "Conceptual Art 1962-1969" with a statement privileging the insight of historical distance, highlighting the scholar's ability to identify larger motivating factors than were known to those at the time. In spite of this assertion, he goes on to provide an account of conceptualism that largely de-contextualises it from its wider surroundings, instead positioning it as a "movement," taking place within a specific art historical continuum.[39] Following this opening logic, however, I would suggest we are now similarly obliged to consider Buchloh's position in history. In his popular account of the decade, Todd Gitlin asserts that the 'Sixties' were re-written in 1980s, in much the same way that the 'Fifties' were re-imagined during the 1960s.[40] For Stephens, these re-imaginings were frequently shaped by, and implicitly reinforced, the authors' particular politics. Such tactical constructions, she asserts, positioned the decade, with it leftist politics and liberal/'permissive' values, (a problematically narrow reading in itself) as in all ways opposite to the present. As she highlights, 1980s accounts of the 1960s thus vary from biting

[38] I use 'orthodox' throughout this thesis to refer to the dominant understanding of conceptual art, centred around East Coast practices, i.e. that propagated Buchloh, and his subsequent followers.

[39] Art historians such as Kintisch have contested this on the basis that conceptual art denoted neither one unified style, nor shared theory. In agreement with this, 'conceptual art' is not capitalised throughout this thesis. Christine Kintisch, "Foreword," in *Romantic Conceptualism,* ed. Jörg Heiser (Nuremberg: Kerber: 2008), 4.

[40] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* (London: Bantam Books, 1987), 12.

critiques of its supposed naïveté, to those verging on wistful nostalgia.[41] Thus, these reconstructions were partially informed by the era's conservative cultural and political landscape, with authors of both persuasions concerned with determining how the liberalism of the Sixties transformed into the Neo-liberalism of the Reagan-era. [42]

Whilst I am not suggesting that Buchloh's motives relate to any such politicised agenda, he begins by drawing attention to his "vantage point of the late 1980s."[43] As is characteristic of the essay as a whole, he relates the importance of this vantage point purely to its situation within a larger art historical narrative. Adopting a similar strategy of opposition to the one Stephens describes, he comments on the contemporary art world's "violent restoration" of all that conceptual art sought to eliminate: traditional artistic forms, modes of production and an emphasis on visuality.[44] In highlighting these contemporary circumstances, he frames his argument as an attempt to elucidate a dialectic thread connecting present artistic priorities with those of the relatively recent past. Thus, what he presents is arguably a retroactive account in which the "currency of the historical object" derives principally from evidence of its continuation in the present day—or, as he contends of conceptual art, its total abandonment.[45] In other words, Buchloh seemingly uses contemporary conditions as the ultimate proof of conceptualism's failure. The basis of this assessment, which forms the driving force of the essay, is reinforced in its concluding lines:

> ….The Enlightenment-triumph of Conceptual Art-its transformation of audiences and distribution, its abolition of object status and commodity

[41] Conservative critics often consign Gitlin's part memoir/part history into this latter category. Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest,* 11.
[42] Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties* (New York: Summit Books, 1989). For a more contemporary account, see: Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[43] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 105.
[44] Ibid, 105.
[45] Ibid, 107.

> form - would most of all only be shortlived, almost immediately giving way to the return of the ghostlike reapparitions of (prematurely?) displaced painterly and sculptural paradigms of the past. So that the specular regime, which Conceptual Art claimed to have upset, would soon be reinstated with renewed vigor. Which is of course what happened.[46]

This approach is problematic, not only because it isolates the conceptual project from its broader context, refusing to acknowledge any relationship between shifting artistic trends and external socio-cultural and economic factors, but also because it fails to account for a future revival of interest in conceptual procedures and concerns. Without quite making it explicit, Buchloh frames conceptualism as a historically-bound movement, rather than a set of artistic strategies with future potential and appeal. Moreover, it is unclear whether this implicit distinction was intentional, or whether it was made purely for the purposes of his analysis. Either way, this apparent lack of foresight is acute given Buchloh was writing on the cusp of the early 1990s, a period of renewed interest in conceptual approaches.

As posited by critic Jörg Heiser, during the 1990s conceptual art was provided with an "emotional rescue," in the form of 'Romantic Conceptualism.'[47] Heiser bases this on a fusion of its supposed strategies of indifference with elements of nineteenth century Romanticism, and, consequentially, re-enforces a de-contextualised account of its history. Although he identifies a latent utopian quality to early conceptual practices he overlooks the relation of this to the concurrent emergence of the counterculture, by instead drawing on the art historic tradition of Romanticism. However, the artists Heiser championed, Felix Gonzalez Torres, Tactica Dean, and Cerith Wyn Evans, among others, indeed indicate a later renaissance in conceptual

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[46] Ibid, 143.
[47] Douglas Eklund, "The Pictures Generation," Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000, Oct 2004, accessed Jan 22, 2015, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/pcgn/hd_pcgn.htm; Jörg Heiser, "Emotional Rescue," Frieze 71 (November-December 2002): 70-75.

practices, or rather their critical appreciation. In the opening of his essay, Buchloh does state conceptual art's disappearance is only "temporary."[48] However, there is no further discussion of when or why this re-emergence takes place. Moreover, the finality of Buchloh's fatalistic conclusion appears to contradict this initial hint at a potential return. By looking for all explanations of its demise within the limitations of the project itself, Buchloh's account leaves little room for this prospect; conceptual art is portrayed as having exhausted all possibilities for its own future. Whilst my intent is to provide a contextual account of conceptual art's emergence, unlike Buchloh, I do not define it as a historically bound movement, but rather a series of divergent approaches and concerns. As I later unpack, this expansion of its terms thus permits a different lineage for the utopian investigations of 'Romantic' conceptualism, outlined by Heiser.

Buchloh eventually posits 1975 as conceptual art's ultimate end, albeit in the evolved form of institutional critique. Although not explicitly referenced in the essay, this date overlaps with those frequently used to mark the arrival of the supposedly *post*-conceptual, "Pictures Generation." For the curators of the 2009 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition of the same name, this revival of visuality and picture-making has been bracketed as emerging in 1974, and declining in 1984.[49] However, there is a far more fundamental argument to be made beyond questioning the proposed date of conceptualism's death/hibernation. This is whether it can be thought to have disappeared at all.

Whilst Douglas Eklund, curator of *The Pictures Generation*, describes the return to visuality in the mid-1970s as a decisive move away from 'Conceptualism's transformation of the art object into the realm of pure idea or linguistic proposition,' he also suggests its strategies enabled this

[48] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969,"105.
[49] Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984,* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).

subsequent critical and distanced approach towards mass cultural imagery.[50] The original exhibition on which the exhibition was based, the Douglas Crimp-curated *Pictures*, held in 1977 at the Artists Space in New York, makes this connection even more explicit. In *Pictures'* catalogue, Crimp explicitly aligns a new generation of artists to their conceptual predecessors. Crimp refers to the influence of Proto-conceptualism, claiming these new practices expanded on its peripheral aspects, its underplayed beauty, incipient romanticism and veiled anxiety, as deployed through strategies of quotation, excerption and staging.[51] According to Kate Fowle, with its connotations of the verb 'to picture,' Crimp's description of this approach to image-making alludes to an intention to allow viewers to create spaces psychologically distinct from reality. As she highlights, Crimp posited a new form of representation, apart from the tradition of mimesis, that is, one unconcerned with replicating reality, and instead with the aestheticization of its signifiers within mass media and popular culture.[52]

In his account of conceptualism, Buchloh refers to a similar, distanced appropriation of images, combined with a Duchamp-like process of re-framing found objects/images as art.[53] His discussion of Dan Graham's *Homes for America* (1966), describes the artist's use of images of the architectural banal as a demonstration of the grounding of visual signs and their meaning within both the structured systems of language, and as referents of socio-political experience. Despite framing *Homes for America* as a declaration of images' bound connection to the world and, with that, their inability to act as empty linguistic signifiers (the avowed aim of other conceptualists, such as Kosuth), Buchloh appears to conceive of Graham's images of standardized,

[50] Eklund, "The Pictures Generation."
[51] Douglas Crimp, *Pictures: An Exhibition of the work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo* (New York: Artists Space, 1977).
[52] Kate Fowle, "The Pictures Generation: 1974–84, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA," *Frieze* 124, June-August, 2009: 80.
[53] Buchloh is scathing of this 'simplistic' interpretation of Duchamp's legacy, and particularly critical of Kosuth's reading of the readymade as "merely an aesthetic of declaration and intention." Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 125.

mass-produced housing as an arbitrary choice of source material. For Buchloh, through their detached staging within the work's magazine layout, Graham deployed these images with a strategic indifference, thus holding any potential for politicised connotations at a distance. This is in marked contrast to a later reading by Alexander Alberro, who sees the work as illustrative of Herbert Marcuse's notion of the "regression of individual and social experience under the impact of progress," as outlined in the philosopher's critique of contemporary society, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).[54]

This idea of a societal crisis, brought about by an increasingly bureaucratic and industrialised world, formed the basis of social critic and historian Theodore Roszak's 1969 conception of the counterculture as a form of youthful opposition to what he termed, "technocracy."[55] As the title of his essay suggests, Buchloh similarly identifies post-World War II American society as characterised by this move toward total administration, and attempts to link this to conceptual art's aesthetic approach. The affinity he finds between the growth of white-collar work and this avant-garde form of art is, however, problematic. Although his phrasing is ambiguous, he appears to posit conceptualism as the art form of the emergent middle classes, describing its administrative style as their "new aesthetic identity."[56] The implication of this position is that, in spite of its claims to radicality, conceptual art can be viewed as a conservative force. This is in terms of its cultural reinforcement of the conditions and structures of technocratic society. Where this theory stumbles, however, is the real-world likelihood of this mainstream identification with conceptualism – its relatively marginal contemporary audience undermining any notion of its power as the kind of

[54] Alexander Alberro, "Reductivism in Reverse (1994)," in *Dan Graham (October Files),* ed. Alex Kitnick (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), 24, 37.; Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 1991).
[55] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor, 1969).
[56] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969,"128-129.

"grand cultural imperative of technocracy," of which Roszak speaks.[57] It is unclear at this point within Buchloh's essay whether he sees the "aesthetic of administration" contained within nascent conceptualism as a reflection of the contemporary society, or as a critical comment on it. His scepticism about its utopian potential, based chiefly on a belief that its concerns were entirely inward looking, would suggest he was postulating was a kind of unconscious symbiosis between its aesthetics, and changes in the socio-economic realm. This is seemingly at odds with the de-contextualised approach taken throughout "Conceptual Art 1962-1969." Moreover, it would suggest Buchloh failed to consider the possible connection between what he posits was an aesthetic form, mirroring the systematic, procedural approaches of the administrative middle class, and the concurrent mid-1960s beginnings of a widespread cultural rebellion, predominantly made up of members of this class. It is this omission I seek to rectify.

Let us return, once more, to Buchloh's vexed assertion of conceptualism's demise. As I have highlighted, traces of conceptual art's spirit and procedures can be found within the very revival of visuality Buchloh insisted marked the 'movement's' end (be this a temporary halt or not). Of the five artists featured in Crimp's original *Pictures* show, at least two, Sherrie Levine and Jack Goldstein, are still frequently categorised as conceptual artists. While Goldstein had largely left behind the conceptual practices of his early career by the time Buchloh was writing (focusing on the creation of large scale salon paintings during the 1980s, and eventually retreating from the art world in the 1990s), Crimp directly links his early experiments in picture-making to John Baldessari, whose 'Post Studio' art class Goldstein attended at the California Institute of Arts.[58] It is interesting to note that Crimp cites a West Coast conceptualist, and, by extension, the art school at which he taught, as a key influence on this new concern with images. As I explore, the incorporation of visual elements of mass culture was a preoccupation

[57] Roszak, The Making of a Counter Culture, xiv.
[58] Fowle, "The Pictures Generation: 1974–84," 80.

Californian conceptualists shared with the counterculture, which frequently appropriated material from popular, vernacular sources for parodic purposes.

In addition to its influence on the pictures generation, conceptualism's project can also be seen to endure in a more direct and obvious form, through the continued development of Institutional Critique. This artistic endeavour to expose the ideological apparatus of the institutions that, according to Buchloh, perpetrated the positivist logic of a fully administered society, did not, as his account suggests, die at the hands of Marcel Broodthaers (whose work he describes as a "travesty," and an "absolute farce" of early conceptualism's earnest objectives).[59] Instead, Institutional Critique flourished in the late 1980s and 1990s, through the work of artists such as Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson. The fact that this new generation of artists had already emerged at the time Buchloh was writing, highlights the highly selective approach he adopted when constructing his linear narrative of conceptualism. This selectiveness is also evident in his decision to predominately limit his discussion to the era's strident voices, the majority of whom were based in New York– a strategy that allowed Buchloh to more clearly delineate conceptualism's lineage in Pop and Minimal forms, a notion he seemed particularly concerned with.

Given the evidence of conceptualism's post-1975 existence, the question remains then, why was Buchloh so invested in the notion of its failure, and more importantly, why have so many subsequent art historians continued to replicate his narrative? Buchloh's investment in conceptual art's demise can perhaps be linked to the broader 1980s historicisation of the Sixties discussed earlier, in which the spirit and ideals of the era were frequently portrayed as irrevocably lost. However, other motivations are likely to have informed Buchloh's position. The essay was published in *October*, a journal which advocated a theoretical approach informed by French post-structuralism.

[59] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969,"143.

This potentially accounts for his preoccupation with an interpretation of conceptualism based largely on the writings of Kosuth. Despite acknowledging the divergent approach of its practitioners, Buchloh asserts that conceptualism's inherent proposal was to "replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone," reconfiguring the artwork as an analytic proposition**.** [60] This is close to the particular strategy Kosuth outlined in "Art After Philosophy," and, I would suggest, it is possible to argue that Buchloh gave this a centrality within his account in order to more actively attack the flawed nature of its premise—that is, one particularly at odds with his own theoretical standpoint.[61] The irony is that in focusing his energies on systematically dismantling Kosuth's attempt to create a tautological, fully autonomous art form, Buchloh ended up constructing an account of conceptualism that rarely goes beyond the realm of art itself.

Buchloh was also driven by an art historical agenda related to recovering the artistic legacies of Duchamp. His concern with positioning conceptual art as a misinterpretation of these legacies arguably constitutes a potential vested interest in also establishing its failure. His assertion was that conceptualism reductively appropriated Duchamp's practice of the ready-made, de-contextualising it from his full body of work, and thus rendering it as nothing more than neutral propositions of artistic intent.[62] Thus, he argued, the full implications of Duchamp's practice were absent from early conceptualism; that is, its exposure of art's reliance on its contextual definition within the discursive framing conditions of the institution. It is on this basis that Buchloh goes on to assert that conceptualism, in its nascent form, self-extinguished through an inevitable process of exhaustion. Additional evidence of Buchloh's pursuit of this particular agenda can also be found in his privileging of conceptualists who purportedly understood Duchamp's work in its full

[60]Ibid, 107.
[61] Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," In *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 158-177.
[62] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969,"116.

complexity. He champions Robert Morris for his 'correct' understanding of Duchamp's programmatic voiding of art's supposed validation on the basis of subjective taste, a fallacy he replaced with an overt discourse of power. Buchloh claims Morris furthered this project in works such as *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)* (1963), which negated the traditional emphasis on visual aesthetics via the legalistic language of the contract. It is via such early explorations of art's underlying power structures that Buchloh traces conceptualism's eventual evolution from a procedural administrative aesthetic, to a deployment of that same approach, directed at institutional critique.

Beyond Buchloh

Despite its flaws and ambiguities, Buchloh's narrative of failure has continued to dominate art historical accounts of conceptual art in the 1960s. There are a number of reasons for this. As Buchloh states at the start of "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," as a 'movement' conceptualism consisted of a "wide range of often conflicting positions."[63] Yet, he successfully accounts for a number of these disparate voices within one, unified interpretation. As stated, this approach of systematically outlining conceptualism's various iterations, in order to fit them into one large schema, has been adopted by a number of subsequent authors.[64] Both the appeal and the flaw of this is that it neatens-up conceptualism's complex histories, pinning down its ephemeral and multifarious practices to one grand idea, as well as a linear sequence of events. Thus, whilst it allows for the construction of an arguably clearer, more concise account, it does so at the cost of accuracy and nuance. It is these nuances I am concerned with exploring. What is more problematic, however, is that those who have adopted this approach have also tended to reproduce Buchloh's exclusionary habits. What fails to fit into the pre-

[63] Ibid, 105.
[64] See for example: Peter Osborne, "Survey," in *Conceptual Art,* ed. Peter Osborne, (London: Phaidon, 2002.), 12-45; Alexander Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977," in *Conceptual Art: a Critical Anthology,* ed. Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999): xvi-xxxviii.

established subcategories is either dismissed, or labelled as something other than conceptualism 'proper.' A piece like Susan Hiller's *Ten Months* (1977–9) was, for example, primarily aligned with feminist art, at least until her work's later association with Romantic Conceptualism.

The continued reproduction of Buchloh's contention that conceptual art failed as an artistic experiment in the negation of visual aesthetics, is perhaps a natural consequence of the replication of his essay's teleological structure, which builds to an inevitable climactic end—as narratives often do. However, Jan Verwoert has ventured another explanation for the ongoing investment in its demise. Verwoert suggests art historians are able to more authoritatively historicize conceptual art as a failed historic movement, than attempt to unpack the contemporary consequences of its paradigm-altering rupture. As a consequence of this rupture, Verwoert thus claims that whether confronting the artefacts of conceptualism, or its present day articulations, it is necessary to situate oneself outside of the established modes of interpretation.[65] Verwoert cites Blake Stimson as a vehement advocate of the former strategy, describing his systematic analysis of conceptualism's failures as equivalent to that of a "coroner inspecting art history's victims."[66] Stimson's essay "The Promise of Conceptual Art," takes up many of Buchloh's arguments, including his belief that conceptualism 'fundamentally lacked the social utopianism inherent in earlier avant-garde art movements,' and attempts to validate these claims by presenting, as evidence, a contemporary discourse of failure.[67] For example, unlike Buchloh who accuses Lippard of 'political and cultural naivety' for her belief in conceptualism's utopian potential, Stimson instead provides proof of her disenchantment by 1973: "…it was 'unlikely,' she lamented, 'that conceptual art will be any better

[65] Jan Verwoert, "Secret Society: Cracking the codes of Conceptual Art," *Frieze* 124, (June-August, 2009): 60-65.
[66] Ibid, 65.
[67] Blake Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art," 140-142.

equipped to affect the world any differently than, or even as much as, its less ephemeral counterparts.'"[68]

While Stimson succeeds in proving the existence of a strong sense of scepticism, or early disillusionment, from within conceptual art's own ranks, that same evidence could, however, be perceived as strengthening the case for its initial promise. As Julie Stephens has suggested of the self –critical practices of countercultural activists, the San Francisco Diggers, criticality of one's own project is indicative of a level of commitment and earnestness lacking in those less self-questioning.[69] While Stephens does not draw direct comparisons herself, her examination of the counterculture as a form of anti-disciplinary protest highlights a number of similarities between what has predominately been portrayed as the era's widespread youth rebellion, and the project of conceptualism. One of these is the strong contemporary, and subsequent, discourse of failure that surrounds the counterculture. Stephens links this discourse of failure to a tendency to apply a logical form of analysis to a movement that, by its very anti-disciplinary nature, lacked a clear, unified set of objectives. For Stephens, the type of radical protest advocated by the counterculture has repeatedly been dismissed, precisely because its socio-political vision was unrecognisable within traditional parameters.[70] Arguably the equivalent could be said of conceptualism, not just in terms of its art-world position, but also in the kinds of utopianism contained within its fragmentary, unbounded forms. This notion drives this thesis, along with a number of other questions generated during this analysis. These are as follows: how do we attempt to interpret an art form that, by its very nature, attempted to derail art's established terms? And, if Buchloh's linear narrative of conceptual art's development—from an aesthetic of administration to an institutional critique, culminating in eventual death or dormancy—fails to account for the project's numerous, complex divergences, then what are we to replace it with? Should it be a series of narrower histories that reject

[68] Ibid, xliii.
[69] Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest,* 27.
[70] Ibid*,* 22-23.

'Conceptual Art' with a capital 'C' as an all unifying label, or a broader, more expansive use of the term that runs the risk of becoming so all-encompassing and nebulous that it no longer carries meaning? While this second option contains this inherent problem, it is my contention that it may also provide an avenue through which the intersection between the utopianism of conceptual art and that of the counterculture can finally be addressed.

I have divided my thesis into four thematic chapters, each identifying such points of intersection. In the first, "Conclusions Logic Cannot Reach: Conceptual Art and Countercultural Magic," I examine conceptual art's ongoing engagement with realms outside of rationality and logic in relation to a contextually particular understanding of the term 'magic,' as a countercultural strategy of resistance. My second chapter, "Come, and For a While, be Free: Conceptual Art as Play," builds on many of these concepts to examine conceptualism's paradoxical gesturing towards infinite open-endedness and autonomous self-containment, as discussed in relation to play. Much like magic, I explore play as a strategy of countercultural resistance, concerned with the creation, on a conceptual level, of impossibly utopian spaces. As I posit, these play-spaces were crucially defined by the individual, acting as part of a collective. My third chapter, "Edible Utopias: Communal Consumption and Conceptual Performance," continues this exploration of utopian space creation to examine conceptual works featuring communally performed acts of consumption. I argue that the utopian spaces they constructed occurred across multiple planes, in a seeming bid to collapse the separation of the social and the corporeal, from that of the conceptual. As in my previous chapter, the countercultural emphasis on the individual, understood as part of the collective, is central to this discussion. As I account, within the countercultural food and diet were understood to have radical social, political, and even spiritual, potential, affecting not only the individual, but the world and cosmos at large. My final chapter "On the Road (Again)," examines the conceptual documentation of movement and journeys, alongside the countercultural interest in trips of various kinds—

those taking place out on America's 'open' roads, in a continuation of the long-standing American cultural tradition, as well as those registered on an entirely different spiritual and/or psychoactive frequency. Through analysis of these intersections of conceptual art and counterculture, I not only intend to provide an account of conceptualism's broader contextual history but also, via an exploration of their symbiosis, to make a case for its intrinsic utopian potential.

Conclusions Logic Cannot Reach: Conceptual Art and Countercultural Magic

Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.

Sol LeWitt, Sentences on Conceptual Art, *1969.*[1]

ROBERT BARRY

Telepathic Piece, 1969.

[During the Exhibition I will try to communicate telepathically a work of art, the nature of which is a series of thoughts that are not applicable to language or image.] [2]

In 1969, Robert Barry produced a short statement for inclusion in the catalogue for an exhibition of conceptual art, *May 19 – June 19, 1969*. This statement was printed beneath the title, *Telepathic Piece* (1969), and was as follows: "*During the Exhibition I will try to communicate telepathically a work of art, the nature of which is a series of thoughts that are not applicable to language or image*."[3] [Fig.1.1] Organised by influential dealer and curator Seth Siegelaub, the exhibition, held at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, featured works by prominent American conceptualists including Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Weiner. With the notable exception of LeWitt's *Wall Drawing* (1969), a work physically inscribed onto the walls of the University in accordance with a prescribed set of instructions, overall, the exhibition had a strong linguistic leaning.

The clearest example of this was Weiner's *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA* (1969)—an artwork which functions as what one might describe as title-

[1] Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 106.
[2] Robert Barry, *Telepathic Piece,* (1969) in the format it appeared in: *May 19 – June 19, 1969* (Burnaby, B.C.: Centre for Communication and the Arts, Simon Fraser University, 1969), unpaginated.
[3] Ibid.

as-totality. Alongside Kosuth's *VIII Eventuality: (Art as Idea as Idea)* (1968), which similarly used language as a means to express a reflexive, self-contained art-statement (an "analytic proposition," to use the artist's own terminology [4]), British members of Art & Language, Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin were represented in the form of their investigations of language permutations, *Hot Warm Cool Cold* (1967) and *22 Sentences: The French Army* (1968). In spite of its physical site-specific realisation, even LeWitt's *Wall Drawing* featured in word form, via the publication of the artist's instructions within the show's catalogue [Fig.1.2]. The same is also true of Huebler's *Duration Piece #8,* which appeared as a typed request. Huebler instructed visitors to record the period of May 19—June 19, 1969 by collecting a series of found surface rubbings. These instructions were, again, re-printed in the catalogue, but were also distributed to students of Simon Fraser along with a chart made up of 32 blank rectangular spaces to be used for the process of documentation [Fig.1.3].

The capacity for these works to be expressed via language alone was reflected in the structure of the exhibition catalogue, which Siegelaub divided into two distinct parts: I. Catalogue, and 2. Presentation. This division ostensibly implies a separateness between the art—as located on a conceptual plane (but inevitably expressed via the use of language)—and its tangible realisation, for the purposes of the exhibition [Fig.1.4]. [5] This contrasts to the traditional notion that an artwork is both what it represents and is the sum-total of its object-bound form—as is conveyed by the catalogue convention of listing medium and dimensions beneath a work's title.

[4] As outlined in: Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 158-177.

[5] Alberro alternatively argues that despite establishing a distinction between "primary and secondary material[s]," Siegelaub posited an equivalence between "the work and its publicity" —a necessary economic strategy for survival. Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity,* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 156.

In spite of this apparent gesture towards art's capacity to function on a purely conceptual level, Barry's *Telepathic Piece*, was, however, the only work that featured solely in the form of a statement. Unlike his co-contributors, Barry resisted the temptation to contribute work to the catalogue list, and then subsequently release it in a separate, more tangible form. Weiner, for example, had *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA* printed on notices bearing the University's letterhead. As detailed in the 'Presentation' section, this "information," was then sent out to "students, faculty members and other interested parties." [6] [Fig.1.5] In this respect, one might argue that Barry's work—even more than that of his colleagues—signalled, the redundancy of the traditional, physically and temporally located exhibition.

However, what is crucial here, particularly in light of the discussions that follow, is that Barry did not simply decide against "presenting" *Telepathic Piece* in a physical, tangible form: the very nature of the work made this impossible. The series of thoughts Barry was attempting to communicate were *outside* of visuality and *beyond* language. The descriptive statement which appeared beneath the work's title was thus not its sum-total, but rather referred to its ephemeral location *elsewhere.* Although bracketed by the duration of the exhibition, *Telepathic Piece*—at least as we are able to perceive it via its catalogue listing—was not self-contained, but fragmentary and open-ended.

In attempting to locate his work in a realm separate from visual perception, Barry's *Telepathic Piece* took conceptualism's abolition of object-bound art and aesthetics to its extreme. In striving to go beyond language, Barry seemingly acknowledged that, when expressed in written form, linguistic propositions are still ultimately accessed via visual means. Barry's contemporary, Mel Bochner, also called attention to this notion with his art-

[6] Lawrence Weiner, *A RUBBER BALL THROWN AT THE SEA, May 19 – June 19, 1969,* (Vancouver: Centre for Communication and the Arts, Simon Fraser University, 1969), unpaginated.

statement: *Language is not Transparent* (1969). However, Barry's logical working-through of conceptual art's supposed ban on visuality arrives at a conclusion outside of rational thought. In order to communicate his work in non-visual and non-linguistic means, he engaged with the realm of parapsychology, a form of pseudoscience blended with the occult. He called upon supernatural, extra-sensory forces to transmit his work via psychic means: telepathy. This gesturing beyond can partially be understood as a recognition of the visuality of written language, as well as an acknowledgement of the impossibility for it to function as a complete system of human communication, that is, capable of expressing all phenomena, no matter how complex, ill-defined or nebulous.

Introduction: Conceptual Art, 'Irrational thoughts followed absolutely and logically'[7]

Following my attempt to re-open and expand the discourse on conceptualism, via a dismantling of Benjamin Buchloh's influential essay, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,"[8] in this chapter I propose a re-reading of conceptual art's experimental terms in relation to nebulous realms outside of rationality and logic: those more associated with spirituality and mysticism. This attempt to re-position conceptualism is ostensibly antithetical to that proposed by Buchloh, and his relation of conceptual art to the increased post Second World War tendency toward the total administration of society and culture. The relation of conceptual art to realms outside of rational thought seemingly runs counter to its characterization as dry, intellectual, and informed by the rigorous application of cold, hard logic. Mysticism, by virtue of its definition as ambiguously-defined belief systems based on mysterious forces, or truths beyond intellectual comprehension, may seem more compatible with art of the ancient or pre-modern world. This is due to its

[7] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," 106.
[8] Benjamin H. D Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, Vol. 55 (1990): 105-143.

antithesis to the rationality and empiricism of the post-enlightenment age posited, by Buchloh and others, to be in acceleration by the 1960s.[9]

However, as was highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, the counterculture can be understood precisely as an attempt to oppose this relentless march towards a totally administered world—or what Theodore Roszak described as a technocratic society, in which the rationality of corporate, techno-scientific specialization is all-pervading—via a recovery of earlier modes of thought and existence.[10] My reading of conceptual art's relation to mystic spirituality is therefore underpinned by a set of developments in spiritual thought and practices, which can be understood as symptomatic of a larger contemporaneous phenomenon of socio-cultural resistance. This is particularly because these developments were often driven by nostalgic yearnings for the pre-modern—albeit in a mythically constructed form, which frequently, and somewhat problematically conceived of non-Western practices as authentic, ancient *others.* For reasons I will unpack, this understanding of spirituality as an oppositional model specific to mid-1960s-70s America shall be referred to here as "countercultural magic." My intent is to interrogate whether the administrative methods of proto-conceptual art can be seen as a conservative re-enforcement of dominant ideological thought (however inadvertent)—or alternatively, as I go on to propose, as a demonstration of rationality and logic's potential for collapse when pushed to irrational and illogical extremes.

In his 1990 *October* essay, Buchloh begins by defining conceptual art via what he understood as its intrinsic project: "to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition)."[11] As highlighted in my introductory discussion of this text, Buchloh's definition of conceptualism appears to draw greatly on the writings

[9] Of particular relevance in light of this project's focus, is the similarity of Buchloh's observations to those of the sociologist of the counterculture, Roszak: Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (London: Faber, 1970).
[10] Ibid.
[11] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969," 107.

of Kosuth, who outlined this notion of art as an analytic proposition in his 1969 essay, "Art After Philosophy."[12] In employing this term, Buchloh thus positions the quintessential (or 'ideal,' in terms of what its practitioners, e.g. Kosuth, strove for) conceptual artwork as the expression, or more accurately the sum-total of, its own self-contained, procedural logic. It is on this basis that Buchloh claims 1960s conceptualism is characteristic of the administrative age from which it originated.

As I observed, whether Buchloh understands conceptual art as an attempt to critique the dominant ideology of the day, via its own methods, or simply as a 'neutral' reflection of the administrative age, is left ambiguous. I would suggest the latter appears more likely: Buchloh's central assertion appears to be that whilst conceptualism purported to radically overturn certain paradigms of artistic tradition, it *inadvertently* did so via the methodological approach favoured by the establishment. Understood in this way, Buchloh's text adds an additional layer to internal criticisms of conceptualism, raised in the early 1970s. In 1973, Siegelaub, for example, expressed his unhappiness that conceptualism had thus far limited its questioning strictly "to the exclusive domain of fine art." Although alluding to its potential to enable an examination of broader concerns he concluded that "conceptual artists were only really interested in avant-garde aesthetic problems."[13] In this respect, Buchloh ostensibly twists Kosuth's 1975 statement that conceptual art should be viewed and "appreciated" as "the art of the Vietnam War era," by aligning it with the same ideological approach extended, by the establishment, to contemporary warfare.[14]

Buchloh's possible alignment of conceptual art and the establishment, is, to an extent, in agreement with an argument raised by Kosuth himself. Largely taken out of its immediate context, Kosuth prefaces his assertion that

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[12] Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy," 158-77.
[13] Seth Siegelaub and Michel Claura, "l'Art Conceptual" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 290. (First publication in English, trans. Stimson).
[14] Joseph Kosuth, "1975" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 345.

conceptual art was "the art of the Vietnam War" with the claim that, "the activities of the mass of [conceptual] practitioners…" are now "…dependent on and expressive of the institutions of the prevailing socio-political-economic ideology…"[15] However, his essay for *The Fox* was ultimately intended as a defence of conceptualism, prompted by the journal's recent declaration of the project's failure—or, at least, the now 'betrayed' "impetus of its original aims."[16] In this respect, the essay was also a self-reflection, from the vantage point of the mid-1970s, on the artist's own earlier thinking. Despite those who, according to Kosuth, had subsequently adopted conceptualism as a mere "stylistic" choice, in its challenge to tradition, the artist conceived of the project as a radical response to contemporary conditions—albeit one which, by 1975, Kosuth acknowledged had exhausted itself in its current form.

Throughout "1975," Kosuth oscillates between championing conceptualism's utopian commitment to autonomy (that is, its attempt to preserve something understood to be sacred and of eternal importance to humankind) and acknowledging that all art is inescapably a 'depiction' of its present historical location. On this latter point, Kosuth reflects on the Marxist assertion that no art can claim to be truly apolitical, cautioning that in their depiction of the present ideological circumstances, all artists—including his conceptual contemporaries—can be understood to partially re-enforce "the unacceptable social status-quo."[17] What the artist appears to make a case for, however, is that in spite of the impossibility of the endeavour, conceptual art, in its purist form, strove to evade this trap.

In his closing paragraphs, Kosuth describes the struggle of being an active agent *in* history *to* history, and of the young artist's role as a mediator between "past" and "future," via confrontations with the present. In taking up this struggle he argued, "the artist-philosopher meets momentarily the

[15] Ibid, 345, 335.
[16] Ibid, 335.
[17] Ibid, 346.

artist-shaman and contacts the inherently revolutionary nature of art-praxis—until again, that parent Society seduces with a further re-description of reality."[18]

In addition to drawing on Kosuth, Buchloh's understanding of conceptualism was also crucially informed by the writings of LeWitt. This chapter uses LeWitt's notion of the conceptual artist-as-mystic as a fundamental jumping off point. Of particular importance was his proposal for a distanced form of artistic production, in which a work's concept became a self-generative force. As summarized in his 1967 "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art": 'the idea was to become the machine which made the art'—the very language of which arguably evokes a sense of techno-administrative efficiency.[19] However, as the artist would further outline in "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969), this attempt to eliminate spontaneity and subjectivity, would also allow for "irrational thoughts" to be carried out "absolutely and logically." Therefore, he asserted that the conceptual artist's role was akin to that of a mystic, in that by employing this method, he/she was paradoxically able to "leap to conclusions logic cannot reach."[20]

Rather than an attempt to achieve neutral distance, via this allusion to mysticism, LeWitt re-positioned his systematic approach to art-making as a means of self-surrender, designed to enable artistic-access to 'higher' truths—ones potentially outside of, or beyond, rational thought and logic. This is a move which arguably bears greater resemblance to the countercultural truth-seeker's desire to 'let go of one's ego,' in order to reach a state of cosmic awareness (be this through the use of psychedelic drugs or alternative spiritual practices—or a combination of both), than the banal and dispassionate quest for efficiency, associated with the world of administration.

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 12-17.
[20] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," 106.

My focus is on conceptualists who overtly demonstrated this leap in, or beyond, logic and rationality, via their engagement with notions related to the ephemeral, the invisible, and even the *impossible*. As I posit, in their explorations of forms difficult for the eye and mind to grasp, as well as phenomena simply beyond human understanding, a connection can be made between conceptual art and the blurred, indeterminate realms of mysticism, spirituality and the occult.

It is worth highlighting, that LeWitt's notion of the conceptual artist-as-mystic contains an odd paradox. The artist is positioned as a gifted individual, capable of accessing realms outside of normal human understanding, via this very process of subjective self-surrender. Thus, whilst his writings ostensibly propose a deconstruction of the artist-as-author and a move away from subjectivity, with this reference to mystic power, LeWitt simultaneously retained a sense of his ultimate authority—even, one might argue, going so as far as re-inscribe the myth of the artist's intimate connection with the divine.

Magic, in its broad sense, refers to ritual practices derived from secret or obscure bodies of knowledge. The OED defines magic as: observances informed by knowledge of the occult, not apprehensible to the ordinary mind, and communicated only to the initiated few.[21] One might cynically observe that the latter part of this definition, would serve as an apt description of conceptual art at its most impenetrable—for example, its ventures into the cerebral realms of philosophy and linguistics. However, this notion of the 'initiated few' hints at magic's function as an expression of countercultural identity and belonging—of which more will be said, in the section on 'the Occult explosion.'

Magical practices then, can be understood as attempts to harness forces believed to be beyond human understanding, via the imposition of

[21] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "magic" Jul 07, 2017 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/112186?rskey=5BZJCQ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid

systematic, organizational structures designed to call them into play, such as the repetition of sets of ritualized actions and behaviours. If we consider the role of language in relation to this idea, within magical rituals, spells and incantations function as symbolic stand-ins for things not visible to the naked eye, or which challenge human comprehension. That is, they are made up of (at least as it appears to the outsider) nonsense, or nonsensically-ordered, words, a hermetic code—again, understood to convey meaning *beyond* language, offering, according to believers, the magic possibility of a summoning of supernatural powers.

It is worth re-stating that one might more immediately connect the ideas outlined here with an archaic means of relating to the world, particularly that pre-dating modern scientific thought. As outlined in anthropological studies on the magical practices of ancient and/or 'primitive' cultures, magic-thinking is chiefly used in the absence of science, or in instances where science has been pushed to its current limits, to explain or attempt to control events beyond human power, and, outside of contemporary knowledge and understanding.[22] James George Frazer first observed this in his 1890 comparative study of magic and religion. He saw magic as the 'foundation of the whole mystical and scientific universe of primitive man,' to be replaced in evolutionary stages by religion and then science. [23] In addition to being a means through which individuals were able to reject mainstream technocratic culture and, thus further express their anti-establishment stance, the resurgent interest in magic during the countercultural Sixties can arguably be attributed to a similar desire to re-gain control, in light of events individuals felt they had limited control over. These include America's involvement in the Vietnam War, and with that draft conscription.

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[22] See for example: James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic,* trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge 1972); Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
[23] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

Along with more traditional forms of political resistance, those opposed to the Vietnam conflict attempted to bring it to an end via a combination of numerous exercises in magical thinking designed to induce a more positive state, or 'trip,' in the world at large. These include practices such as chanting, energy transfers and sending out positive vibrations. I will go on to examine one notable example in detail: the 1967 attempt to levitate the Pentagon. The levitation attempt provides an initial counterpoint to proto-conceptual art and its supposed aesthetics of administration. However, I will go on to challenge this reading, and propose a potential alignment between conceptualism and contemporaneous expressions of countercultural resistance. Not all 'countercultural magic' was specifically directed at ending the war. However, as I contend, it can be understood as a response to a sense of individual powerlessness, fostered by the technocratic conditions of contemporary America, and with that, contemporary American warfare. This notion is similar to arguments outlined by Roszak, as well the German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse, whose 1964 *One-Dimensional Man* I shall examine more fully later,[24] but also those of Kosuth, who contextualized his 1975 discussion of conceptual art's past and future, as follows:

> Our youth was spent in an environment clouded by the prospect of a nuclear holocaust: our children face an equally grisly, and more likely, prospect: life under the merged bureaucracies of multi-national corporations and Communist state capitalism—the "peaceful" world of which Kissinger's "détente" speaks…what is the *alternative* to this encroaching space-age feudalism: I wish I knew.[25]

As stated, this chapter deals with what can be understood as a particular thematic strand of conceptual art—its attempts to engage with nebulous realms outside of language and vision: the ineffable, the imperceptible, the indeterminate and the logically impossible—as read in relation to a set of

[24] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[25] Kosuth, "1975," 345. Kosuth's conclusion to this statement implies that from his vantage in the mid-1970s, the artist failed to see conceptual art, nor for that matter, the counterculture, as a viable solution.

specific contemporaneous strategies of resistance: opposition to the all-pervading dominance of technocratic and administrative thought, via the expression of alternative spiritual beliefs and practices—referred to here as "countercultural magic." This undertaking has broader implications for my thesis as a whole, in that it fundamentally informs the understanding of both conceptual art and the American counterculture pursued in subsequent chapters. In other words, what I am, to an extent suggesting is that all of the conceptual works discussed within these pages have the capacity to be understood in relation to this notion of countercultural magic—and, additionally, that via the discussion of this notion, the terms of the counterculture as it is understood here, will also be unpacked.

The Unknown as the Occasion for Possibilities'[26] in the work of Robert Barry

I use the unknown because it's the occasion for possibilities, and because it's more real than anything else.

Robert Barry, 1969.[27]

In his written statement for *May 19 – June 19, 1969*, Barry used language to refer to the activity that constituted *Telepathic Piece*: the telepathic transfer of a series of thoughts, during a set duration of time. The words themselves—our only means of accessing *Telepathic Piece*—do not constitute the work, but simply conceptually gesture in its direction. Thus, rather than being bound to an object, or a 'complete' linguistic statement, Barry re-designated art to a collection of undefined, fleeting conscious and/or unconscious thoughts (as one might argue the latter is more likely given their supposed position outside of language), as well as the psychic exercise of their projection. We assume, or perhaps can infer, that these thoughts are

[26] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," 106; Robert Barry, 1969, quoted in John T. Paoletti, "Spaces for Liberated Thought," in *Some Places to Which We Can Come: Robert Barry 1963-1975,* ed. Ellen Seifermann and Beat Wismer (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2003), 21. (original source not cited.)
[27] Robert Barry, 1969, quoted in Paoletti, "Spaces for Liberated Thought," 21.

incapable of being expressed via language due to their transient and obscure nature, but it may also be a consequence of their potential volume. Although Barry does not state that the work was the sum-total of *all* his thoughts at this time, their number is an additional indeterminate factor. This is an element upon which Barry expanded in another work from his 1969 *Psychic Series*, which Robert C. Morgan described as a silent telepathic transmission, documented in a single sentence.[28] The statement originally featured in the catalogue of another Siegelaub-curated exhibition, *July, August, September 1969,* and was printed as follows: "Everything in the unconscious perceived by the senses but not noted by the conscious mind during trips to Baltimore, during the summer of 1969."[29] [Fig.1.6]

For Morgan, Barry's *Psychic Series* fits with the artist's contemporaneous preoccupation with testing the limits of language and vision. According to Morgan, "What emerges…is a silent poetic voice, a distilled thought…it is as if Barry had reached the limits of what language was capable of addressing."[30] After his move away from painting in 1968, Barry's principle concern was with invisibility and absence or what one might alternatively describe as phenomena difficult or impossible to grasp: the ineffable, or that outside of human sensory perception. Thus, his works from this time contain an intrinsically elusive quality.

This quality is identifiable in other works by Barry, which overtly engage with the fleeting and the transient. An example of this is, *All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking—1:36p.m.; June 15, 1969* (1969) [Fig.1.7]. As John T. Paoletti has observed, although the "moment" Barry refers to in this 'transmission-statement' is indicated precisely, it is this specificity (i.e. down to the minute), or rather its briefness, that results in its inextricable merging with subsequent moments that follow, "just as

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[28] Robert C. Morgan, "Robert Barry: Language and Silence," in *Some Places to Which We Can Come: Robert Barry 1963-1975,* ed. Ellen Seifermann and Beat Wismer (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2003), 77.
[29] Robert Barry, *Physic Series*, 1969, *July, August, September,* 1967, Seth Seigelaub, 1967.
[30]Morgan, "Robert Barry," 77.

imperceptibly as thoughts enter and leaving a wandering mind."[31] This temporal slipperiness adds to what Paoletti describes as the "conceptually tricky" notion at the statement's core, that is the declaration of having knowledge of something, whilst simultaneously, at the time of that declaration, not thinking of that thing.[32]

Much like *Telepathic Piece*, *All the things I know*… uses language to gesture towards art that is ultimately located *elsewhere*—from our vantage point after-the-fact, to a moment of time/(un)consciousness now past. Barry's series of *Untitled* statements, also dating from 1969, achieve a similar effect: *Untitled (Something I was once conscious of, but have now forgotten), Untitled (Something which is unknown to me, but which works upon me), Untitled (Something that is taking shape in my mind and will sometime come to my consciousness),* and perhaps the most mystic seeming of all, *Untitled (Something that is searching for me and needs me to reveal itself).* These transmissions can be understood to gesture to an inaccessible elsewhere: the once known but now forgotten past, an imperceptible element of the present, and to a not-yet reached—and, I would argue, continually deferred—moment of conscious realization; nothing contained within these latter statements indicate that Barry will have now arrived at these moments, instead they eternally refer to an unspecified point of time in the future.

In addition to engaging with ungraspable, fleeting conditions of time and streams of conscious/unconscious thought, Barry's other works from the late 1960s experimented with materials that were not only invisible, but beyond ordinary sensory perception. *90 mc Carrier Wave (FM) (1968)* marked a departure from the artist's earlier practice of visibly calling attention to the dimensions of the gallery (both inside, and later outside, *between* institutional spaces), via the use of celling-suspended nylon and/or copper wires. *Carrier Wave* instead signalled Barry's new concern with imperceptibly filling architectural spaces. Within his studio, the artist concealed a hand-

[31]Paoletti, "Spaces for Liberated Thought," 33.
[32]Ibid.

engineered FM transmitter, which generated high frequency radio waves. As Morgan describes the work: "no-one could see the sound being transmitted, but one could surmise the carrier waves existed in the space." [33]

Barry continued to pursue this concern via the use of radioactive materials. For *Radiation Piece* (1969), he had the following information added to a wall-mounted plaque: Robert Barry, RADIATION PIECE, Cesium 137, O.51 MEV Beta Energy, March 6, 1969, H.L. 30 years. As Morgan alludes, the effect of this plaque and its subsequent placement was that those who encountered it presumed radioactive material had been placed in its vicinity. Also completed in March 1969, Barry's *Inert Gas Series*—or rather its documentation—similarly invited the traditional 'viewer' to take a leap of faith beyond their reliance on sense-based evidence. The works themselves consisted of Barry releasing small measures of colourless inert gases (helium, neon, argon, krypton and xenon) into the atmosphere at various open-air locations across California. Due to their invisible nature, the photo-documentation of these locations, and Barry's accompanying statements, provides the only visual means of accessing these art-actions [Fig.8—13].[34] To be more accurate, this is the case for the contemporary viewer, who can now easily view these much-re-printed images. In April 1969, Siegelaub produced a 30x45-inch monochrome poster, featuring a single line of information about the work along with a P.O. Box address in Los Angeles, and the number of a telephone answering service as the location of its 'exhibition.' Those interested were able to dial the number and hear an audio description of Barry's action. Thus, as Alexander Alberro notes, at that time the only accessible visual manifestation of the series was Siegelaub's language-based publicity poster,

[33] Morgan, "Robert Barry," 75.

[34] Barry stated the photographs were taken at Siegelaub's insistence, to ensure future posterity. He claimed he originally wanted the work to be a purely transient, invisible act. Conversation with Robert Barry, Greta Meert, Brussels, Belgium, Sept 11, 2015. Barry has elsewhere asserted he allowed the photographs to be taken precisely because they proved "that there was nothing to photograph." Barry, interview with Novell, in Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell, eds., *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelaub, Smithson, and Weiner by Patricia Norvell* (London: University of California Press, 2001), 91.

and consequently public access to the work/its exhibition was exclusively in the form of "advertising as pure sign."[35]

Barry's use of inert gases underscored his interest in non-visible and uncontainable materials without solid form. This was made explicit in Barry's accompanying descriptions which detailed the gases' diffusion from a specific "measured volume to indefinite expansion." The date, location and exact measure of gas then followed this statement. For example, for Krypton: "…On March 3, 1969 in Beverly Hills California one litre was returned to the atmosphere."[36] Barry's reference to seemingly boundless expansion evokes the infinite—or, more accurately, the indeterminately large, in terms of volume, or field of dissemination—and the ungraspable. As stated, traces of both can be found throughout Barry's works from this period.

This aspect of the *Inert Gas Series* renders the work distinct from other, near-contemporary works that employed similar materials. As its title indicates, Michael Asher's *Vertical Columns of Accelerated Air* (1966-1969), consisted of spatially-defined "columns," (as well as "walls" and "curtains") of air, treated as sculptural matter and confined to specific spaces inside gallery settings. Created and controlled via air blowing-units, placed in direct relation to architectural features, Asher's manipulations of air were designed to influence visitors' movement around the Whitney Museum of American Art, in New York, and subsequently Newport Harbour Art Museum in California. *Vertical Columns* thus contrasts with Barry's *Inert Gases*, which were deployed outside of institutionally and architecturally confined spaces, in boundless open-air locations. Although Asher concealed the source of his columns, those who encountered them will have registered the small movement of air, as a draft, or subtle shift in body temperature, whereas Barry's gases were completely imperceptible to the ordinary human senses. The same could be said of *Telepathic Piece*, made just two months later, for

[35] Alberro, *Conceptual Art,* 118. Note: the lack of photographs at the work's initial 1969 exhibition was at Barry's insistence.
[36] Robert Barry, *Inert Gas Series: Krypton*, 1969.

which the artist evoked the *extra*-ordinary and extra-sensory force of psychic projection and receivership.

Telepathic Piece pushed Barry's previous testing of the boundaries between perception and imperceptibility, logic-based knowledge and directly encountered sense-based evidence, as well as the limits of visual and linguistic communication. Although Barry previously used non-visible materials or methods of 'transmission,' these phenomena were familiar to anyone with a basic knowledge of science. In other words, sound waves, radiation, and gases are all known scientific entities. Thus, in spite of their invisibility, the viewer, taking Barry at his word, can logically infer their presence. Where *Telepathic Piece* crucially differs is in its engagement with realms outside of known science.

In referring to the occult or pseudoscientific practice of telepathy, Barry can be understood to have brought together two strands of his prior investigations, by establishing an analogy between thoughts inexpressible by language, and phenomena currently beyond, or outside of, rational scientific thought. In doing this, he arguably moved closer towards realising the artistic potential of taking leaps in logic, as advocated by LeWitt.[37] Barry echoed this sentiment in 1969 with his claim: "I use the unknown because it's the occasion for possibilities…" The artist followed this with what can interpreted as a cynical observation on the limits of scientific rationality and empiricism: "…because [the unknown is] more real than anything else."[38] It is this same sense of disillusionment with scientific rationality, and its socio-cultural dominance, that arguably motivated the development of 'countercultural magic,' as well as the countercultural phenomenon at large.

A Conclusion (to an introduction) which Logic Cannot Reach

This introductory chapter sets up a number of thematic concerns which run throughout this thesis. These include conceptual art's engagement with

[37] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," 106.
[38] Robert Barry, 1969, 21.

notions of impossibility and utopianism. My assertion is that alongside attempts to escape visuality, aesthetics and the object or form-bound realm, conceptual art's striving toward autonomy and purity (i.e. away from commodification) can be seen as *impossibly* utopian.

Conceptual art and the counterculture's concurrent use of play as a strategy of resistance, is also touched upon here. This is via my reading of the administrative quality of nascent conceptualism as a potential hyperbolic 'playing-up' of dominant ideological processes (or 'establishment traditions,' [39] if we are to borrow from Kosuth) in order to stretch them to their illogical extremes. The free form of play associated with children is ostensibly antithetical to the earnest, rule-governed realms of rationality and logic. In spite of its straight-faced delivery, there is a ludicrousness to Barry's declared attempt at psychic projection—precisely due to its allusion to forces beyond or outside of logic. The same may also be said, in varying degrees, of the countercultural and artistic levitation attempts which I later go on to discuss. The artworks under consideration here highlight conceptual art's open-ended and fragmentary nature. *Telepathic Piece,* for example, arguably contains a participatory impulse. The traditional 'viewer' is invited to complete the work on a conceptual level, albeit via impossible means: an imperceptible transfer of telepathic energy. Again, the artwork is located in a continually deferred and impossible to reach other, resulting in a (non)conclusion, which I would suggest, befits conceptual art's emphasis on process over end-product. This way of thinking about conceptualism runs throughout this thesis.

In terms of the counterculture, this chapter introduces an understanding of this phenomenon as a means of resistance to the contemporary mainstream, which the social theorist Julie Stephens has characterised as a political, albeit "anti-disciplinary" form of socio-cultural protest.[40] Also of importance here and throughout my thesis is the counterculture's seemingly oscillating

[39] Deployed throughout: Kosuth, "1975."
[40] Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

emphasis on the individual and the collective. As I shall elucidate, rather than positioning these in conflict with one another, this attraction towards both individualization and communality characteristically worked in tandem, leading to a focus on what I continually refer to as the individual-as-part-of-the-collective. This relates to group membership, but also more broadly, to a sense of universal belonging, or spiritual oneness.

Countercultural magic provides a useful means of highlighting these aspects of the counterculture. As stated, the term is used here to refer to non-institutionalised, and therefore less rigorously structured, spiritual beliefs and practices which grew in popularity during the countercultural Sixties. Although individually focused in nature, such practices were often expressed in group settings, or as part of communally performed rituals. Additionally, their antithesis to the totalising logic of mainstream technocratic culture can be seen as exemplary of the anti-disciplinary forms of countercultural protest outlined by Stephens. To that end, I shall examine a key, publicly visible (or more appropriately *in*visible) example of countercultural magic's use as a demonstration of political resistance: the 1967 attempt to levitate the Pentagon. The discussion of this countercultural activity provides a contextual backdrop for my subsequent examination of the San Francisco-based conceptual artist Terry Fox, who in 1970 performed his own semi-private act of levitation.

These Magic Eyes of Victory: The Levitation of the Pentagon, 21st October 1967

We call upon all men of good will to join us in this confrontation with immoral authority. Especially we call upon the universities to fulfill their mission of enlightenment and religious organizations to honor their heritage of brotherhood. Now is the time to resist.

A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority, October 1967[41]

[41] RESIST, "A Call To Resist Illegitimate Authority," *New York Review of Books*, Oct, 12, 1967, 7.

Sorcerers, swamis, witches, voodoo, warlocks, medicine men, and speed freaks will hurl their magic at the faded walls… everyone will scream 'VOTE FOR ME.' We shall raise a flag of nothingness over the Pentagon and a mighty cheer will echo through the land.

Abbie Hoffman, levitation of the Pentagon, October 1967 [42]

The events which took place in Washington D.C. on 21st October 1967 have been well recorded in the histories of the anti-Vietnam War Movement. Approximately 100,000 protesters gathered to demand an end to the conflict, with around 30,000 to 50,000 of these taking part in a march from the Lincoln Memorial to the Pentagon. As detailed in the contemporary press the organisation of this march provoked clashes with Government officials. Disputes over route permits prompted the National Mobilisation Committee ('the Mobe') to assert a new strategy of active opposition moving, as they described it, from a policy of "dissent to resistance."[43] This strategy referred not only to the broader 'call to resist illegitimate authority,' via the burning of draft papers (an urge made explicit in a collectively authored statement published in *The New York Review of Books*), but also to physical forms of resistance.[44] As reported by the *New York Times,* militant attempts to control the demonstration were likely to be met with an equally militant response. Protestors were now willing to "offer themselves up," it could no longer be assumed that those demonstrating against the war would act as "total pacifists."[45]

In spite of the crowds, the protest's main rally at the Lincoln Memorial was relatively calm. However, the speeches given by Mobe co-chairs David Dellinger and Dr Benjamin Spock, reiterated the new strident stance, adopted

[42]Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of It* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005), 27.
[43] Quoted in E. W. Kenworthy, "Thousands Reach Capital To Protest Vietnam War," *New York Times*, Oct 21, 1967, 8.
[44] This statement was co-authored by over three hundred prominent intellectuals. On 20th October 1967 it was submitted to the Justice Department along with a briefcase of draft cards, prompting the arrest of the 'Boston Five.' For extended discussion: Penny W. Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), 55-56, 87-90.
[45] Kenworthy, "Thousands Reach Capital," 8.

by both protestors and officials. Dellinger declared the event a "new stage in the American peace movement."[46] In anticipation of large-scale civil disobedience, four battalions of military police stood alongside members of the National Guard, and police drafted from across the district. Those participating in the march on the Pentagon were met with a line of soldiers with bayonet-tipped rifles. A sizable minority of protesters attempted to break through and gain access to the building. The Department of Defence denied responsibility for incidents of tear gassing, attributing this to protesters. Two hundred and fifty people were arrested, including Dellinger and the novelist Normal Mailer. Although there were no serious injuries, according to the press reports, "the Pentagon steps were splattered with blood."[47]

In contrast to the violent images conjured by contemporary press references to blood and clouds of tear gas, the Pentagon protests have been popularly remembered for their expression of a new form of counterculturally-infused resistance, dubbed 'flower power.' As documented in photographs taken by Bernie Boston and Marc Riboud, a number of protesters responded to the National Guard by offering them flowers [Fig.1.14—15]. In Riboud's photograph, Jan Rose Kasmir, a young female demonstrator, holds up a single chrysanthemum as through clutching a symbolic shield, whilst in Boston's Pulitzer-nominated *Flower Power* (1967) a young man, commonly believed to be George Edgerly Harris III, can be seen placing daisies in the barrels of thrusted rifles.[48] Both images capture not only the youthful face of countercultural America, but also their peer-aged military counterparts. The contemporary press made limited references to the presence of these 'flower children.' The *New York Times* described them as the "younger variety of hippies," before briefly going on to discuss their plan to "surround the Pentagon amid cries of "love, love, love." [49] Although vague, this allusion to

[46] Ibid.
[47] Joseph A. Loftus, "Guards Repulse War Protestors at the Pentagon," *New York Times*, Oct 22, 1967, 1.
[48] Harris (or 'Hibiscus') founded the psychedelic theatre group The Cockettes in 1969.
[49] Kenworthy, "Thousands Reach Capital." 8.

surrounding the Pentagon, may have referred to a specific alternative protest, that took place in addition to the day's rallies, marches, and more well-remembered countercultural gestures. This was the levitation of the Pentagon, an attempt to end the war with immediate effect, via an act of magic.

Gathering as close to the Pentagon as official permits allowed, one hundred yards away from the main rally in the north parking lot, a group of colourfully robed 'protestors' proceeded to perform a ritual exorcism. Surrounding the building whilst chanting ancient Aramaic rites, their intent was to induce the Defence Department to levitate. According to the protesters' press statements, succeeding in getting the Pentagon to "rise into the air," would cause it to "turn orange and vibrate until all evil emissions had fled." The effect, they claimed, would be immediate. By ridding the headquarters of the U.S. military of the evil forces occupying it, "the war would end forthwith."[50] The original plan had been to encircle the building, though this request was rejected by officials, along with the proposal to raise the Pentagon three hundred feet in the air. The reported compromise offered was a more modest height of ten feet.[51] As an alternative, those assembled chanted, sang, and formed 'circles of protection.' Described by various onlookers as colourful and anarchic, the loosely structured festivities were led by Abbie Hoffman and The Fugs, a satiric proto-Folk Rock group [Fig.1.16-17].[52]

Due to his vocal role in the event's organisation and publicity, Hoffman has frequently been framed as the leader of the levitation attempt.[53] However, the original concept has been attributed to a number of key individuals involved in initial discussions.[54] According to Allen Ginsberg, who was part of

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[50] As quoted in, "Protest: The Banners of Dissent," *Time,* Oct. 27, 1967, 9.
[51] Ibid, 9." Whether this counter-offer was actually made by officials remains unclear.
[52] See for example: Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History.* (New York: New American Library, 1968), 128–141. Mailer repeatedly describes the atmosphere as "medieval," and alluded to the chants' hypnotic quality.
[53] For footage of Hoffman's press conference: "It Was 20 Years Ago Today," Granada Television, June 1, 1987, television broadcast.
[54]See following for extensive oral histories which inform this paragraph: Larry "Ratso" Sloman, Michael Simmons and Jay Babcock, "OUT, DEMONS, OUT!: The 1967 Exorcism of the

the proceedings, it was first conceived by the poet Gary Snyder. Snyder's countercultural battle cry, published that year, "A Curse on the Men in Washington, Pentagon," addressed the "men in Washington" directly, asserting that through the power of love and, most importantly, *magic*, "my children may flourish, and yours won't live."[55] [Fig.1.18]. Allen Cohen, poet and founder of the underground newspaper the *San Francisco Oracle* [Fig.1.19] and co-editor, the visionary painter, Michael Bowen, have also been cited for highlighting the symbolic significance of pentagons within occult folklore. This awareness has variously been credited to meetings with wandering holy men, consultations with shamans in Mexico, and reading Lewis Mumford's *The City in History,* in which the pentagon was described as a baroque symbol of oppression.[56] The concept of spiritually cleansing the Pentagon via ritual exorcism was supposedly born from the editors' assertion that five-sided figures were frequently used as symbols of power and, when pointed north like the Pentagon, represented evil.

Founder of The Fugs, Ed Sanders, played a central role in developing the eventual activity, culling information on exorcism rites from various sources, in order to create a loose order of ceremony. As can be seen in his handwritten bill [Fig.1.20], the "exorgasm" was to include, among other rituals: prayers for U.S. soldiers (and their bad 'karma'), a consecration of four corners surrounding the Pentagon, the pouring of a cornmeal trail, an invocation of spirits to aid the exorcism and levitation, and, finally, a peace mantra and purification spell.[57] As can be heard on recordings of the event

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Pentagon and the Birth of Yippie! *Arthur Magazine*, April 13, 2011, https://arthurmag.com/2011/04/13/out-demons-out-the-1967-exorcism-of-the-pentagon-and-the-birth-of-yippie-arthur-no-13nov-2004/.

[55] Gary Snyder, "A Curse on the Men in Washington, Pentagon," *Diggers Papers*, August, 1968, 1, The Digger Archives, accessed 23 July, 2015, http://www.diggers.org/digpaps68/curse.html.

[56] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (London: Penguin Books, 1966).

[57] Ed Sanders, "Exorcism Handbill," 1967, re-published in Sloman, Simmons and Babcock, "OUT, DEMONS, OUT!"

which feature on The Fugs' 1968 album *Tenderness Junction,* Sanders was also responsible for leading chants of "out demons, out!"[58]

Exact details of the levitation attempt and its origins remain somewhat murky. In spite of Sander's bill, the events have largely been characterised as free flowing and anarchic. Although limited film footage remains, where discussed at all, accounts have predominately been informed by the often conflicting recollections of those involved.[59] Note, for example, the lack of consensus regarding the desired height of the Pentagon's projection, which ranges from three to several hundred feet in various sources. The event's mythic status can partially be attributed to its participants active blurring of reality with fiction. Prior to the protest, Hoffman informed the press of his intent to release a high potency sex drug, capable of penetrating the skin on contact. The existence of the fictitious "LACE" (a play on the newly police-tested 'mace' spray) and consequential threat of a mass public orgy was earnestly reported by a number of outlets.[60] Hoffman circulated false information about the event as part of a deliberate strategy designed to confound the media. He appears to have maintained this tactic long after the fact: in a 1987 television interview he asserted that if one looks closely at surviving photo-documentation, one can see the Pentagon rising from the ground.[61]

I would argue that the mythological fog surrounding the exorcism and its authorship underscores that the event consisted of the loosely organised actions of a collective of individuals. In keeping with the emphasis on individual freedom encapsulated by a popular counterculture phrase, participants seemingly engaged via "doing their own thing." In this regard, the levitation attempt can be understood to have ushered in a new form of activism, distinct from the practices associated with the New Left. This sense

[58] The Fugs, "Exorcising the Evil Spirits from the Pentagon Oct. 21, 1967," *Tenderness Junction*, Reprise, 1968, 12-inch vinyl.
[59] Note the liberal blending of history and fiction offered by influential first-hand accounts: Mailer, *The Armies of the Night,* 128-141; Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of It*, 21-50.
[60] See for example: "Protest: The Banners of Dissent," 9.
[61] "It Was 20 Years Ago Today." Regretfully, I was unable to locate this photograph.

of being distinct from, or even antithetical to, the rest of "the Mobe" was articulated by Hoffman, who prophesized that the exorcism would kill off both the Pentagon and the "fag-ridden peace movement."[62] Echoing this sentiment, albeit in less antagonistic terms, Jerry Rubin subsequently claimed that "a new man was born smoking pot while besieging the Pentagon…" a different kind of protestor: "The Marxist acidhead, the psychedelic Bolshevik."[63] Hoffman and Rubin would go on to use this approach as the basis for the activist group, the Youth International Party (Yippie), which they founded that December, alongside Paul Krasser, Anita Hoffman and Nancy Kurshan.

Sociologist Julie Stephens has argued that the levitation attempt is exemplary of the "anti-disciplinary" nature of countercultural politics, which was characterised by a greater fluidity of authorship, leadership and structure.[64] This is in its contrast to both the traditional approach of the establishment, and also that of the New Left. I will return to Stephen's discussion of countercultural forms of protests, in an attempt to extend her argument to account for the countercultural fascination with magic, as part of this inclination towards the 'anti-disciplinary.' However, it is the centrality she gives to a particular feature of countercultural protests that is of interest at this juncture. This is the notion of plurality. While Stephens' analysis emphasizes the communal style of leadership present at the levitation, as fostered through the event's multiple authors, it is crucial to note the plurality of its spiritual underpinnings. According to distributed literature [Fig.1.21], the exorcism was carried out not only in the name of God, but also: "Ra, Jehovah, Anubis, Osiris, Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Thoth, Ptah, Allah, Krishna, Chango, Chimeke, Chukwu, Olisa-Bulu-Uwa, Imales, Orisasu, Imales, Orisasu, Odudua, Kali, Shiva-Shakra, Great Spirit, Dionysus, Yahweh, Thor, Bacchus, Isis, Jesus Christ, Maitreya, Buddha, Rama."[65] As Sanders succinctly

[62] Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of It*, 39.
[63] Jerry Rubin, *Do-it!: Scenarios of the Revolution* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1970), 82.
[64] Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest*.
[65] Exorcism Mimeograph, October 21, 1967.

expressed it in his address to the crowds, the aim was to summon all "the powers of the cosmos….to raise the Pentagon from its destiny and preserve it."[66]

"2+2=?"[67]: Proto-Conceptualism and the Administration of The Military-Industrial Complex

> *This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence-economic, political, even spiritual-is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications.*
>
> President Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People" January 17th, 1961[68]

How can conceptual art with its apparent "aesthetics of administration" be reconciled with the countercultural action that took place in 1967?[69] At a glance, early 'orthodox' conceptualism, with its dry, procedural approach bears a greater resemblance to the institutional establishment which the protesters were attempting to raise from the ground. Take, for example, Robert Morris' *Card File* (1962) [Fig.1.22—23], which many view as one of the earliest examples of conceptual art, if not a similarly process-led precursor. Consisting of a boxed collection of alphabetically ordered manila files, the bureaucratic overtones of *Card File* present a procedural aesthetic more akin to the interior offices and corridors of the Pentagon—the space where modern American warfare was organized, logged and documented—as opposed to the bright burst of magical (or quasi-magical) activity which took

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[66] The Fugs, The Fugs, "Exorcising the Evil Spirits."
[67] Bob Seger System, "2+2=?," *Ramblin' Gamblin' Man*, Capitol Records, 1968, 12-inch vinyl.
[68] Transcript of President Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, January 17th, 1961," accessed 25 June, 2018 https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/,3.
[69] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969."

place beside it in October 1967. Unlike the archaic, freewheeling structure of the levitation attempt, Morris' card files bear labels which ostensibly indicate a more controlled approach to the creative process. Cataloguing steps in the artwork's making, the files cover practical aspects such as 'dates,' 'locations,' 'materials,' 'prices,' and 'purchases,' as well as more abstract concerns, open to varied interpretations, including: 'dissatisfactions,' 'future,' 'repetition,' 'time,' and 'tenses.' The contents of each file, typed and dated comment cards relating to the titled process, are notably inaccessible to the casual viewer. *Card File* is instead displayed as a complete filling system, hung vertically, behind a glass panel. As if to emphasize this, in an almost hyperbolic show of bureaucratic organisation, there are also files devoted solely to maintaining the system's order: 'alphabet,' 'cross filing,' 'deleted entries,' and 'index.'

The visual appearance of *Card File* undoubtedly evokes the visual language of administrative spaces, where facts and figures are recorded and subsequently filed. As I have asserted, this link between the increased administration of all elements of society *including* the artistic output of the cotemporary avant-garde has previously been identified by Buchloh.[70] As he observed, with its emphasis on process over object-production within proto-conceptualism, adherence to a strict procedural method not only dictated the artwork's physical manifestation, the two became one and the same. In other words, according to Buchloh, process and aesthetics became synonymous terms. Outside of the art world, this supposed progression towards the total administration of modern life in the West, extended to contemporary warfare, via the structured deployment of advanced forms of military technology.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously highlighted the centrality of the defence industry to the Post Second World War American economy in his 1961 farewell address. The speech, delivered just one year before Morris

[70] Ibid.

created *Card File*, features the first recorded use of the term, "military-industrial complex," used to refer to the relationship between the American military and the nation's industrial-economy. Eisenhower asserted the necessity of this partnership for interests at home and abroad, citing the 3.5 million Americans directly employed in the defence establishment, and millions more in connected industries. However, his intent was also to caution against the ever-growing influence of privately-owned industrial firms, via their economic alignment with the U.S. government. He warned of the potentially grave implications of this new, core element of the American experience and urged for an "alert and knowledgeable citizenry" to protect against possible encroachments on the democratic process.[71]

As it was deployed by Eisenhower, the term "military-industrial complex" served to highlight the economic impetus behind the military advances of the late 1950s-60s, as well as their underlying corporate and bureaucratic basis. He arguably exposed to the public a national defence strategy less concerned with physical combat, and more with domestic business, as negotiated and documented via contracts and balance sheets. *Card File* seems also to relate to this realm. Aside from its procedural self-structuring, the work's psychical appearance, as a totality, resembles an item of administrative furniture. Moreover, the inaccessible nature of Morris' individual files evokes a body of withheld information, concealed from public view. As the administrative headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defence, the Pentagon similarly functioned as a container for publicly-withheld information. This notion was infamously reinforced by the *New York Times*' 1971 Pentagon Papers exposé.[72] In light of its relative contemporaneousness to Eisenhower's speech, with its cautions about inhibited freedoms and democracy, *Card File's* concealed documents potentially take on additional meaning. Its glass front creates an illusion of transparency that is ultimately false. Whilst the work may be understood as the sum total of its own making, the exact nature

[71] Transcript of Eisenhower: "Farewell,"4.
[72] Neil Sheehan, "Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U. S. Involvement." *New York Times,* June, 13 1971, 1, 38.

of this process remains a mystery to its viewers—a fact that somewhat undermines claims that the work represents a more democratic approach to artmaking.

In his farewell address, Eisenhower argued that the influence of America's military-industrial complex, and its technocratic mechanisations, had penetrated all the way to the nation's spiritual core. However, in terms of its relation to an actual conflict, due to its date, it is arguably more appropriate to situate *Card File* in relation to the Cold War, rather than using it as an example of conceptual art as "the art of the Vietnam War era."[73] This positioning is arguably also fitting due to the conflict's administrative style of warfare, with emphasis on the "soft power," gained via economic sanctions, propaganda, and technological posturing. However, the strategies employed by the U.S. military in Vietnam can be seen as an extension of this. Their technocratic approach to combat included the intensified use of systematic, chemical means of destruction. In addition to a reliance on mounted infantry, Napalm-B and Agent Orange, White and Blue, were deployed to flatten terrain and eradicate anything of potential use to the enemy, including civilian food sources.[74]

This attempt to replicate machine-like efficiency in Vietnam can be seen as another feature of the techno-administrative age. The wave of contemporary criticism in reaction to the war was as much due to this apparent rationalisation of irrevocable destruction, as it was ideological opposition to America's involvement in the conflict. The U.S. military's 'scorched earth' policy destroyed civilian communities and caused permanent damage to the environment.[75] A now infamous attempt to justify this approach was recounted by AP Correspondent Peter Arnett in 1968. In response to the near-total annihilation of Bến Tre, an unnamed Army Major stated: "It

[73] Kosuth, "1975," 345; Note Moira Roth's framing of proto-conceptualism as part of an apolitical "aesthetic of indifference" prompted by the political hysteria of the Cold War era: Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," *Artforum* 16 (1977): 46-53.
[74] See: Fred A Wilcox, *Scorched Earth: Legacies of Chemical Warfare in Vietnam* (Seven Stories Press: New York, 2011).
[75] Ibid.

became necessary to destroy the town to save it."[76] The allied decision to bomb the city "to rout the Vietcong," "regardless of civilian causalities," was repeatedly cited by opponents of the war as evidence of the intrinsically nonsensical nature of American military logic.[77] A letter subsequently printed in the *New York Times*, summarised the growing concerns felt by many: "the obliteration of Bến Tre…illustrates the American theory and practice of warfare…can it be inferred that the American military is prepared to destroy the rest of the world as well, should that appear necessary…?"[78]

Similar evidence of rationality applied with *irrational* effect can be identified within the procedural references which make up Morris' *Card File*. At a surface glance, the work offers a transparent insight into the process of its own creation. However, the artist's rigid adherence to an alphabetical system resulted in a non-sequential (or at least non-linear) order, rendering it impossible to re-trace the artist's steps. For example, "conception" follows "completion," and "interruptions" follow "index," in what the art historian Peter Osborne has described as a random systemization of the artist's thoughts and actions.[79] The difficulty one has in following the processes behind the work's creation is further compounded by the inaccessibility of each folders' contents. The result of this restricted access is that the only truly transparent element of *Card File* is the artist's alphabetized ordering system.

America's Selective Service System of military conscription purported to operate in an equally randomised fashion.[80] Following the Selective Service Act of 1948, male citizens were required to register after their eighteenth birthday. Two draft lotteries were called in 1969, as the Vietnam conflict intensified. Selection was based on birthdate, and later from initials. For

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[76] "Major Describes Move," *New York Times*, Feb 8, 1968, 14.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Thomas H Greer, "Ben Tre's destruction," letters to the editor, *New York Times*, Feb 20, 1968, 46.
[79] Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, (London: Phaidon, 2002), 68.
[80]First influential article highlighting the systems' class inequalities, see: James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" *Washington Monthly*, October (1975): 5–19.

today's viewer, capable of retrospectively projecting a broader historical context on to the work, Morris' individual, index-like cards are arguably visually reminiscent of those used in both the Korean and Vietnam War drafts [Fig.1.24—27].

Experiencing the work today, one has a greater sense of the subsequent importance draft cards would go on to hold in Sixties visual culture. Although their existence pre-dates the creation of *Card File*, their significance increased during the latter half of the decade when images of men receiving, and then destroying their draft cards, proliferated in the media [Fig.1.28]. At this time, draft cards arguably entered the collective consciousness as symbols of the U.S. Government's attempt to rationalise the selection of young American men to fight an increasingly difficult and unpopular war. Moreover, along with the televised spectacle of the draft lotteries, they can also be understood as visual symbols of the ultimate imposition of technocracy on the lives of ordinary men, that is their literal subjection to an 'efficient' administrative system, employed to decide their fate.

Within the development of conceptual art, *Card File* can be viewed as a prototype for Sol Le Witt's 1966 vision of the artist as a "clerk," whose process consists merely of "cataloguing the results of his premise."[81] The parameters set by Morris are ostensibly self-explanatory: to order all aspects of the work's creation and present them to the viewer, albeit in limited form. in other words, an approach befitting a card-cataloguing clerk. Despite having not yet adopted the term "conceptual," as he did one year later, LeWitt's writing on the "serial artist" makes reference to concerns which would later become central to the conceptual project. Proceeding his description of the artist-as-clerk, LeWitt stated, "The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object."[82] This statement hints at conceptualism's future move away from the traditional emphasis on aesthetics and the fetishized art object. As LeWitt outlines, the artist's primary objective was

[81] Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966." *Aspen* 5+6 (1967): Unpaginated.
[82] Ibid.

instead the realisation of his [sic] initial premise. Therefore, the work's conceptual basis became its most important feature. LeWitt's writing at this time pre-supposes his later embrace of conceptualism and explicitly articulates an impulse intrinsic to *Card File*. In Morris' work, visual appearance is made secondary to the self-generative force of the work's procedural logic.

The sequential arrangement of quadrilateral forms of LeWitt's *Serial Project, I (ABCD)*(1966) [Fig.1.29—30], demonstrate these principles. Laid out on a grid-lined base, *Serial Project* consists of a series of cubes and cuboids systematically placed in a clear, legible sequence. The arrangement of these forms appears to have been determined by a kind of self-sustaining logic, internal to the artwork itself. This involved the progressive placement, within *Serial Project's* frame-like grid, of one shape inside another, with the outline of shapes becoming 'filled in,' and so on. The artistic process involved in *Serial Project's* creation was pre-defined, thus negating the potential for any form of spontaneous self-expression. It is via this apparent concern with an objective, measured approach to art-making that connects LeWitt's conceptualism to the world of administration—or more specifically *techno*-administration. This connection was arguably made explicit by the artist, via his casting of the (proto)conceptual artist in the role of a clerk.

The artistic process described by LeWitt in 1966, of a systematic working through of a 'premise'— literally a statement from which another, or sequence of statements is logically inferred—ostensibly aligns the artist's position with the logic and rationalism associated with technocratic thought. His claims of objectivity mirror the technocracy's purported neutrality, precisely via its basis in techno-scientifically informed logic. Just as *Card File* bears a visual resemblance to the administrative realm, LeWitt's sequential use of simple geometric shapes, as well as a graph-like base arguably has connotations of a scientific-style investigation. One might also compare *Serial Project* to a strategic game-board, complete with advancing pieces. This comparison provides a further connection to the contemporaneous

dominance of technocratic thought. Beyond its visual likeness to a military strategy board, LeWitt's organisational structure calls to mind the U.S. Military's employment of game theory for its tactical manoeuvres in Vietnam. Influenced by former international trade negotiator Tom Schelling's *The Strategy of Conflict* (1959), which conceived of war as "a violent form of bargaining," the U.S. adopted strategies of controlled escalation, designed to provoke specific responses in their opponents.[83] It should be noted, however, that the success of this approach was limited, as the Vietcong often failed to react with the next 'logically inferred' move.

LeWitt's early emphasis on objectivity was subsequently reinforced by other figures associated with conceptualism. Curator Kynaston McShine adopted the word 'information' for the title of an exhibition of conceptual art held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York from 2 July-20 September 1970. It notably included Hans Haacke's *MoMA Poll* (1970), which used clear Perspex ballot boxes to collect visitor-data on the public perception of MoMA trustee, Governor Rockefeller, following his recent support of Nixon's Indochina policy. This work and others that featured in *Information*, purported to demonstrate the supposed strengths of technocratic information gathering and communications: objectivity and neutrality. *MoMA Poll* arguably highlights the capacity to turn these methods back on to the institutional establishment, exposing and subjecting their underlying power structure to interrogation, via their own ideological means. Thus, as a method of critique, one could describe the approach exemplified by *MoMA Poll* as allowing transparently gathered 'facts' to speak for themselves.[84]

Buchloh traced his narrative of conceptualism's eventual transition into institutional critique, via its direction of the same administrative and procedural methods towards critical investigative analysis. However, both the

[83] Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press, 1959).
[84] For extended discussion of *Information*, *MoMA Poll* and the Art Institution as site of Anti-Vietnam War protest, see: Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (London: University of California Press, 2009), esp. 189-196.

art historian and Kosuth, writing in 1975, seemingly question the radicality of this approach.[85] Whilst acknowledging that artists like Haacke purported to interrogate the institutional structures of the establishment, both allude to the notion that their approach simultaneously endorsed the validity, and with that the supposed neutrality, of its ideological methods: the application and communication of technocratically-informed logic. This notion of submission to the superiority of rationalism and logic is fundamentally at odds with the challenge proposed by the counterculture, as it was seen by Roszak, and as demonstrated by the 1967 attempt to levitate the Pentagon.[86] However, what I am attempting to chart here, and in the thesis as a whole, is conceptualism's multiple and alternative evolutionary strands, contra to the grand (and notably East Coast dominated) narrative proposed by Buchloh.

My concern at this juncture is with tracing one of these developmental strands: the progressive attempts of conceptual practitioners to push logic and rationality *beyond* logical and rational means—or, that which can be easily comprehended via logical and rational inference. I would suggest it is possible to trace in their work a series of increasing moves away from object-bound art (to which *Card File* and *Serial Project* arguably still pay lip service), to linguistically expressed self-contained logical propositions, and then to attempts to leap beyond the confines of language and the visual, form-bound realm. Moreover, it is my contention that this proposed trajectory also offers an alternative means of reading conceptual art in its nascent form. Rather than conceding to the validity of techno-administrative logic, I would instead suggest that early works by artists such as Morris and LeWitt can similarly be interpreted as raising critical questions about this contemporary ideological approach, via a testing of its limits. One might alternatively describe this as pushing them to the brink of collapse. As I shall discuss, this is similar to the anti-disciplinary strategies of resistance employed by the counterculture.

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[85] Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969;" Kosuth, "1975."
[86] Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture.*

"Verging on Maddening": Proto-Conceptual Leaps in Techno-Administrative logic.[87]

At first glance, *Serial Project's* modulating cuboid forms appear contained by the grid-like board on which they sit. However, its horizontal and vertical lines also hint at the possibility of infinite expansion. The underlying logic of the work, detailed at length in LeWitt's accompanying documentation, imbues *Serial Project* with a never-ending potential for self-generation. The limits of its physical, object-bound manifestation, have the capacity for expansion via the continued repetition of the artist's pre-determined sequential structure. In this respect, *Serial Project, I*, along with LeWitt's subsequent variant *Serial Project (Set B)* (1966), can be understood to paradoxically evoke a sense of both finite containment and infinite open-endedness.

This paradox is identifiable in the alphabetical and numerical system used to inform the work's structure. Whilst the alphabet is a closed system, limited to 24 letters, numerical order can be understood to organise, but not contain numbers; it is an open-ended system, dealing with the infinite. This notion is referred to directly in LeWitt's writing.[88] The artist attached the letters A,B,C,D to each grouping of forms, based on their 'open' and 'closed' variations. The forms themselves and the grids they occupied were assigned numbers, and were additionally part of a numerical sequence in terms of their dimensions, which incrementally increase or decrease depending on how they are sequentially read. Hinting at the possibility this provides for infinite expansion, LeWitt states this system "allows additional sets to become obvious such as: A9, B9, C9, D9, or A258B258."[89] The artist also refers to letters and numbers in relation to how the viewer might read the work's various sequences. Although these are finite in number, he notably

[87] "Serial Project, I (ABCD)," *MoMA.org,* accessed 18, Nov, 2016, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/sol-lewitt-serial-project-i-abcd-1966#
[88] LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966."
[89] Ibid, unpaginated.

highlights that these include sequences which violate the logic of linear numerical and alphabetical (if not spatial) order, for example: 312, 213.

MoMA describes *Serial Project*'s repetition of forms as verging on "maddening."[90] One could perhaps attribute this quality to its allusions to the infinite and the numerical sublime, a never-ending vastness impossible for the human mind to grasp. However, the impenetrability of the work's complex structural logic—even in its physically-bound form—could equally be seen as maddening. Alluding to a sense of self-contained completeness to the work's visual object-bound form, LeWitt stated that his artistic duty was to provide the viewer with visual information.[91] However, he also acknowledged the complexity of *Serial Project's* simultaneously operating sets, rendering its comprehension difficult, if not near impossible.

This acknowledgement somewhat undercuts the artist's assertion within the same text, that his concern was not with the production of "mysterious objects."[92] However, one might reconcile the latter statement with the work, by reading it as an expression of the artist's oppositional stance to the art-object as understood as the product of mysterious-divined subjective creativity. That is, rather than as a declaration of *Serial Project's* visually self-evident and easy to de-code logic. Conversely, even when considered in relation to LeWitt's diagrammatic figures, I would argue its complex procedures are close to hermetic. This reading would also account for what initially appears to be an apparent self-contradiction, or revision on the part of the artist: his later reference to mysticism.

As I have asserted, in positioning the conceptual artist as a mystic, LeWitt evoked notions of subjective self-surrender, whilst, via this allusion to mystic spirituality, ultimately re-inscribing his mythic status as a uniquely gifted individual.[93] This impulse arguably sets the artist's engagement with logic and

[90] "Serial Project, I (ABCD)."
[91] LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966."
[92] Ibid.
[93] LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," 106.

rationality apart from the era's dominant technocratic ideology. This is in terms of his allusion to realms beyond ordinary comprehension, but also the retained focus on the power of the artist as individual. Eisenhower's farewell address made reference to the technocratic shift from "the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop" to "task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields."[94] In contrast to this, LeWitt seemingly championed the importance of the individual experimenter, restoring, via quasi-spiritual means, the 'solitary inventor's' original power and authority.

Serial Project's complex procedures, informed by a near-impenetrable systematic structural logic, can be understood as distinct from the efficient and supposedly clear logic associated with the technocracy. In striving to reach realms beyond human comprehension, via these procedures, LeWitt arguably restored a transcendent spirituality to the application of mathematical logic that was all-but eliminated within contemporary technocratic thinking. LeWitt's use of the word "clerk" can be seen to highlight this, pre-supposing his later more explicitly spiritual reference to mysticism. In addition to its administrative connotations, the word also evokes notions of the religious cleric, a self-surrendering conduit for the divine.

Serial Project can alternatively be understood as an irrational application of logic and systematic order, which by the very challenge it presents to ordinary comprehension, exposes as fallacy the clear, unambiguous nature of techno-administrative thought. A similar argument can be extended to *Card File.* Morris' imposition of administrative order on to the supposed free-floating process of creative thinking is inherently flawed. The insight it purports to offer, along with the transparency of its self-contained logic, is only illusory. Morris' process is impossible to follow due to the work's lack of linear narrative, but also the limited access it offers. For the casual viewer, each step of the work's creation is reduced to a mere categorical description.

[94] Transcript of Eisenhower: "Farewell,"3.

The efficiency and supposed rationality of the work's techno-bureaucratic approach comes at a cost—one that potentially highlights the reductive and de-humanising effects of its pervasion into all areas of contemporary life, including artistic production. [95] Thus, *Card File* offers a seemingly dis-enchanted, or 'non-mysterious,' approach to art-making, which challenged the sacredness of the artistic realm, via the replacement of subjective spontaneity with banal, everyday procedures and aesthetics. However, it ultimately re-enforced the exclusivity of this domain, and, in so doing, arguably called attention to the non-egalitarian aspects of techno-administrative control, and its growing dominance.

The implicit critique of technocracy offered by *Card File* bears a resemblance to later countercultural forms of resistance, particularly expressions of anti-war sentiment. Bob Seger System's protest song, *2+2=?* (1968) provides a notable example.[96] Its young protagonist questions the logic of war and the draft system, as well as the establishment's failure to provide valid answers to the following simple question: why his classmates have to die. The official answer, as the song's title suggests, is merely a question of mathematics. With its references to being a high-school educated, average guy, Seger's song also highlighted the class inequalities of conscription.[97]

Hyperbolically parodying the techno-administrative approach associated with the establishment was a popular countercultural strategy. Groups such as the San Francisco Diggers and Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters were preoccupied with the production of alternative 'official' papers. Surviving ephemera includes certificates, membership cards, the creation of an alternative 'free' currency (the 'digger dollar') and fake health warnings, such as notices about

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[95] For an analysis of the radical potential of Morris' self-identification as an "art worker" in relation to his post-minimal practices, as situated in the context of the era's art activism, labour and anti-war movements, see: Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 82-125. (Although related to Morris' later interest in industrial methods and factory production, her assessment of his process-led approach is pertinent here: "art goes from the realm of the individual to that of the political when the process—the effort, the labor—becomes the art itself." [103])

[96] Bob Seger System, "2+2=?"

[97] College attendance was a legitimate reason for exemption. See: Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War."

the perils of incorrect roach storage [Fig.1.31—34]. List making was also a recurrent practice. This includes the creation of long lists of rules, made by the 'man' and designed to be broken, with their extreme length designed to demonstrate the ludicrous extent of societal repression. In 1966 Tuli Kupferberg and Robert Bashlow wrote a protest poem of rule-violating suggestions to avoid military conscription. *1001 Ways to Dodge the Draft* consists of a numerically ordered list of staccato sentences—a style notably similar to the structure of LeWitt's "Sentences."[98] The poem progresses through a series of systematic permutations on the same theme: 29. marry your sister, 30. marry your brother etc. The imaginative solutions it offered ranged from the completely absurd, to those with some logical basis. For example, carrying out suggestion 77, "Burn the Pentagon," would have likely been effective– albeit at the cost of incarceration [Fig.1.35].[99] The vastness of the list can be interpreted as an attempt to consider all the logical and illogical (im)possibilities available. However, much like LeWitt, rather than being exhaustive, their use of a numerical ordering system, gestures to the list's potential for open-ended expansion.

The reading of *Serial Project* I have proposed traces back to proto-conceptualism a set of impulses made more overtly evident by Barry in his 1969 *Telepathic Piece.* With its simultaneous allusion to containment and infinite openness, *Serial Project* highlights, and perhaps even acknowledges the impossibly utopian goal of artistic autonomy. In pursuit of this goal, the artist strives for total self-referentiality, running the risk of the work collapsing under the weight of its own logic. For example, as in *Card File*, where Morris' imposition of logical order acts as a barrier to reading the work's terms in a logical, linear sequence. Alternatively, in an attempt to create a separate, impenetrable space for art, the artist is forced to gesture to realms beyond human comprehension—a move which imbues their creation with a fragmentary, open-endedness. The latter of these two

[98] Tuli Kupferberg and Robert Bashlow, *1001 Ways to Dodge the Draft,* (New York: Oliver Layton Press, 1966); LeWitt, "Sentences."
[99] Ibid, 6.

approaches can be understood to designate the realm of art as a space akin to that of magic: one governed by rules and its own internal logic, but separate from the ordinary human world, and only accessible via the intermediary efforts of the individually gifted few.

In spite of its separateness and location in a mysterious beyond, an aspect of magic that has not yet been made explicit in this chapter is its supposed ability to influence events, or manipulate the ordinary sensory world. In keeping with this notion of magic as a means to effect change, this chapter will now examine the resurgent interest in magic during the countercultural sixties. It will also explore how this impulse increasingly became aligned with strategies of resistance, or what Stephens refers to as forms of anti-disciplinary protest—as exemplified by the 1967 Pentagon levitation attempt.[100] This account provides the contextual backdrop to this chapter's final case study: the quasi-spiritual performances of West Coast conceptualist Terry Fox, as discussed in relation to this notion of magic as a contemporaneous form of 'anti-disciplinary' protest.

The Occult Explosion: The Revival of Magic during the Countercultural Sixties

Housewives hold séances, gurus speak on college campuses, businessmen exploit the zodiac…Where in the world can the Age of Aquarius be taking us?

Nicholas Pileggi, "Occult" *McCall's*,
March, 1970 [101]

Three years after Hoffman and his co-conspirators staged an anarchic protest against the Vietnam War, an attempted levitation and exorcism of their nation's military headquarters, Terry Fox performed his own, individual act of sorcery. Taking place behind the closed doors of the Richmond Art Centre, Fox's *Levitation* was a discreet endeavour, enacted with a spare, visual simplicity. The only evidence the act took place was an imprint of the artist's

[100] Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest*.
[101] Nicholas Pileggi, "Occult," *McCall's*, March, 1970, 140.

body, left behind in a square of mound of earth. In contrast, the Pentagon protest was an intentionally visible public act, conceived as an expression of discontent with the American Government, and a symbolic disavowal of its authority. The use of magic signalled a refusal to communicate via the established and, therefore, officially sanctioned means of conventional protest. As Stephens suggests, it thereby denied the legitimacy of the entire existing political structure, which to an extent permitted dissent as long as it came in a palatable form. This strategy of resistance through refusal has been identified as a characteristic feature of countercultural politics, expressions of which have variously been termed "anti-disciplinary," or a "politics of dis*play*."[102]

Despite the ostensibly more insular, inward looking aims of Fox's *Levitation*—to raise his body from the ground in order to 'enter the air'—the two acts share an emphasis on the power of the individual. [103] Both Fox and the protestors positioned themselves as magical intermediaries, capable of summoning mysterious forces. In other words, the ability to lift one's self from the ground, or indeed the Pentagon, was framed as a matter of individual will, whether singular or as part of a collective. This understanding of magic is one which can be seen as counterculturally particular in that it shares its central individualistic focus. This emphasis on the individual was made overt in the hippie commandment: 'do your own thing.' It found expression in numerous popular spiritual philosophies, and self-help guides, as well as the later rise of human potential-style movements, including Erhard Seminars Training (EST). [104]

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[102] Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest*.; Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), 233.

[103] Terry Fox, interviewed by Willoughby Sharp, "Terry Fox: I wanted to have my mood affect their looks," in *Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 253.

[104] For an account of this era-defining impulse see: Peter Clecak, *America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfillment in the 60s and 70s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); W. J. Rorabaugh, *American Hippies* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 71, 101–102. Rorabaugh provides a history of this phrase from its origins in Perl's Gestalt prayer, and subsequent appropriation by Nike.

Magical beliefs and practices experienced a renaissance during the mid-1960s-70s. This resurgence of interest in magic and the occult manifested itself, with varying degrees of sincerity and earnestness, throughout both America's mainstream and countercultures. One can identify within Fox's performed act of physical self-transcendence and the Pentagon protest's collective display of individual resistance two interconnected strands related to this resurgent interest in magic. The first is its frequent appearance as a component of new or alternative forms of spirituality. These emerging spiritual trends often focused on individualistic notions of personal transformation, with great emphasis placed on the journey towards self-enlightenment or fulfilment. Alongside a renewed up-take in traditional magical practices, such as ritual candle burning and fortune telling, the transformative experiences gained via psychedelic drug use or new therapeutic practices were frequently framed in quasi-magical terms. The second strand relates to its use as a countercultural strategy of resistance. As I shall argue, magic functioned as an expression of an individual's oppositional stance to mainstream society and culture, and, ultimately, the ideological frameworks that underpinned them. When performed in a group or public setting, participation in magical practices communicated this not only to the world at large, but also to other like-minded individuals, thus fostering a sense of kinship.

My assertion is that magical thinking was used to push beyond the logic and rationalism associated with mainstream technocratic culture. Thus, it functioned as a statement of socio-political resistance precisely because of its marked stance of *apoliticism.*[105] As Stephens highlights, the deployment of this kind of "anti-disciplinary" protest strategy was overtly demonstrated in an infamous non-magical act performed in 1965, at a Vietnam Day rally in Berkley, California.[106] Speaking on stage, author and countercultural

[105] This alignment of conceptualism with countercultural forms of apolitical resistance challenges Roth's assessment of art of the Sixties as engaged in "a denial of commitment and feeling," despite artists' radical anti-war sympathies. Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," 53.

[106] Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest*, 24.

figurehead Ken Kesey instructed the crowds to put down their placards and join him in 'turning their backs' on the war. Kesey's suggestion was partially motivated by the political rhetoric of the previous speakers. He viewed the New Left and other politicos as hypocritical, in terms of their attempt to replace one structure of control over the American people with another. He also argued that communicating discontent in the same politicized language used by the establishment indicated tacit agreement with its authority. As he saw it, to engage with war-makers via the very frameworks that gave them power was, ultimately, to be complicit in their actions. As he attempted to demonstrate the only valid strategy of opposition was one of total refusal.[107]

The countercultural interest in magic can be understood in relation to this notion of resistance-via-refusal. This move away from organised forms of religious worship to more fluid and individually-focused expressions of spirituality can be seen as part of a broader rejection of the institutional organisation of mainstream America. Thus, it is possible to frame its re-emergence as part of the countercultural attempt to stage what the philosopher Marcuse termed "the great refusal." In his 1964 work *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse claimed the only means of bringing about revolutionary change was via the individual's total rejection of all elements of contemporary society and culture. As Marcuse outlines in the counterculturally popular text, this was because in the advanced industrial age the individual had become relatively powerless, as "the self-contained and self-perpetuating technological world allow[ed] change, only within its own institutions and parameters." [108] Marcuse argued, like Kesey, that the control of advanced capitalism was total, and therefore even expressions of dissent, in their traditional form, would inevitably be subsumed into its frameworks. According to the philosopher, the only hope for possible revolution, a process in which 'one-dimensional' man could be freed from the

[107] A well-known account of this incident appears in: Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 196–201.
[108] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 2002), xxv.

burden of false consumer needs, was to completely shun all capitalist institutions through a strategy of non-participation.[109]

The Sixties fascination with magic can be related to nostalgic impulses for the pre-modern. The period marked a renewed interest in America's origins, its folk history and culture, including its native peoples. This longing for a different sense of temporal space extended itself to an interest in non-Western, primitive or ancient cultures, which were frequently deemed 'authentic' alternatives to the contemporary mainstream. W. J. Rorabaugh frames this quest for authenticity as part of a disavowal of contemporary national identity and belonging. In other words, as a form of resistance via refusal. He explains the particular countercultural affinity with Native American culture as follows: "They thought of themselves as analogous to the American Indians because they believed themselves to be inside the United States but not truly *of* the United States." [110] In an effort to further separate from contemporary mainstream America, members of the counterculture frequently used "Amerika," as a means of differentiation. This alternative spelling was intended to allude to its corrupt, inauthentic fascist state.

The contemporary interest in magic and the occult extended, via the small screen, beyond the enclaves of countercultural retreats and communes to the average American home.[111] Examples of popular occult-themed family TV shows include, *Bewitched* (1964-72), *The Addams Family* (1966-64), *The Munsters* (1966-64) and *Dark Shadows* (1966-71). Whilst the mainstream uptake of such themes arguably reflect a blurring of dominant and alternative culture, in the main, such shows used magic as a device to reinforce traditional American values: the importance of home and family and clearly

[109] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*.
[110] As Rorabaugh highlights, the countercultural appropriation of Native American culture was problematic, particularly its conflation of Native American rituals with the occult and the pre-modern. W. J. Rorabaugh, *American Hippies* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 83.
[111] For a broad account of the occult revival see: Gary Lachman, *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of Age of Aquarius* (New York: Disinformation, 2001).

defined gender roles. A common dramatic trope was the arrival of an outsider, labelled the 'white sheep' of the family, by virtue of their being ordinary and non-magical. Alternatively, this interloping character was a more extreme version of the central one, frequently presented as a popular interpretation of a member of the counterculture —a long-haired, brightly dressed 'hippy.' A notable example is Samantha's less domesticated cousin, Serena, in *Bewitched*. The arrival of this figure usually signalled the onset of chaos to the home's relative order, generally resulting from a misapplication of their supernatural powers. Whilst these storylines were largely played for laughs this connection of magic, counterculture and domestic disruption arguably hints at an undercurrent of real-life anxiety, caused by the perceived challenge the phenomenon proposed to traditional, American family values.[112]

Conservative, mainstream anxieties relating to generational conflict were also articulated in American cinema. In addition to the subgenre of hippy exploitation films (usually containing the same basic formula: a female innocent being lured into an underworld of drugs and promiscuity),[113] horror movies increasingly used black magic and witchcraft as metaphorical representations of this new societal fear. The genre-blurring *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), based on Ira Levin's best-selling novel of 1967, perhaps best illustrates this trend. Differing from European folk horrors, the film is centred on the practices of a satanic coven based in a modern, urban setting, and reaches its climax with the birth, to a terrified host-mother, of her devil-induced spawn.[114]

Beyond the screen, references to magic were rife in popular music and fashion. Spells, magic potions, witchcraft, and fortune tellers frequently

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[112] Ibid. Lachman highlights the fractious relationship between pop culture, public opinion and the earnest occult movements.
[113] See for example: *Riot on Sunset Strip*, directed by Arthur Dreifuss (American International Pictures, 1967), film.
[114] Ibid, 277; For an extended discussion see: Adam S Covell, "A Brief History of Occult and Folk Horror.," *Celluloid Wicker Man*, accessed December 2, 2015, http://celluloidwickerman.com/2012/11/29/a-brief-history-of-occult-and-folk-horror/.

featured as lyrical motifs, as well as on poster and album art. "Magical" symbols were used for decorative designs on jewellery, clothing and fabrics. A photo-story published in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1968, illustrates magic's crossover, via clothing, from the counterculture into the mainstream. "The Cult of the Zodiac," shot by the photographer Hiro Wakabayashi, features astrological signs embroidered on shoes and hosiery, as well as models posing with crystal balls and, in mid-air, as though levitating [Fig.1.36].[115] In 1970 another women's magazine, *McCall's*, devoted an entire issue to "The Occult Explosion" and its influence beyond the world of fashion, highlighting the rise in occult book shops, clairvoyants, astrological and tarot reading services, as well as the recent record sales of Ouija boards. They jokingly predicted that the supernatural parlour game would soon be found in every American hall closet [Fig.1.37].[116]

The ubiquitous references to magic within Sixties fashion and pop culture may appear frivolous, and, potentially, as nothing more than a concession to the faddish American youth market. However, sociologists and historians of religion, such as Robert S Ellwood and Steve Tipton, have highlighted their underlying significance.[117] As I have suggested, the use of magical and occult themes in horror cinema arguably tapped into an undercurrent of societal anxiety relating to their increasing real-life prevalence. Evidence of both this growth and the unease surrounding it can be found in the twin aspects of the occult publishing boom. In addition to numerous modern guides to witchcraft, there were also numerous accounts which sought to highlight the movement's potential to morally corrupt the naïve.[118] Thus, although *McCall's* joked about trendy occult paraphernalia soon gathering dust

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[115] Hiro Wakabayashi, "The Cult of the Zodiac," *Harper's Bazaar,* October 1968, unpaginated.
[116] See lead article: Pileggi, "Occult," 62-65, 140.
[117] Robert S. Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1994). Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
[118] Lachman, *Turn Off Your Mind*, esp. 379-384; for an extensive collection of occult publishing ephemera, see: *A Higher Strangeness*, accessed January 31, 2016, https://ahigherstrangeness.wordpress.com/.

alongside old monopoly sets, they also promised to reveal, along with the secret arts of tarot cards and palmistry, the dark forces behind the recent Sharon Tate murders.[119]

Gallup polls indicate that by the early 1960s regular church attendance was in sharp decline. Ellwood has argued that high attendance figures during the 1950s corresponded with the super-patriotism of post-War America, when the nation still assumed itself to be "uniquely powerful and affluent, and in possession of an unwavering moralistic heritage."[120] As he suggests, committed membership to an institutional mainstream church was as much a communal expression of shared national beliefs, as it was a sign of personal religious devotion. In contrast, the ease with which individuals, particularly the young, switched religious affiliations during the 1960s, or declined to participate in any organised worship was indicative of an increased sense of individual autonomy. As Wade Clark Roof describes the spiritual mentality of the baby boomer generation: "…religion was now whatever one chose as one's own, without benefit of hegemonic nationalism or family tradition."[121] This shift can be interpreted as yet another sign of the diminishing influence of institutional authority, including that of the family, on the American youth.

Ellwood's analysis of countercultural-era spirituality goes beyond the permissiveness theories that dominate the first historical studies of the phenomenon, attributing the decline in traditional worship to more than youthful restlessness, stimulated by greater freedom. [122] Instead, he frames the quest for alternative forms of spirituality within a larger rejection of metanarratives of universal truth and progress. As he asserts, during the 1950s the church, closely tied with American national identity, was perceived

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[119] "The Occult Explosion."
[120] Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening*, 23.
[121] Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 243.
[122] The following chiefly framed the counterculture as the youthful 'revolt of the unoppressed': Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971); Frank Musgrove, *Ecstasy and holiness: counter culture and the open society* (London: Methuen, 1974); Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts About the Sixties* (New York: Summit Books, 1989).

to be an emblem of modernism. However, by the mid-1960s the Church's claim to be a progressive societal force, was increasingly questioned by the liberal young. For Ellwood, this stemmed from a sense of disillusionment following the decade's initial promise. Awareness about limitations on free speech and civil rights, as well as increasing scepticism about attempts to enforce American-style democracy overseas, led many to reject mainstream America's supposedly progressive moral and religious agenda.[123] Equally, the conservative lifestyles choices advocated by the mainline church grew increasingly at odds with the era's emphasis on personal freedom. Extending Ellwood's argument, the re-emergence of magical beliefs and practices can therefore be seen as a return to pre-modern forms of spirituality, in response to the perceived failures of contemporary America. This is based on the understanding that magic, unlike religion, does not offer an all-encompassing world view, but instead focuses predominantly on individual acts thought to bring about change at a particular moment in time.

Magic, to a degree, is a historically contingent concept. It has often been defined in opposition to both religion and science. In *A General Theory of Magic*, Marcel Mauss alluded that the distinction between magic and religion is largely determined by the dominant social consensus.[124] Magic is deemed to be a false form of religion because it occurs outside of the social group, or is practiced by a small minority. The anthropologist Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah has argued that 'magic' simply refers to religious practices and beliefs which are viewed as 'other.' This 'otherness' originates from notions deeply entrenched in Western Religious thought. As he outlines, Monotheist Judeo-Christian religions are founded on the core belief that man exists in a realm entirely separate from God. Therefore, any attempts made by man to exchange, coerce or enter into direct reciprocal agreement with other supernatural forces—both internal and external to himself—have frequently been deemed blasphemous, and deserving of the label of 'magic' or

[123] Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening*, 12–13.
[124] Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory Of Magic*.

Paganism. As Tambiah points out, this establishes an automatic prejudice against any religion which is polytheist, and also against those who believe in a more fluid boundary between the realms of God and man.[125] This is worth noting in light of the tendency for conservative critics to dismiss the influence of Eastern religions on counterculture spirituality on an almost equal basis to practices such as witchcraft. There was a tendency to see *both* as misdirected or invalid forms of worship.

Despite its broad and dilute representation within the era's pop culture, the prevalence of magic during this period can thus be attributed to key countercultural concerns. These include an increased emphasis on the individual, the communal, and on immediate or spontaneous action.[126] The counterculture privileged individual perception, in terms of its ability to offer unique insight. Knowledge gained via direct lived-experience, and personal intuition was favoured over the scientific empiricism associated with mainstream technocratic institutions. This emphasis on the individual may seem at odds with the desire to expand the traditional family unit in order to establish larger, but still intimately connected communities, made up of multiple, unrelated members. However, the sociologist Steve Tipton argues that these countercultural pursuits were made compatible by an overall, pervading belief in a sense of cosmic interconnectedness—between all individual beings, the earth itself, as well as forces beyond or outside the ordinary sensory world. Tipton refers to this as 'countercultural monism.'[127]

This notion of interconnectivity has been foundational to historic conceptions of magic, which as stated, traditionally rely on the belief in an increased fluidity between the natural and supernatural world. It is this monistic belief in a lack of separation between these two realms that is understood to enable gifted individuals to call on supernatural forces, in order to bring

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[125] Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7.
[126] Rorabaugh claims spontaneity was valued for its supposed authenticity, another high value concern. Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 11-13.
[127] Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties*, 14.

about change in the ordinary world. This connection is believed to be direct and without means of intercession, as in prayer. This perception within magical-thinking of a greater immediacy between individuals and the spiritual realm has been a consistent feature in the conceptualisation of magic, which, as has been noted, is a somewhat slippery and contingent term. However, it is the emphasis on the individual's potential power, crucially understood to derive from a cosmic connection with the universe at large—the individual as part-of-the-collective in its broadest sense— which accounts for its re-emergence as a strategy of countercultural resistance. This is in addition to magic's antithesis to the logic and rationality of the technocracy, via its engagement with less strictly structured, non-empirical and extra-sensory modes of thought.

Leave Your Body Behind: The Illogical Monistic Logic of Terry Fox's *Levitation* (1970)

Heading for the ceiling, I'm up off the floor

I've broken my horizon, out-distancing my door…

…Don't need these wings to guide me

They are hardly ever there

It's the clear I make inside me

Makes me feel light as air.

13th Floor Elevators*, (I've Got) Levitation,* 1967.[128]

I was trying to think about leaving the ground, until I realized I should be thinking about entering the air. For me, that changed everything, made it work. I mean, I levitated.

Terry Fox, *Levitation,* September 1970.[129]

[128] The 13th Floor Elevators, "(I've got) Levitation," *Easter Everywhere,* International Artists, 1967, 12-inch vinyl.
[129] Fox, I wanted to have my mood affect their looks," 253.

Having provided an account of this contextually particular notion of countercultural magic, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of some key works by the West Coast conceptualist Terry Fox, whose practice during the early 1970s overtly engaged with individually-focused forms of spirituality. Fox's work can be understood as challenging scientific rationality and logic, via its attempt to leap beyond the ordinary human senses. Through this reading of his work one can align his visually spare and often privately performed actions to the contemporaneous countercultural strategies of resistance deployed by members of the counterculture. As I assert, Fox's spiritual explorations were also crucially informed by a monistic logic similar to that central to countercultural magic. It is via this underlying monism that the artist's individual spiritual investigations can be understood as inextricably linked to more overtly political, and publicly performed artistic and countercultural statements, such as his *Defoliation* (1970).

The spiritual undertones of Fox's conceptual inquires have frequently been deemed characteristic of his works' location within a regionally-nuanced iteration of conceptualism. This is one specific not only to the American West Coast, but to San Francisco, and its small conceptual art scene of the late 1960s-70s, which eventually centred around Tom Marioni's Museum of Conceptual Art, founded in 1970.[130] I do not deny the existence of this regional difference; indeed, during the course of this thesis I continually emphasize the distinct ways conceptual art was defined regionally. However, my assertion here is that Fox's work can be understood to share a continuity with the earlier East Coast-based practices I previously outlined. This is in terms of their shared impulse to push beyond logic and rationality, as well as art's traditional location within the visual, object or form-bound realm. This is perhaps most evident in Fox's *Levitation*. This work, performed one year after Barry's *Telepathic Piece*, can potentially be read as the logical (or *illogical*) extension of conceptualism's continued gesturing towards a deferred or

[130] See: Constance Lewallen, "Terry Fox—Performance in San Francisco" in *Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 24-38.

inaccessible other, that is a space not only outside of visuality and language, but potentially ordinary human comprehension. As I have attempted to trace, via Barry's body of work from the late-1960s, this impulse can be identified in conceptual art's earliest origins, including the work and writings of proto-conceptualist, LeWitt.

Although, like Barry, Fox was interested in transience and ephemerality, in contrast to his New York contemporary he simultaneously bound his gesturing to the extra-sensory beyond with specific locations in real space and time. Emphasizing this concern with spatial and temporal conditions, he referred to his works as "situations." In 1971 he described his practice as follows: "What I am involved in is creating certain kinds of spatial situations. I am dealing with objects in a space and their relations to each other, and with how my mood alters them."[131] This notion of objects in proximity to the artist somehow being altered via a mysterious process connected to his interior state—as opposed to his physical actions—arguably contains a certain nonsensical and even, quasi-magical logic.

Fox's approach, as he outlined it to Willoughby Sharp in 1971, aligned with the definition of conceptualism proposed by Marioni, who saw it as re-thinking of sculpture, centred around the performance of "idea-orientated situations."[132] As Fox would later expand in a subsequent interview, his situations could crucially be distinguished from traditional performance in terms of their establishment of a temporary communal and participatory space: "The actual situation is what's going on in the space we're in. And the situation involves everybody there…"[133] Crucially, however, this element of participation did not necessarily take place on a physical level, in the form of physical action, but on what can perhaps be understood as alternate, extra-sensory planes; or, if not, on perceptual registers too ill-defined to easily

[131] Terry Fox interviewed by Willoughby Sharp, "A Discussion with Terry Fox, Vito Acconci, and Dennis Oppenheim" in *Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 271.
[132] Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy: A Memoir by Tom Marioni* (San Francisco, CA: Crowne Point Press, 2007), 104.
[133] Terry Fox, interviewed by Robin White, in *View* 2, no. 3 (1979): 5.

comprehend. In her essay interrogating the conceptual underpinnings of the artist's 'situations,' Nikola Doll argues that Fox's concern was with going beyond visuality, that is, in terms of object-creation or performance, to a questioning of human perception in its entirety. Unpacking what the artist meant by attempting to alter objects (which one can extend to include audience members/participants) via a projection of his own internal state or "mood," Doll suggests: "Sculptural acts can be understood as gestures, as a mode of moving or acting with things. In contrast the *situation* is an experience, transcending given meaning and approaching a reality unable to be grasped rationally."[134]

Fox's situations can therefore be understood as grounded in a specific, shared sense of experiential space and time. Yet within these bounds the artist frequently gestured to seemingly uncontainable forces and realms: those outside of visual, or ordinary sensory perception, as well as beyond rational comprehension. The energy and vibrations of Fox's situations were thus as diffuse and free-floating as Barry's inert gases. However, their lack of basis in material, scientific-inferred fact rendered them closer to the psychic forces at play in *Telepathic Piece.* Again, this simultaneous gesturing to containment and infinite open-endedness can be seen as analogous to art's designation to a mysterious, sacred and separate realm, via claims to its autonomy. In contrast to his contemporaries, however, Fox marked out this separate space for art in more overt and explicit ways. In the case of *Levitation,* this process was made most literal via his construction of a magic circle drawn in the compressed earth with his own blood. According to the artist, it was within this circle that the act referred to in the work's title supposedly took place: he temporarily levitated from the ground and entered the air.

Preparing to Enter the Air: The Magic Rituals of Fox's *Levitation*

[134] Nikola Doll, "Situations," in *Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 120.

Fox's *Levitation* took place on September 17, 1970, in a large, otherwise empty gallery at the Richmond Art Center [Fig.1.38—42]. Prior to the act, the artist rigorously prepared both the space and his own body. In addition to emptying himself by fasting for 24 hours, he emptied the gallery by removing its contents and covering the walls and floors with sheets of white paper, his intent being "to create a space conducive to levitation." He described the effect as follows: "The floor had been dark but it became such a brilliant white…it glared…it was such a buoyant space that anyone in it was already walking on air."[135] Fox then laid a ton-and-a-half of earth taken from the site of a newly built freeway on Army Street, San Francisco (now Cesar Chavez Street) in an eleven-and-a-half-foot square. The mould for this was made with four redwood planks twice the length of the artist's body, 11 feet 6 inches by 11 feet 6 inches. It was on top of this mound of earth that the artist drew his "magic circle." The blood, extracted from him by a doctor, was drawn in a ring, the diameter of which again, corresponded with his height. According to the artist, this use of his body as a unit of measurement was in line with the medieval notion of a 'magic circle.' This measurement, along with the number eleven, dictated numerous elements within the piece. According to Fox's former assistant, Ronald J. Meyers, this number had particular symbolic significance for Fox, and can be found throughout his work.[136] During the course of the levitation attempt, which lasted six hours, the artist lay within this circle, holding four long, transparent polyethylene tubes. These contained blood, urine and water, and milk, and extended out from the square of earth, into wider space.

The Richmond Art Center was closed for the duration of Fox's attempt. Thus, his actual moment of levitation was concealed from public view. Marioni, the gallery's curator, produced a two-page description of the work, which he posted on the wall outside. This statement makes a number of overt references to the supernatural undertones and symbolism of the piece,

[135] Fox, interview, 252.
[136] Ronald J. Meyers, telephone conversation with the author, June, 6, 2016.

beginning with Fox's publicity poster: "In the world of the occult when the spirit leaves the body it takes the form of smoke or gas and leaves through all openings in the body. The poster announcing Terry Fox's show illustrates with a photo of the artist's head, smoke coming from his mouth, which introduces to the public the continuing process which takes place here."[137] Marioni went on to detail Fox's use of white paper to create "a supernatural-like environment" which gave the piece, "the feeling of floating in space," before concluding: "On this day, September 17, Terry Fox, after fasting for an extended period, laid down on the earth for six hours and attempted to levitate his body into the space he has created."[138] Marioni's notice remained in place after this period ended, when access to the gallery resumed. Subsequent visitors to the space encountered all that Fox had physically placed there, including the imprint of his body left in the soil, as well as, reportedly, a charged residual energy.[139]

Fox recounted what took place on September 17, 1970, in his *Avalanche* Interview with Sharp, published a year later. He was in the space for six hours. The doors were locked from the outside by Marioni, the only key holder, resulting in the first of a series of confrontations with the institution's health and safety inspectors. During this time, Fox remained completely still. He kept his eyes open, focusing on the spatial void above him. As he stated it was by focusing on entering the air, rather the leaving the ground that he eventually achieved his goal: "That changed everything, made it work. I mean, I levitated." According to the artist after the fourth hour, he stopped being aware of his own body, even down to the rhythm of his breathing: "I couldn't feel any part of my body, not even my chest expanding and contracting…I felt I was somewhere else. I'd gone, I'd left my body." Around this time, he began hallucinating. On hearing a fly buzzing around the space, Fox began to think he was the fly. Although this experience was fleeting, he

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[137] Terry Fox and Tom Marioni, *Elemental body fluids radiate outward... (Levitation*), 1970, Box 46, folder 426, 1995.46.426.12, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Fox, interview, 253.

claimed that "the feeling of being out of [his] body persisted for two hours."[140]

From Earth to Earth: Mortality and Monism in Fox's *Levitation*

In subsequent accounts of *Levitation*, Fox explained his use of the compressed soil in terms of a belief in its potential energy. Again, recounting the work to Sharp, Fox stated he took the earth from a recently constructed freeway "because of the idea of explosion," before going on to suggest that one could imagine the compacted material expanding, "…rising, becoming buoyant."[141] This notion of the compressed particles re-expanding, having been held down and then subsequently released, has an obvious basis in scientific fact. However, the artist made what can be understood as an irrational—or *magical*—leap in logic, via his attempt to harness this as a source of power for his own attempt to rise. As he asserted, "of course it's physically impossible. But for me the mere suggestion was enough..."[142] Thus, as he alluded, Fox attributed his levitation to a mysterious form of energy transfer from the soil to his own body, the connection between the two having been bound and cemented via the magical space marked out with his blood. This notion of a cosmic sense of connectedness between earth and the individual contains an underlying monistic logic typical of that associated with countercultural spirituality. As with Fox's other situations, the work seemingly posits a lack of distinction between the physical realm of man and material, and that of the supernatural and spiritual.

In addition to its demonstration of a monistic connection between man and earth, via the immediate materials concerned, that is, Fox's body and the re-expanding soil, I would argue that it is possible to extrapolate from *Levitation*, an allusion to a larger, universal sense of cosmic interconnectivity. This is hinted at in Marioni's accompanying statement, which suggests that Fox's use of soil served as a symbolic reminder of man's corporeal mortality,

[140] Ibid, 253.
[141] Ibid, 252.
[142] Ibid, 252-253.

and eventual return back to the earth. Marioni used words taken from Genesis 3:19: “thou art dust and unto dust thou shall return.” However, read alongside Fox’s references to transferred energy and cosmic vibrations, one can perhaps interpret these words, in relation to ideas prevalent within countercultural spirituality. That is, rather than as a reference to the Christian distinction between the temporary physical, bodily realm and that of the afterlife. These include the individual’s place within a continuum of the earth’s natural cycles, as part of an infinite and circular transfer of energy. Fox’s construction of a magic circle can be interpreted as symbolic of this. In addition to creating an enclosed separate space in which the artist magically gestured to an infinite spiritual beyond, as a shape, the circle, having no obvious beginning or end, can be understood as both contained and infinitely unending.

In the same *Avalanche* interview in which Fox first discussed the terms of *Levitation,* he also explicitly stated that his work was not concerned with large scale environmental issues, or questions of a socio-political nature. Instead, he claimed, they related to individually-focused spiritual experiences, located in specific moments in space and time. However, I would argue it is via this decidedly *apolitical* and individually-centred approach that one can identify a connection between Fox’s ‘situations’ and the contemporaneous countercultural strategies of resistance I have outlined. As I have proposed, one can extend this argument to the conceptual project as a whole. Moreover, I would venture that in spite of this statement from the artist, it is possible to see the specific location of the artist’s excavation site as one of particular contextual significance. Army Street, now re-named in honour of the activist Cesar Chavez, was so-called because it denoted the central passageway through San Francisco down to Army Pier, one of the main departure points for U.S. soldiers bound for Asia. Reading significance into this—beyond the location simply being a viable source for large quantities of compressed earth—is arguably less far-fetched

when one considers it in relation to another work by the artist, made earlier that year.

Defoliation (1970) [Fig.1.43] also dealt with a square patch of earth. In this case, it was a small plot of land containing rare Chinese Jasmine, located in flowerbeds outside the University of California, Berkeley. To mark the opening of the University Art Museum's exhibition, *The Eighties*, Fox used a flamethrower to burn "a perfect rectangle right in the middle" of these beds, in order to destroy the Jasmine in a visibly obvious and "calculating" way.[143] The act thus demonstrated the damaging, cosmically-destructive potential of man's capacity to manipulate the natural world via the use of technology. As the artist articulated in statements on this publicly performed action, as well as the explicit reference made in its title, Fox intended observers of the piece and its aftermath to draw comparisons to the U.S. Army's use of chemical defoliants in Vietnam. The repercussions of this strategy caused immediate damage to plant and human life, as well as long term consequences for the land's future fertility.[144]

According to the artist, the patch of scorched earth that remained after *Defoliation*—a spot where people sat and ate lunch—served to highlight the human impact of such acts of destruction: "It was the same thing they were doing in Vietnam…burning flowers [people] like to sit near."[145] One could extrapolate from this an attempt to evoke a shared sense of investment in the earth and its well-being, as well as, potentially, to equate this systematic destruction of the land, with the war's vast simultaneous losses of human life. Considering this in relation to *Levitation*, performed at the end of that same summer, Marioni's quote from Genesis, "from dust unto dust," takes on a darker, more apocalyptic tone. In rising from the dust/'ashes,' Fox's temporary bodily abandonment has subtle connotations of an act of self-immolation. Much like *Defoliation,* many of the individuals who performed

[143] Terry Fox and Willoughby Sharp, "Elemental Gestures: Terry Fox" in *Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 246.
[144] See: Wilcox, *Scorched Earth.*
[145] Ibid.

this form of anti-war protest on American soil, did so publicly, on University campuses.[146]

Somewhat ironically, although it was not an intentional component of the work, the fragility—and moreover, flammability—of the earth used in *Levitation* was seized upon by the institutional powers of the Richmond Art Center. The head of Richmond's Department of Recreation had the show shut down, and Marioni fired in the process, citing fire safety concerns. However, many speculated that conservative board members simply disapproved of Fox's use of 'crude' materials, as well as the challenge the work posed to the traditional conventions of art and sculpture.[147]

With *Levitation,* Fox can be understood to have taken LeWitt's notion of subjective self-surrender to a systematic procedural method, and twisted this notion of mystic self-transcendence to an attempt, via quasi-magical means, to leap beyond his own corporeal limits. However, the artist still ultimately followed a set of rigorous procedures in order to make this happen—that is his ritualised preparations of both body and space, as well as his adherence to a system of measurements selected for their supposed magical significance. In his *General Theory of Magic*, Mauss notably observed the centrality of complex preparatory procedures within magical practices, and attributed this to a need to blame possible failure on human error, rather than the inefficacy of magic itself.[148]

Fox's desire to leave his body behind can partially be linked to his own personal biography. Diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma at a relatively young age, Fox was subject to numerous invasive bodily procedures over his lifetime. He cited the experience of having a lymphangiogram as particularly influential. Part of the procedure involved him watching the interior workings of his body, as an X-ray camera captured and projected images on to an

[146] See for example, George Winne Jr: H. Keen, "San Diego student who set self afire in war protest dies," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1970, 3, 17.
[147] Fox, interview, 252-254. According to Fox, Larry Bell originally suggested this.
[148] Mauss, *A General Theory Of Magic*, 19.

external monitor. Viewing himself at a remove gave him the sensation of being outside his own body which he strove to re-create in *Levitation*.[149] Whilst these experiences were undoubtedly a source of inspiration for the artist (as made evident in other works which more overtly reference his both illness and its medical treatment), *Levitation* was not intended to be an autobiographical reflection, but rather an individually-focused investigation of universal human significance. This was highlighted in Suzanne Foley's description of the work for the 1981 exhibition catalogue, *Space/Time/Sound—Conceptual Art in the San Francisco Bay Area: The 1970s.* According to Foley, the piece "addresses the universal fact of humankind—the unity of body and spirit as transcendental forces in a world of natural forces."[150]

Rather than reading *Levitation* as an exercise in bodily transcendence, Foley, one of the few authors to offer an interpretive analysis of the work, alternatively suggests it posits a notion of the human soul or spirit as fundamentally em*bodied,* or intertwined with the corporeal. In doing this, she frames the work as an apparent attempt to demonstrate the lack of separation between man and the realm of divine spirituality. However, she still seemingly insists on its distinction from the ordinary world of "natural forces."[151] In other words, she alludes to its underlying monistic logic—a logic that has historically been identified as intrinsic to magical thinking.

In contrast to Foley, I would suggest that via Fox's use of the natural material, soil, as a potential source of magic energy, the work contains a monism particular to countercultural magic, with its emphasis on cosmic interconnectivity and universe oneness. Fox's *Levitation* can be understood as an act of bodily transcendence which takes place via both a physical and cosmic connectedness to the earth: the literal connection between the

[149] Fox, interview, 252.
[150] Suzanne Foley, *Space, Time, Sound: Conceptual Art in the San Francisco Bay Area: the 1970s* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1981), 60.
[151] Ibid.

artist's body and the soil, and the mysterious energy transfer that took place between the two.

In spite of this allusion to a monistic connection to the physical and spiritual earth at large, the magic at the heart of Fox's *Levitation* can still ultimately be understood to have originated from *within* the artist-as-individual. As he stated, his attempt to levitate only became successful when he altered the focus of his thoughts—from 'leaving the ground' to 'entering the air'—and entered a trance-like state. This notion of the individual's intrinsic ability to reach alternative realities or expanded states of consciousness bears an obvious resemblance to the transcendental meditative practices which gained popularity during the countercultural Sixties, as well as the psychedelic experiences unlocked via the use of hallucinogenic drugs. Fox's *Levitation* emphasizes individual experience and perception both as a source of quasi-magical power, and as a validating frame of reference. The artist's perceived experience of entering the air is our only 'evidence' his levitation took place: his *imagined* reality is presented to us as the reality of the work. This element is arguably its most obvious countercultural impulse, as direct individualised experience is privileged over empiricism and rationality. The concepts outlined here notably also found expression in a song by the psychedelic rock band, The 13th Floor Elevators. *I've got Levitation* (1967), similarly attributes to the protagonist's ability to break new horizons, not to the growth of magical, or indeed chemical, wings, but to what is seemingly an internal moment of perceptual clarity.[152]

According to contemporary accounts of *Levitation*, via this individually-focused act of magic, Fox altered the energy of the Richmond Art Centre, as though it radiated out from his risen body, much like the transparent tubes containing symbolic stand-ins for his expelled elemental fluids. In addition to the physical traces of the artist's presence, those who encountered the space reportedly experienced a charged atmosphere, or extra-sensorily perceived

[152] The 13th Floor Elevators, "(I've got) Levitation."

shift. Fox noted the reluctance of people to fully enter the space, describing its impact as "terrifying and depressing…the whole room was energized."[153] In contrast to the 1967 attempt to levitate the Pentagon, Fox did not direct this magical energy towards a specific outcome, or larger change within the ordinary sensory world. However, as stated, it is this notion of the individual as cosmically bound to a large, universal collective that connects Fox's work to such expressions of countercultural resistance—or what Stephens refers to as "anti-disciplinary" forms of protest.[154]

The potential (a)political undertones of Fox's underlying monism are perhaps most evident in his 1971 work *Turgescent Sex* [Fig.1.44]. Whilst blindfolded, the artist systematically bound and unbound a fish from a series of tight, intricate knots, before finally covering it with smoke, blown from a cigarette. Prior to the performance, which took place in his Rose Street studio, Fox held a prolonged viewing of a photograph of the Mỹ Lai massacre, perpetrated by the U.S. military in 1968. Fox's intent was to symbolise the difficult task of extricating one's self from the shared guilt and despair provoked by such atrocities. In a 1979 interview, Fox spoke of this sense of frustration in practical terms, referring to how protests and petitions had, at that time, failed to stop the Vietnam war, as well as the near-impossibility of escaping involvement in the system which perpetrated the conflict.[155] However, the work can also be understood to relate to spiritually inextricable bonds, where human loss and destruction have unavoidable cosmic consequences for the individual who must share the burden, as well as the joy, of being a part of a larger, universal collective.

Fox's earnest engagement with spiritual themes arguably set him apart not only from the clinical and seemingly dispassionately procedural approach associated with early 'orthodox' conceptualism, but also the deadpan humour identifiable in the work of his near contemporaries. After all, one can

[153] Fox, interview, 253.
[154] Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest*.
[155] Fox, interview, 11.

read *Telepathic Piece* as a tongue-in-cheek joke, in which conceptual art's impossible goals function as something of a wry punchline. However, my contention is not that later iterations of conceptual art represent a sudden-about-turn in the terms of their alignment with the counterculture (and with that countercultural spirituality), but rather that the utopian impulses evident in Fox's work can be seen as a continuation, or evolution, of those already gestured to in the art form's earliest stages.

For a While, be Free: Conceptual Art as Play

Prelude: "Make Up an Art Game"

Assignment #1

Make up an art game. Structure a set of rules with which to play. A physical game is not necessary; more important are the rules and their structure.

John Baldessari, *CalArts Post Studio Art Class Assignments (optional),* 1970. [Fig.2.1]

In 1970, John Baldessari made literal the death of his career as a painter. Through *Cremation Project*, Baldessari created a new conceptual work by destroying all the paintings he had in his possession dating from a thirteen-year period: 1953-1966. As the name of the project suggests, the artist had these works incinerated at a local crematorium. The remains were then baked into cookies and enshrined in urns, with their birth and death dates commemorated on accompanying brass plaques [Fig.2.2—2.5].

In the decade proceeding *Cremation Project,* Baldessari was actively engaged in dismantling the established conventions of painting, and it was his embrace of this new direction that eventually led him to the funeral pyre. Two notable examples of this engagement were *Art Lesson*, (1964) and the series, *Commissioned Paintings*, (1969). The artist's formative impulse to play with the rules is evident in *Art Lesson*, which can be seen as a precursor for the artist's later, more well-known, *Wrong* (1966-8) [Fig.2.7]. Both works seemingly school the viewer on the 'correct' artistic procedures of their respective media via a demonstration of their violation and in doing so, ironically made these supposed transgressions the subject of art itself. Whilst *Wrong* concerns amateur photography, as indicated by its mimicry of popular photography manuals, which combine image with instructional text, *Art Lesson* concerns painting. The oil on canvas comprises four separate images: two landscapes, a still life and a portrait. Each image is accompanied by

letterset text, detailing the artist's deliberate 'mistakes.' Beneath his featureless outline of a woman's face and shoulders are staccato pronouncements, criss-crossing each other as though arbitrarily stamped onto the canvas, rending it 'void': "Portrait is flat. No light and shade." Baldessari would go on to make his critical observations even more succinct in *Wrong.* The sign-written word functions as both title and single word critique. The photograph above, of Baldessari positioned directly in line with a palm tree is slightly out of focus and transgresses a popular compositional rule of subject placement. Baldessari appears to merge with the tree. In *Wrong,* the artist's visible presence is purely photographic, signalling a move away from the loose brushstrokes of *Art Lesson* through which the trace of the artist's hand can still keenly be felt.

Baldessari's increasingly conceptual approach is also evident in his *Commissioned Paintings*. Subverting the medium's particular association with authenticity (a still lingering symptom of Abstract Expression, with its emphasis on immediacy and directness), the artist abandoned traditional models of authorial ownership by employing local commercial painters to realise the works for him. Baldessari's proxies worked from photographs provided by the artist, of hands pointing at various items—or, as is the case of *Commissioned Painting: A Painting by Patrick X. Nidorf O.S.A* [Fig.2.8], through an open upper storey window, at the night sky. In place of that traditional marker of painterly ownership and authenticity, the artist's signature, the paintings bear sign-written labels, crediting each commissioned painter in uniform block lettering. The effect, ironically, is that the named painters feel oddly anonymous. It is as though their lack of subjective input has been underscored, along with their contractual relationship to the artist. Painting is revealed to be a commercial endeavour—just as it has always been. At first glance, Baldessari's role and presence as the artist-author of *Commissioned Paintings* is ostensibly reduced to the declarative act of pointing at something, and calling it art. On examination of the series it becomes clear that not all of the featured hands belong to Baldessari, a white

man—leading us to question whether the artist was physically present at any stage in the process of creation. However, via his inclusion of a number of hands which may or may not be his, the artist seems to play with the expectation of his presence, leaving the viewer to assess their basis as evidence of his nearly eradicated 'touch.'

As indicated in the titular shift from painting to 'project,' *Cremation Project* can be seen as the climax of Baldessari's work from the 1960s, but also as an artistic dramatization of his rebirth as a conceptual artist, rising from both its symbolic and actual ashes. In a move antithetical to art's traditional concern with the production of sacred, static objects, the work recasts an act of object annihilation as a work of art. Photo-documentation of the process focuses on the crematory, capturing its combination of flames and industrial machinery. In spite of the apparent soberness of this approach, one more systematic and controlled then simply lighting a bonfire, there is arguably an inherent violence to the notion of torching an entire body of work. It has the potential to be seen as a sacrificial act of artistic self-immolation.[1] This reading is particularly potent given contemporary events; in May 1970 student George Winne performed a fatal act of self-immolation, in protest of America's involvement in the Vietnam War, on Baldessari's former campus at University of California, San Diego (USCD). This notion of martyrdom-for-the-cause is further supported by the artist's careful preservation and enshrinement of the remains, which according to the artist sill sit in a book-shaped urn on a shelf in his studio library, serving as a commemoratory reminder.[2]

In spite of its connotations of death and annihilation, Baldessari provides a crucial clue to the intended tone of *Cremation Project*, via his decision to bake the remains into 'cookies.' The round discs of ash, which the artist formed after the cremation process, could have just as fittingly been designated sacramental breads—albeit in a more heavy-handed allusion to messianic

[1] H. Keen, "San Diego student who set self afire in war protest dies," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1970, 3, 17.
[2] Baldessari in Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, "A Brief History of John Baldessari," video, 5:55, 2011, accessed 29 July. 17, http://www.lacma.org/video/brief-history-john-baldessari

rebirth. By concluding with the production of an all-American childhood snack, Baldessari drew on the ordinary, as opposed to the sacred. The connotations of spiritual nourishment associated with communion wafers, were instead replaced with wholesomeness, domesticity and American consumerism. Freshly baked cookies arguably conjure up images of the American home and family centred around mother and kitchen, as frequently featured in post-War advertising [see: Fig.2.6]. However, I would argue that what is key here is less the symbolic significance of Baldessari's cremated cookies (if indeed there is any), and more the way in which they subtly undercut the work's gravity. Baldessari's faux funeral pyre can be more readily interpreted as an overblown act of melodrama, or knowing, straight-faced play-act, owing to this juxtaposition of ashes, urns and sweet, baked goods.

The year Baldessari created *Cremation Project* is of importance, both in terms of the artist's career and for conceptual art more broadly. The end of the 1960s has been much mythologised in popular culture as the end of a period characterised by hope and youthful optimism (this is in spite of the notion that the Long Sixties are considered to span beyond a ten-year period). As I discussed in-depth in the introduction to this thesis, a number of art historians have also considered it a watershed for conceptualism; although whether the new decade's beginning heralded its death, or its diffusion into a series of strands is a much contested matter.[3] *Cremation Project* can be seen as the climax to Baldessari's earlier artistic interrogations on the established conventions of artmaking. However, I would argue his decision to stage his artistic rebirth in 1970 is evidence of more than an ongoing commitment to conceptual art: it is indicative of his idiosyncratic interpretation of its terms. Baldessari's use of irony, deadpan humour and, as I discuss, the dynamics and utopian qualities of play, sets his work apart from the cold cerebralism

[3] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions" *October,* Vol. 55 (1990): 105-143; Blake Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: a Critical Anthology,* ed. Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999); Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, (London: Phaidon, 1998), 239-278.

frequently associated with 'orthodox' Conceptual Art. The significance of *Cremation Project* is that it signals neither a conclusion nor transformation of Baldessari's artistic practice, but can instead can be viewed as a reassertion of his signature brand of conceptualism—thus proving the existence of diverging forms of conceptual art prior to 1970.

Cremation Project also coincided with a move of particular importance for the artist's career.[4] In the year he made *Cremation Project*, Baldessari was hired to teach at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), having previously taught at USCD and, prior to that, for many years in San Diego's education system, teaching high school life drawing and lettering classes. Baldessari's output during this period was symbiotic with his teaching. His interest in pedagogy can be seen in works such as *Art Lesson* and *Wrong*, as can his desire to subvert the didacticism associated with traditional approaches to art-making—and by extension formal art education. The unique environment and climate of CalArts in the 1970s was, however, a key factor in enabling the artist to develop a model of teaching that reflected the anti-authoritarian impulse of these earlier works.

Baldessari's recruitment to CalArts coincided with a period of institution-wide innovation, heralded by the arrival of institute's first president, Dr Robert W. Corrigan, also in 1970. Corrigan replaced large numbers of existing staff following the merger of two existing schools, Chouinard Art Institute and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music, which led to CalArts' foundation in 1966. As a result of such decisions, the art department was able to shake off the residual conservativism associated with Chouinard, which was often viewed as a commercial trade school, due to its historical link to the Disney animation studios.[5] This is in spite of its role in the development of regional avant-garde art movements, such as Junk Art, Finish Fetish, Light and Space Art, as well

[4] Like many of his peers, Baldessari relied on teaching as a means of income. For a discussion of the contemporaneous conditions of L.A.'s art market see: Michael Fallon, *Creating the Future: Art and Los Angeles in the 1970s* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014), 1-9.
[5] Disney's 'Nine Old Men,' were recruited from Chouinard, and he originally envisioned CalArts as a professional training ground for Disney animators/artists.

as, arguably, a form of (proto-)conceptual photography.[6] Baldessari was appointed by the new Dean of the School of Art, the abstract painter Paul Branch, whom he knew from his time at USCD. Alongside Baldessari, Branch installed a faculty made up of avant-garde artists and educators such as Allan Kaprow, Wolfgang Stoerchle, Miriam Schapiro, Judy Chicago, (the latter two being responsible for America's first Feminist Art Program, initially started by Chicago at Fresno State University), and later Michael Asher, Nam June Paik and Douglas Huebler. A quote from visiting *New York Times* critic, Grace Glueck, emphasised the energy of CalArts at this time: "It's alive with all kinds of artistic experiments and ideas. The art department doesn't just sit there – it *moves*."[7]

Although Baldessari was initially hired to teach painting (an irony given his recent renunciation of the medium), the palpable atmosphere of experimentation within CalArts' newly established Art Department enabled the artist to propose a new model of art education, in the form of his now famous Post Studio Art Class. This class arguably constituted the first concerted effort to teach the conceptual method, in that it was designed to offer an education to a new generation of artists whose focus was something other than object-oriented studio production. As Baldessari himself would later describe it, "there is a certain kind of work one could do that didn't require a studio. It's a work that's done in one's head. The artists could be the facilitator of the work; executing it was another matter."[8] Based on Baldessari's surviving class assignments which took the form of optional instructions (one of which provides this chapter's epigraph), as well as the recollections of his former students, the structure of these classes fit the unbounded nature of the art produced within them. The word 'optional' is worth emphasising here. James Welling, one of Baldessari's protégées and his

[6] Many noted L.A. artists attended classes at the school, including, Baldessari, Larry Bell, Ed Ruscha, Bob Irwin, Mary Corse.
[7] Grace Glueck, quoted in Paul Gardner, "The Heirs of Mickey, Minnie, Pluto and Donald: California Institute of Fine Arts Where the Muses Really Sing," *Art News*, October (1973): 41.
[8] John Baldessari, interviewed by Barbara Kraft, "Art is what Artists Do: An Interview with John Baldessari," *Articles* 1, no.2 (1984-1985): 11.

teaching assistant from 1973-1974, remembers the loose nature of the artist's lessons and his approach of providing his students with creative suggestions, rather than proscriptive instructions: "John was very low key, very gentle. He would offer suggestions but didn't say much." [9] Such suggestions included: "Make up [a] list of distractions that often occur to you. Recreate on video tape," "Defenestrate objects. Photo them in mid-air," and "Imitate Baldessari in actions and speech. Video." As I shall assert, Baldessari's approach to teaching was much like his art-making, an open-ended process consisting of the creation of *playful* possibilities.

Conceptual Art as Play (an introduction): John Baldessari's *Choosing: Green Beans,* 1971

It was in his Post Studio Art Class that Baldessari created the work that provides the principle case study for this chapter. Aided by the assistance of his students, Baldessari devised a game for two players. This game, *Choosing*, would be played by the artist a number of times and formed the basis of a series of works. The premise of the game was simple: a sequence of moves would be played out by the artist and a willing participant. As its title suggests, these moves were dictated by a series of choices made by both players. In *Choosing: Green Beans* (1971) [Fig.2.9], the first iteration of the series, the participant would begin by choosing three green beans from a selection given to him or her. The individual was free to determine their own criteria for this choice, or alternatively, to make an arbitrary selection. The chosen three would then be photographed, along with Baldessari's own, selected by pointing finger. The chosen bean would remain, and two new choices would be added, courtesy of the participant. The game would continue until all the available beans had been used. There were nineteen green beans in total, but the number of 'choices' varied with each iteration. With the aid of students, Baldessari would continue to re-play *Choosing*,

[9] James Welling, as quoted in: Amy Heibel, "Post Studio Art: Remembering John Baldessari's Famous Cal Arts Class," *LACMA Unframed*, July 6, 2010, accessed May 18, 2017, http://unframed.lacma.org/2010/07/06/post-studio-art-remembering-john-baldessari%25e2%2580%2599s-famous-cal-arts-class

adding to the series by using other foodstuffs including carrots, rhubarb, turnips, and chocolates, but also with items more closely related to other artworks, such as photographs and manuscripts.

As Baldessari himself stated, during the course of *Choosing* both players would develop their own secret strategies for selection, which remained unknown to one another.[10] That Baldessari chose to highlight this strategic element is worth noting. *Choosing* is unusual in that the game does not result in either player winning or losing (the expected outcome of the majority of traditional games). Both participants were instead ostensibly working toward the same goal—to eliminate all other green beans until only one remained. However, precisely how each player intended to reach this conclusion was withheld both from their opposing partner, and those subsequently encountering the artwork. In other words, the exact criteria determining the game's forward progression were defined discretely by each player, and thus so too was their understanding of the significance of the final "win." This creates a tension within Baldessari's game between collaboration and competition. One might even argue that neither dynamic is truly present, making it difficult to define what type of game *Choosing* is, at least in relation to conventional forms of structured games, which conventionally follow either model.[11]

Choosing lacks, at least in the strictest sense, the contest of powers usually expected in a competitive game. However, although it is partially collaborative, it does not quite fit with the co-operative model of gaming either. There is a shared trajectory, and with that a reciprocal dynamic (the game moves forward each time one player responds to the other's previous "choice"), but the players' motivations remain isolated from each other. There is also no real conflict in the game, no shared opponent for the players to unite against, be this an opposing team, or the structure of the game

[10] John Baldessari quoted in, *John Baldessari Works 1966 - 1981.* (Eindhoven Essen: Van Abbemuseum; Museum Folkwang, 1981) 11.
[11] Katie Salen Tekinbaş and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals,* (London: MIT Press, 2004).

itself.[12] The final "victory" does not come from any form of defeat or conquest, and there is seemingly no way to lose. These combative terms, frequently used in relation to games, feel at odds with the dynamic set up by Baldessari. That being said, it bears re-stating that elements of what might be perceived as collaboration and competition both exist within the game, that is, in the form of the players' reciprocal moves towards the same shared goal, whilst simultaneously withholding the strategies determining these moves. Whilst this makes for an unusual game in conventional terms, it is my contention that these dynamics reflect the particular circumstances in which *Choosing* was made, specifically the increasing tendency toward collaborative forms of artistic production, as espoused at CalArts, and the broader, countercultural backdrop of the Sixties.

In an art market still preoccupied with notions of individual authorship, the dynamics of Baldessari's game can potentially be seen as a parody of a familiar struggle related to collaborative artistic practices—namely the conflicting desire to claim or to attribute individual recognition to a single artist. The tension between co-operation and competition in *Choosing* can, however, also be thought to mirror the specific environment at CalArts during the 1970s. As shall be discussed further at a later point in this chapter, the model of education adopted at the institution was informed by a non-hierarchical, heuristic approach. In keeping with this ethos, classes were structured in a way designed to be beneficial for both students and teachers, with an emphasis placed on individual discovery, over didactic instruction. When considered in relation to this context, what one might first identify in *Choosing* as a competitive game dynamic can instead be understood as the incorporation of individualism within a collaboratively informed art work.

[12] In laying out their 'fundamentals of game design,' Tekinbaş and Zimmerman argue that all games involve conflict. In competitive games, this conflict is the opposition between players/teams, whereas co-operative games are based on players working together to defeat the game itself. (As a point of clarification - co-operative games have a more specific meaning within games theory, I am referring here to games design, as are the authors.) Tekinbaş and Zimmerman, Rules of Play. 80.

That is, as an art-game shaped by the sum total actions of its individual participants/players.

As I outlined in the previous chapter, the idea of the individual-as-part-of-a-collective was of central importance to the Countercultural Sixties' notion of the communal. Communal activity was understood to be the collective action of a group of discrete individuals, and therefore the pursuit of self-identity and discovery was seen as a complementary component, rather than a contradictory impulse. The approach adopted at CalArts can be seen to mirror this aspect of the counterculture. A central aim of this chapter is to chart this link and its connection with the procedures of play as utilized by Baldessari in his contemporaneous works. Within the specific socio-cultural context under consideration here, play and pedagogy can be understood as less distinct from one another, and even intertwined, owing to an increasingly fluid approach to rules, structures and authority. However, rules are integral to Baldessari's *Choosing*. Although given 'free' choice, each participant moves within a structured system of play. Thus, one could alternatively argue that *Choosing* is shaped by its rules of play rather than the actions of its players. Baldessari's own instructions for 'making up an art game' appear to support this emphasis: "A physical game is not necessary; more important are the rules and their structure."[See: Fig. 2.1] Moreover, I would argue that beyond the work's full title, the apparent presence of rules in *Choosing* is ultimately how we are able to recognise it as a game—even if these are minimal, and simply enforce a basic system of turn-taking.

That the existence of a set of rules, however basic, is part of how we identify *Choosing* as a game is revealing of an aspect game-playing which can be connected back to the principal theme of my previous chapter. Despite its apparent anti-authoritarianism, magical rituals, like play, employ rules to aid the creation of separate, self-contained worlds. This notion has also been identified as a key feature of play, with game designers frequently referring

to the space carved out by rules as the "magic circle" of play.[13] As I asserted, however, what makes magic distinct from other religious practices is that these rules are defined, at least partially, by the individuals involved in their enactment. The power conferred to the individual-as-part-of-the-collective is what gave magic its popular countercultural appeal. The play space Baldessari constructed appears to share in this embrace of the individual, with the player's ability to 'choose' seemingly alluding to the spirit of freedom contained with the countercultural slogan: "do your own thing."[14] Yet, it remains structured and rule bound. In this regard, *Choosing* reflects the apparent contradictions play shares with magic: it has the capacity to be both communal and individualistic, it is associated with openness, freedom, and an anti-authoritarian impulse, and yet is seemingly always guided or contained by a system, or series of rules. As shall be outlined, much like magic, play can also therefore be thought to have a particular countercultural significance.

"One Skinny Growth Gesturing at Another"[15] – *Choosing*: A Game of Aesthetic Selection

At first glance *Choosing* appears strikingly simple, both as a game and as a work of art. Further examination, however, reveals its numerous complexities. *Choosing's* links to play, pedagogy, collaborative production and the counterculture merit sustained analysis. This expanded discussion of the work will be used to highlight the ludic properties of Baldessari's practice during the early 1970s, in a way that explicitly relates these procedures to their historically contextual significance. In doing this, I will lay the foundations to expand this analogy of Baldessari's conceptual-art-as-play to include other California-based artists who explicitly engaged with different

[13] Tekinbaş and Zimmerman, *Rules of Play.* 94; The authors borrow this term from: Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*: *A Study of The Play Element in Culture,* trans R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge, 1949).
[14] According *Time* this was a central facet of the Hippie 'code': " Youth: The Hippies," article, *TIME,* July 7, 1967.
[15] Taken from Kelsey's description of *Choosing*: Robin Kelsey, *Photography and the Art of Chance* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 293.

ludic modes (varying from game-playing constrained by some semblance of structure, to the free, imaginative form of play more commonly associated with children), as well as the practices of more orthodox forms of conceptualism. This will include artists associated with a serial, systematic approach, which can be thought to resemble a structured form of game-playing. In order to carve out this fresh re-examination of the conceptual project via Baldessari's express interest in game playing, it is first necessary to interrogate the existing art historical discourse on *Choosing.*

Choosing has chiefly been interpreted as a metaphor for the curatorial process, or the selection and evaluation of art more broadly, both as an aspect of the artistic process, as well as its subsequent appreciation. The arbitrary selection of one green bean over two others (at least as it appears to the mystified viewer attempting to determine a consistent logic behind the sequence of choices), can be seen as wry comment on the often mysterious or highly individualised criteria used to assess one work of art over another. In her essay "Choosing, a Game for Two Curators," Jessica Morgan argues that the work is concerned with "dismantling [of] the structure of decision making," specifically decisions relating to critical judgements on art – made crucially, by both the artist and curators. According to Morgan, *Choosing* raises questions about the appropriateness of various modes of art assessment: "What is the strategy for selection? Aesthetics? External reference? Recognition? Difference?" As she goes on to state, "Baldessari's work makes manifest the personal and apparently illogical information that informs such a process of selection."[16]

The deadpan quality of the work's photographic handling, combined with the everyday objects initially selected by Baldessari—items which could easily be found in the grocery store—gives the *Choosing* series a somewhat absurd, even ludicrous quality. Morgan goes so far as to suggest that after the first game, Baldessari and his students appear to have purposely gravitated

[16] Jessica Morgan, "Choosing: A Game for Two Curators" in *John Baldessari: Pure Beauty*, ed. Jessica Morgan, and Leslie Jones (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 23.

towards increasingly ungainly items. In this regard, *Choosing* contains a trace of the dry humour more overtly present in *Cremation Project;* after all, I would argue there is something undeniably ludicrous about the combined solemnity and silliness of cremating and then baking into cookies one's rejected artistic endeavours. The green beans featured in the first iteration were shot with the distanced, documentary style commonly associated with conceptual photography. Each chosen bean was placed onto faintly lined graph paper, and spaced out relatively evenly from its 'competitors.'[17] The same is true of each image in the sequence. The visual effect is such that the photographs resemble botanical studies or, appropriately, given the context in which they were made, the findings of a class fieldtrip—be this for a natural science class, an elementary school lesson — or, as was the reality, a Post Studio class assignment. These notions are furthered by Baldessari's placement of the photographs within an artist's book, its format providing a wordless visual narrative, akin to a child's picture-book.

When considered in relation to Morgan's understanding of the work as a metaphor for the curatorial process (whether enacted by the artist, or by critic, curator or viewer), Baldessari's use of everyday objects can be read as an attempt to juxtapose the banal and the ordinary with the supposed sacredness of art and aesthetics. Pursuing a similar interpretation to Morgan, but addressing the artist's active incorporation of humour (something Morgan does not explicitly comment on), Robin Kelsey provides the following description of this idea: "by using vegetables, Baldessari humorously brought aesthetic preference down to the level of supermarket browsing."[18] This analogy, volunteered by Kelsey in passing, merits further discussion. In likening the art game to perusing the shelves of a grocery store, Kelsey extends the emphasis that Morgan places on its arbitrary nature—aesthetic decision making is shown by Baldessari to be a humdrum, automatic and potentially indifferent activity. Indifference, as Kelsey goes on to suggest,

[17] A black table-top was used for later works in this series. See: Fig 2.10.
[18] Kelsey, *Photography,* 293.

often develops into boredom. For him, the *Choosing* series represents an exercise in monotony: "as the viewer moves from one photograph to the next in the series, the logic (if any) behind the successive selections is elusive. Suspicion arises that time and repetition, giving rise to boredom, may have figured into the process, that particular vegetables lost their desirability simply because the artist grew tired of choosing them."[19] According to Kelsey, the fact that none of the winners from early rounds survive to the end of the game is suggestive of the artist's dwindling enthusiasm for his initial choices, or his increasing weariness with the process itself. "In principle," he argues "the very "best" vegetable, however defined, could turn up in the first set of three and then win out…but this never seems to happen."[20] As he rightly asserts, boredom is a concern that runs throughout Baldessari's practice, and is most obviously referred to in his work from the same year, *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, 1971. Play has an intimate connection with boredom, as it is often considered to arise from it, as a strategy for its alleviation. In relation to *Choosing,* it could be argued that the sense of fatigue (and subsequent fickleness) that Kelsey claims is evident in the series, serves to re-assert art's status as a commodity—and, moreover, a potentially disposable one. If Baldessari has reduced aesthetic selection down to supermarket browsing, then by extension the art objects themselves become throwaway: what is on offer is continually replenished, and the would-be browser moves restlessly on.

An alternative reading of *Choosing* can also be made via Kelsey's notion, however. Instead of interpreting the work as a parody, and therefore a critique and rejection of the humdrum, arbitrary nature of aesthetic decision making, it could also be seen as an exercise in the appreciation of the everyday. Kelsey asserts that Baldessari's game of supermarket browsing trivialises a core concern of traditional art-making, the pursuit of nature's ideal via a process of artistic selection and rejection. Referring to an argument

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

that the eighteenth century academician Joshua Reynolds made in his *Discourses on Art*, Kelsey suggests that *Choosing* plays with the notion that the artist's role is to seek out and depict the most exemplary natural forms, rather than capturing variety in nature. Although *Choosing* appears to be a very literal demonstration of this process, drawn out straight-facedly to the point of being deadpan, I would question whether it can be assumed that Baldessari was attempting to trivialise it, as Kelsey definitively states. Grocery store browsing may indeed be humdrum, but it underscores the way in which aesthetics play a part in everyday activities. One could argue that Kelsey's assumption about the artist's fatigue and waning interest is somewhat undercut by the way in which Baldessari chose to present these everyday objects to his viewers/players. The similarity of the artist's photographic handling of the beans to the earnest documentation of botanical specimens arguably conveys a sense of reverence rather than off-handedness. One could even go further and suggest that the colour saturation and contrast of the images gives the photographs the appearance of graphic illustrations, and the beans themselves a near sculptural quality. Although arguably less perceptible in subsequent reproductions of the work, on viewing *Choosing* in person I found Baldessari's images to be more beautiful than banal.

Despite the potential aesthetic appeal of Baldessari's green beans, the prospective offered by Kelsey—an under-stimulated viewer—highlights an aspect of the work often overlooked. This is the work's relation to game play, particularly the dynamics established between the artist and viewer/would-be player. Kelsey's experience of *Choosing* as an exercise in boredom can be considered the appropriate response of a frustrated or excluded player, one who is unable to engage with the game due to its mysterious or unfamiliar rules.[21] It is interesting, I think, that this version of *Choosing* has only nine documented steps; the game is not particularly protracted for its players, or

[21] As highlighted in my previous chapter, games with a mysterious/other worldly significance increased in popularity during the countercultural era. The mysterious nature of *Choosing's* game-play is, however, offset by the artist's seemingly deliberate use of non-mysterious objects.

for the viewer following along via the images. As an exercise in tedium it is a relatively short one. Perhaps a wearied Baldessari drew the game to an early close because he grew tired of playing. Either way, there is no real sense of climax to the work/game's conclusion. Baldessari does not provide a final image of the winning specimen to end the sequence, or offer an opportunity to scrutinize the artist's final choice. Is this indicative of the arbitrariness of the supposed winner, or could it be a deliberate attempt to preserve the mystery of Baldessari's game-playing strategy? A point worthy of consideration is that not all of the works in the *Choosing* series end after nine rounds. *Choosing (a game for two players): Carrots*, 1972 [Fig.2.10], for example, concludes at fourteen, the final decision apparently being more difficult.[22]

Borrowing Kelsey's notion of supermarket browsing, and re-interpreting it in this way, that is, as an attempt to elevate the status of the everyday, is at odds with the dominant narratives on conceptual art, and its supposedly autonomous stance. It instead aligns the artist with an approach more associated with CalArts colleague Allan Kaprow, in its potential attempt to "blur the boundaries between art and life."[23] *Choosing*'s invitation to participate in an art game involving foodstuffs also calls to mind fellow Fluxus artist and CalArts faculty member Alison Knowles' 1962, open-ended invitation to *Make a Salad*. Quite how *Choosing* is supposed to be read, however, is ultimately as ambiguous as the strategy employed for the game of selection itself. Whilst Baldessari seemingly re-casts the artists' process of aesthetic selection as a de-skilled act of child's play, with decisions made without a discernible rationale and ostensibly according to arbitrary whim and fancy, his 'chosen' green beans are still conferred with the special, albeit mysterious, significance traditionally accorded to art objects. Such ambiguities and contradictions are arguably intentional features of *Choosing.*

[22] The differences across the series arguably give the game a greater sense of authenticity, thus making each 'winner' appear less arbitrary.
[23] Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life,* ed. Jeff Kelly (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

Baldessari floats the possibility of the work as both a critique of subjectively-informed aesthetic choice and as a potential exercise in raising the status of everyday objects to that of art. The latter, it should be noted, to an extent affirms the artist's authority, positioning him as an individual able to perform this act of alchemy.

"Anything can be Art/Art can be Anything" [24]: *Choosing* to play with Green Beans

Previous interpretations of *Choosing* frame it exclusively in relation to the questions it raises about art and art-making. However, the implications of the broader socio-cultural context in which the work was made have largely been obscured. Yet, Baldessari's decision to use game play as a creative strategy can be understood as contextually significant. Locating *Choosing* and other examples of Baldessari's contemporaneous practice within the immediate context of his CalArts' Post Studio Art Class is important. However, my intention is to situate this narrow contextual account alongside a broader one, so as to examine this model of Sixties art education in relation to the world outside its walls. This is informed by Baldessari's particular pedagogical approach, which was characterised by an open-endedness not only in terms of its move away from didacticism, but also in its rejection of the classroom/studio as a hermetically sealed laboratory.

CalArts: Insular Playground, or "Everything Coming Together"?[25]

CalArts was on the geographical periphery of Los Angeles and its art scene. The pre-merger location of the Chouinard Art Institute had been Westlake, a residential and commercial neighbourhood in downtown Los Angeles. As if to draw attention to the significance of this contrast, in his 1972 *ArtNews* article, Peter Gardner describes the new Valencia location as "a mountainous hamlet

[24] Baldessari's class mantra, according to: David Salle, "The Petit Cinema of John Baldessari" in *John Baldessari: Pure Beauty*, ed. Jessica Morgan, and Leslie Jones (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 144.
[25] Robert Corrigan quoted in Gardner, "The Heirs of Mickey," 41-42.

about 40 minutes from Hollywood."[26] Walt Disney's original vision for CalArts was an all 'under one roof,' space for interdisciplinary arts education. In realising his final, unfinished project, its founders had this notion of creative togetherness incorporated into the institution's architectural design. In its original form CalArts was a five-level, 500,000-square-foot 'mega-building,' housing all of the various departments, centred around a large, balconied exhibition space [Fig.2.11—12].[27] This vast construction of glass, stone and concrete was set on a hillside within a landscape that Gardner describes as "ranching country." This allowed for studio-side views of the Tehachapi Mountains.[28] Architects Ladd & Kelsey's construction thus mirrored the institute's core objective: to offer a holistic arts education within a single space, which fostered a spirit of creative collaboration.

Although by no means as remote, the relative isolation of CalArt's new site reflected Provost Herbert Blau's attempt to replicate the radical precedent set by Black Mountain College (1933-57), located in rural North Carolina. Influenced by the experimental model of education offered at Black Mountain, Blau proposed a less rigid, more egalitarian approach to teaching than that originally envisioned by Disney.[29] Although he wished to encourage collaboration and cross-disciplinary proficiency, Disney intended to implement a conservative, Atelier model of student-master apprenticeship, in a return to a Renaissance-inspired style of teaching. [30] In contrast, Blau proposed that individuality be favoured over adherence to a set curriculum, and that student-teacher relationships be more collegial. This was in spite of

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[26] Ibid. Although a 40-minute drive is not drastically far (particularly in L.A.), Chouinard was roughly equal distance from Hollywood and Disney's animation studios in Burbank.
[27] For more see: "Timeline," *Institute History*, CalArts, accessed June 18, 2017, https://calarts.edu/about/institute/history/timeline
[28]Gardner, "The Heirs of Mickey," 41. Emphasizing the shared nature of the space, Gardner also states: "Music practice rooms are across the hall from photography labs. Theatre and dance students pass through the main exhibition gallery to reach their studios."
[29] Ruth Erickson, "A Progressive Education," in *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957,* ed. Helen Molesworth (London: Yale University Press, 2015), 76-85.
[30] Walt Disney's plans for CalArts were first made public via "The CalArts Story," 1964. Emphasis was on the acquisition of technical skills, and on making the artist 'a decidedly useful member of society.' The original proposed location was also closer to Hollywood, on a site adjacent to the Hollywood Bowl. CalArts, "The CalArts Story," Vimeo video, 17.48, posted by "CalArts," May 22, 2010, accessed Jul 18, 2017, https://vimeo.com/11955096.

the deliberate decision to employ working artists with established reputations, again, an approach modelled on Black Mountain College.[31]

When considered in relation to this context, the reciprocal game-play of Baldessari's *Choosing* can be seen to reflect the conditions of learning espoused at CalArts. 'Lessons' at the School (if this is even the appropriate term, given the heuristic approach adopted by the institution) were devised to be mutually beneficial for the artistic practices of students and teachers alike. In terms of game play, *Choosing* is structured around both parties working toward the same goal. Even if the significance of this is defined discreetly by each individual, mutual progress is made each time a player responds to their partner's previous choice(s). It is therefore both collaborative and individualistic. Baldessari's commitment to CalArt's non-hierarchical stance is evident in his decision to refrain from calling members of his classes 'students.' He instead claims to have viewed them as a 'group of artists working together,' in a bid to 'keep the wall between them as low as possible.'[32] The just-visible presence of Baldessari in *Choosing* mimics not only his approach as an artist, but also as a teacher—and, indeed, these roles appear inextricably intertwined. It is worth restating that *Choosing* was a game that Baldessari played with Post Studio students, meaning they were actively involved in the work's creation. One could, however, argue that Baldessari's pointing finger signals his ultimate authority as an artist-instructor, just as it indicates his loose but continued grip on the notion of authorial ownership. Alternatively, it can be seen as a parodic take on that marker of authenticity familiar to Abstract Expressionism, the trace of the artist's hand.

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[31] As Baldessari highlights, Blau strove to create a faculty made up of members of the contemporary avant-garde again, in an attempt to replicate the model of arts education pioneered at Black Mountain. John Baldessari, interviewed by Richard Hertz, in *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, ed. Richard Hertz (Ojai: Minneola Press, 2003), 66.
[32] John Baldessari in conversation with Fiona Connor, "The Experimental Impulse", SoundCloud audio, 9:00, posted by "Fiona Connor," Jul 21, 2011, accessed Aug 2, 2017, https://soundcloud.com/fiona-connor/john-baldessari-in

The romantic vision of CalArts held by its founders has, to an extent, been perpetuated by histories of the institution. Accounts speak with some reverence about the specialness of its atmosphere, and frequently feature anecdotes about impromptu or unusual campus activities [Fig.2.13—14].[33] As egalitarian as the CalArts' experience was supposed to be, the admissions process itself was highly selective. This was a key aspect retained from Disney's original proposal. CalArts was to be relatively small, but made up of "top grade calibre" students.[34] When the re-location was finally complete in the fall of 1971, student intake was around 650, with only twelve enrolled on the graduate fine arts program. The official image projected by the institution was, therefore, that of an elite, artistic utopia.

CalArts' size and exclusivity have, perhaps inevitably, led to an interest in, as well as a mythologizing of, the interpersonal relationships, rivalries and alliances forged there. It is this impulse which drove Richard Hertz's 2004 publication, *Jack Goldstein and The CalArts Mafia*. [35] As the author states in his foreword, by the late 1970s a mystique developed around the institution due to the critical success of its alumni. Hertz focuses in particular on the careers of a group of former students collectively referred to in contemporary press as the CalArts Mafia: Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Matt Mulligan, David Salle and James Welling. Via interviews with these artists and other key figures, including Baldessari, the work also provides what reviewer Mariah Corrigan describes as a "dramatized oral history" of the institution's 'golden' years.[36] Whilst these interviews offer an alternative to the grand narratives frequently constructed by art historians and critics, I would suggest the multiple and often competing accounts gathered by Hertz somewhat

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[33] See accounts provided in: Richard Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia*, (Ojai: Minneola Press, 2003); articles on Michael Jangs' *College* photographs [Fig.2.13—14] also reinforce this aspect of the CalArts experience, see for example: Cait Munro, "See Raunchy Photos from CalArts in the 1970s,"*Artnet News*, July 16, 2014, accessed July, 23, 2016. https://news.artnet.com/art-world/see-raunchy-photos-from-calarts-in-the-1970s-62256

[34] CalArts, "The CalArts Story."

[35] Hertz, *Jack Goldstein*.

[36] Mariah Corrigan, "Review of Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia, Richard Hertz," *CAA Reviews*, (2004), para. 2, accessed, July 16 2017, CrossRef DOI: 10.3202/caa.reviews.2004.64

problematically add a further layer of myth, rather than dispelling those myths which pre-existed. However, what is successfully highlighted is the disparity between the School's official self-image of cross-disciplinary, collaborative unity, and the divisions which existed in reality, on both an individual and department-wide level. To cite one specific example, according to Hiro Kosaka, there was a complete split between the painters who studied under Allan Hacklin and the students who worked with Baldessari.[37]

The image of CalArts in the late 1960s which Hertz partially attempted to counter with his 'unsanitized, uncensored and unidealised' history, that of a utopian community of artists set in a rural, mountainous idyll, arguably provides some justification for previous decontextualized readings of Baldessari's *Choosing* series.[38] In addition to being framed as an example of the purportedly self-reflexive concerns of conceptualism, where its immediate context is acknowledged, *Choosing* is perhaps understood to be a product of Baldessari's artistic experiments within a hermetically sealed, classroom-as-art-lab—that is, a space removed from wider society. However, this understanding of the circumstances in which *Choosing* was made is fundamentally at odds with the ethos of Baldessari's Post Studio Class. Baldessari deliberately avoided framing the class as an attempt to teach a conceptual method. Whilst this potentially raises questions about whether he viewed work produced within this context as something other than conceptual, I would instead suggest it is indicative of his open-ended approach to this art form. His use of the descriptor 'Post Studio' reflected a desire to inclusively account for any form of art not made by hand, such as emerging forms of video art and performance. Thus, he freed the scope of its activities from the more limited terms associated with an 'orthodox' conceptualism, with its emphasis on investigations in language, and systematic, procedural approaches.[39]

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[37] Hertz, *Jack Goldstein,* 45-46. Kosaka likened this divide as follows: "It was like Vietnam – there were the long hairs and the short hairs."
[38] Ibid.
[39] See Baldessari's reflections on his post studio class in: ibid, 58-68.

In establishing his Post Studio Art Class, Baldessari attempted to propose working conditions better suited to a new emerging form of artist. The studio, with its strong associations with modernism, conjures images of the artist as a lone figure, apart from society.[40] In contrast to the "all under one roof" art education envisioned by Disney, Baldessari's Post Studio Class was less tied to a physical space within CalArts. Classes frequently involved field trips that took the students off campus, and onto the streets of Los Angeles. In yet another playful interaction with his students, locations were chosen via a dart thrown at a map of the city. Notable visits included the Forest Lawn Cemetery, the Hollywood Wax Museum, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Farmers Market.[41] As former student David Salle recalls, Baldessari instilled the notion that good ideas could come from anywhere: "as the name of the class had it, the point was anything that happened *outside* the studio." [42] According to Salle, Baldessari encouraged the class to draw on the "bounty of kitsch art palaces" offered by Los Angeles and other urban environments.[43] As Salle implies, materials students gathered also fed into the artist's own practice.

In spite of their ostensibly arbitrary selection, Salle hints at an underlying rationale behind Baldessari's field trips. Indeed, there appears to be a common thread among the sites the artist gravitated towards, reflecting an apparent interest in spaces and activities traditionally considered outside of the scope of art: examples of low-culture, the everyday and the humdrum. As shall be discussed, this interest in the urban banal can be seen as a distinctive feature of Baldessari's conceptually-based but outward looking practice.

Baldessari was not alone in adopting this approach. His CalArts colleagues Allan Kaprow and Judy Chicago regularly engaged students with the outside world. Kaprow frequently organised off campus excursions into CalArts' rural

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[40] For an extended discussion: Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-59.
[41] Salle, "The Petit Cinema," 144.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

surroundings (mushroom picking being a notable activity), as well as into the city. By 1971 Chicago and Schapiro's Feminist Art Program engaged in *Womanhouse*, a collaborative installation project based in a residential property in Hollywood. A year later, they organised *Route 126,* a performance work involving a series of artistic interventions on the 126 State Highway. In spite of its base in Valencia, it is arguable that CalArts' faculty bent Disney's vision to their will, forging a new kind of education for a generation of artists thoroughly in-and-of-the-world. Articulating this in 1972, CalArts President Robert Corrigan declared that he liked to think of the School as analogous to the artist communities of Paris and Greenwich Village in the 1920s and 30s, where artists studied whilst being in the world. The CalArts of the 1970s, he claimed, reflected a moment at which boundaries were becoming blurred, and "everything was coming together."[44]

Despite being partially modelled on Black Mountain College, the CalArts of the 1970s can be seen as a product of its time. Corrigan's statement indicates an awareness of this fact, and moreover a desire for the School to reflect the prevailing attitudes of the era. One could go further, and suggest that his reference to blurred boundaries and togetherness reflected a sensibility which is close to countercultural. The approach adopted at CalArts mirrors many key features of the counterculture, with its collapse of hierarchical divisions, focus on collaborative practice, and the replacement of didactic instruction with an emphasis on self-discovery. Although Blau, as CalArts' Provost, deserves principal credit for this progressive re-adaption of Disney's vision (Paul Cronin has described him as the institution's "ideological overlord"), Maurice Stein, whom he appointed as the first Dean of Critical Studies was another vital influence.[45] Stein, a noted sociologist, spent the late 1960s collaborating on a radical pedagogical project *Blueprint for Counter*

[44] Corrigan quoted in Gardner, "The Heirs of Mickey," 41-42.
[45] Paul Cronin, "Recovering and Rendering Vital — Blueprint for Counter Education at the California Institute of the Arts," in *Blueprint for Counter Education: Expended Re-Print,* Maurice Stein and Larry Miller, (New York: Inventory Press, 2016), 38.

Education.[46] Published in 1970, the year in which Stein took up his position at CalArts, *Blueprint* took the form of a boxed set of three large format posters [Fig.2.15—18] and an A4 sized paperback. Its sum contents, a "curriculum," "handbook," "wall decoration," and "shooting script," were designed to offer individuals all the tools necessary for a 'counter university' education.[47] As was emphasised on its front cover, however, no text book nor final exam was included—the emphasis instead was on learning as a form of personal development.

Much like Baldessari, via *Blueprint,* Stein and his co-author Larry Miller proposed a model of arts education that positioned itself outside of the traditional classroom. As Jeffrey T. Schnapp describes the project, *Blueprint* was intended to be a "do-it-yourself, alternative classroom…a portable learning environment that would instantiate a personalised, socially engaged model of education."[48] Precisely how *Blueprint* attempted to achieve this goal, via its posters, charts and scripts—a "participative series of art-life games"—will be discussed in a subsequent section examining the use of game-play as a particular countercultural strategy.[49]

Stein's appointment at CalArts thus signalled the Institution's commitment to new, radical pedagogies. All students were required to take classes in Critical Studies. This approach was again modelled on that of Black Mountain College, where students were encouraged to engage in the philosophical and the social, as confronted in everyday life.[50] This is in contrast to the commercial and more strictly practice-led focus of Chouinard and many rival institutions. Thus, these "classes" lacked any formal sense of structure. As one student recalled, "We would often attend classes and discover that the instructor had no agenda," using one specific class as an example he went on to state that

[46] Maurice Stein and Larry Miller, *Blueprint for Counter Education: Expended Re-Print,* (New York: Inventory Press, 2016).
[47] As listed in the work's original subtitle.
[48] Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Blueprint for a Blueprint" in *Blueprint for Counter Education: Expended Re-Print*, Maurice Stein and Larry Miller, (New York: Inventory Press, 2016), 5.
[49] Original text, quoted in Schnapp, "Blueprint for a Blueprint,"4 (original unpaginated).
[50] Erickson, "A Progressive Education,"77.

there was, "no explanation, no introduction, no specific intended outcome."[51] In addition to this open-ended approach, Stein was also responsible for bringing the counterculture to CalArts in a more literal sense. As Blau reflected on his hiring in 1992, "We said, look, students today are concerned with the Vietnam War, drugs, the opening of new sexual possibilities, alternative lifestyles etc."[52] Under Stein's deanship, students had the opportunity to supplement their creative development with a range of unorthodox subjects, many of which were linked to popular countercultural ideas and movements. These included: Parapsychology, Mystery Religions of the Far East, Cannabis Myths and Folklore, Advanced Drug Research (which involved guided psychedelic sessions in the surrounding woodlands), Popular Culture (taught in music critic Robert Christgau's living room), and even a class dedicated to finding the best hamburger in Los Angeles, led by the sociologist Daniel Foss.[53] Stein played a vital role in shaping CalArts as an institution in which student learning extended beyond the classroom, to direct, lived experiences. As former faculty member James Hurtak termed it, "CalArts was a unique and explosive experiment, a university without walls."[54] By regularly taking students off campus, and into the city, it could be argued that Baldessari applied this notion to his own "lessons" in Post-Studio art making.

Borrowed Images as Building Blocks: *Choosing* - Conceptually Based, But Outward Looking

What is often underplayed in discussions of Baldessari's work is the artist's interest in drawing on, as well as capturing, images—particularly those of banal, everyday objects and locations. The artist frequently used the

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[51] Film Studies student Steve McAdam quoted in Cronin, "Recovering,"48. (McAdam was referring to a class where students were shown hours of Nazi propaganda films, then were simply instructed to write down their reflections).
[52] Herbert Blau interviewed by Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta, "The Play of Thought: An interview with Herbert Blau," *Performing Arts Journal* 14, no.3 (1992): 24.
[53] Foss was an early author on Sixties Counterculture: Daniel Foss, *Freak Culture: Life-Style and Politics,* (Boston: Dutton, 1972); for more information on individual classes see Cronin, "Recovering,"46-48.
[54] Ibid, 46,

everyday as a juxtaposing backdrop for his conceptual and occasionally absurdist artistic gestures. It is crucial to re-state that Baldessari's teaching practice at CalArts was inseparable from his contemporaneous work. As Salle alluded, class field trips were a primary means for Baldessari to gather ideas. Moreover, in contradiction to his purported non-hierarchical approach, Salle states his students frequently felt as though they were working on his behalf. [55] His assignments for these trips consisted of offering creative avenues to intervene in the ordinary. One such occasion, recalled by Salle, involved the purchase of a plucked chicken, which the class then kicked around the stalls of the Los Angeles Farmers Market. The battered carcass was then dumped beside a Kentucky Fried Chicken Restaurant. These art school hijinks can be understood as boisterous injection of the ludic within the everyday—another of example of Baldessari impelling his students to play with their food.

Documenting these kinds of actions was key for Baldessari. His first step in setting up his Post Studio Art Class was to ensure his students had access to audio-visual equipment and abundant supplies of film. On field trips, students were encouraged to record their activities, as well as to simply capture images at random. This emphasis on quick, point-and-press photography is in keeping with the de-skilled approach commonly associated with conceptual photography.[56] It is also similar to that of the tourist snapshot. This is fitting given many of the locations visited were frequented by tourists, or were suitable for elementary school trips. The amateurism of Baldessari's *Wrong* notably also bears a resemblance to a poorly executed vacation portrait. This connection between Baldessari's photographic approach and the multiple, in-the-moment, snapshots taken by tourists for pleasure runs counter to the cold, dispassionateness often associated with conceptualism.[57] Taking snapshots is a fun holiday activity but, as *Wrong* underscores in bold text, its

[55] Salle, "The Petit Cinema," 144.
[56] For extended discussion, see: Jeff Wall, "Marks of Indifference: Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art" in *The Last Picture Show*: *Artists using Photography, 1960-1982,* ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), 32-44.
[57] Ibid, esp., 42, 44. Wall notably cites Ed Ruscha's "utilitarian and perfunctory" images as exemplary of photo-conceptualism's of 'impersonalized' amateurism.

results are potentially throwaway. Whilst not an entirely dispassionate process, the act of taking snapshots arguably also doubles the distanced perspective of the tourist-as-outsider. The implications of such ideas our current understanding of conceptual photography will be examined more fully in my final chapter, in specific relation to the figure of the countercultural tourist.

This aspect of Baldessari's work (and teaching) has chiefly been discussed in terms of its formative influence on 'The Pictures Generation,' who emerged in the late 1970s. The collective name given to these artists, many of whom were Baldessari's former students, originates from Douglas Crimp's 1977 *Pictures* exhibition, held at Artists Space in New York. However, its common usage was cemented by a 2009 Metropolitan Museum exhibition of the same name.[58] Douglas Eklund, the curator, expanded the scope of Crimp's original show to include a loose group of artists, often referred to as post-conceptualist. This notion of post-conceptualism can be attributed to the pervasive characterisation of conceptualism as an art movement founded on the rejection of the visual, in favour of pure, dematerialized ideas. In other words, a stance at odds with Baldessari's post studio approach. In addition to his image-gathering field trips, Baldessari frequently used photographic images as creative prompts for his students and encouraged them to appropriate found photography from disposable or overlooked sources, such as print advertising.[59] In spite of his reference to conceptualism's supposed "near ban on visuality," Eklund thus cites Baldessari's interest in appropriating images from, or of the everyday, as a major influence on protégés such as Goldstein, Welling and Salle:

> His use of visual source material so ubiquitous that it had been overlooked completely, yet which mediates our understanding of the world. This was very different from Pop Art's introduction of coarse or vernacular images into the elegant and refined medium of painting; the borrowed images from

[58] Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).
[59] Ibid, 40.

> magazines and newspapers were to be used like building blocks that could be taken apart and put back together in an infinite number of ways.[60]

However, what Eklund crucially highlighted was that Baldessari's approach to picture-making was informed by the same detached approach associated with his New York contemporaries. Baldessari held the images he engaged with at a critical distance, enabling him to play with how visual representation mediates both meaning and experience. As Eklund asserts, this practice was founded on the principle that much like art, the world as we encounter it is already highly mediated.[61]

Eklund's attempt to distinguish Baldessari's concern with the image-saturated world from that of Pop adds a vital layer of nuance to our understanding of the artist's practice. By invoking this notion of conceptual distance, Eklund enables us to reconcile Baldessari's idiosyncratic brand of conceptualism with the art form's supposed ban on visuality. However, there is more to be said about the connection he establishes between Baldessari and Pop. Through its appropriation of the aesthetics and techniques of advertising, Pop Art of the 1950s and early 1960s drew focus to the individual's constant bombardment with the visual effects of consumerism. Although, it should be noted, a number of contemporary critics saw this as a celebratory embrace of a central aspect of the Post Second World War American experience, rather than a critical commentary.[62] Baldessari's selection of less overtly manipulated (and manipulative) but still ultimately mediated photographic materials and strategies can be thought to take this notion a step further, in a way that mimics consumerism's all-pervading, inescapable presence. This notion of the total commodification of human culture and activity gained traction during the countercultural Sixties, in particular via the influence of Herbert

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid, 24.
[62] For extended discussion: John Roberts, "Warhol's 'Factory': Painting and the Mass-Cultural Spectator" in *Varieties of Modernism*, ed. Paul Wood (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 339-362.

Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1964).[63] As the title suggests, Marcuse argued that consumerism led to the creation of false needs which permeated every aspect of the contemporary human condition, leading to a one-dimensional form of human existence.

The argument I am proposing is not radically different from the one Eklund sketches out in relation to the pictures generation. However, what I wish to challenge is this tendency to compartmentalise Baldessari's interest in vernacular images in terms of its influence on a subsequent generation of artists, as though it signalled a transitional, *post* conceptual moment, rather than a central element of his practice from the 1970s onwards. My contention is that prior to the later work of his Post Studio protégés and their migration to New York, Baldessari was already engaged in going beyond Pop's acknowledgement of the image-saturated nature of a consumer-driven world, to instead reflect the inescapable structures of consumerism. When considered in this way, the artist's appropriation of the everyday and the vernacular can be seen to reveal not just a concern with 'imaging making' but an interest in the mediated experience of contemporary life, that is one shaped totally by the structures and apparatus of consumer capitalism, as Marcuse proposed.

The locations Baldessari selected for student field trips appear to share a common impulse, including those ostensibly determined via chance procedures—after all, there is still a degree of choice involved in selecting the closest (and likely 'best') site of interest to a dart freely thrown at a map. Whilst many of these were Los Angeles landmarks, as popular urban sites they also inevitably connected with elements of everyday, consumer-driven life. Forest Lawn, for example, was held up as a case study in consumerism's invasion of the way in which contemporary American society processed the

[63] Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society,* (London: Routledge, 2002). It is worth mentioning that Maurice Stein was highly influenced by Marcuse. Schnapp identifies Stein's attempts to hire Marcuse as the tipping point which lead to his eventual firing from CalArts in 1972 (the Disney trustees did not approve of this appointment). Schnapp, "Blueprint for a Blueprint," 7.

end of life and grieving. This vast, pristine cemetery inspired Jessica Mitford's exposé of the funeral industry, *The American Way of Death* (1963), as well as the Folk singer-songwriter Tom Paxton's *Forest Lawn* (1970), which dealt with similar themes on the increasing commercialisation of death.[64]

When considered in relation to the contemporaneously popular notion of consumerism's all-pervading influence, Salle's recollection of his classmates playing soccer with a chicken carcass takes on significance beyond that of a mere absurdist gesture. The Farmers Market is often thought to be a way of circumventing consumerism by buying directly from producers. However, as it was battered around the stalls, the carcass' status as a disposable commodity was reinforced, and then again as it was unceremoniously dumped next to that bastion of American Capitalism: a fast food franchise. Thought of in this way, the action bears a resemblance to a later work by another California based-artist, Jeffrey Vallance. *Blinky the Friendly Hen* (1978) [Fig.2.19—20], consisted of the artist purchasing a frozen chicken from a Ralph's supermarket, which he then reverently buried in a pet cemetery, documenting each step of this process with photographs and receipts. Both gestures have potential connotations of a sense of alienation from food's natural sources. While Vallance's *Blinky* reminds consumers that supermarket meat was once an animal, Baldessari's dumped carcass appears to destabilize the distinction between chicken sold as 'farm fresh' from the deep-fried kind. Whether Vallance was championing vegetarianism, or mocking our over-attachment to certain kinds of animals is ambiguous, as is whether Baldessari was attempting to skewer the pretensions of 'bougie' shoppers. However, it could also be claimed that both acts were nothing more than "irreverence veering off into smart-assedness"—with their shared ludicrousness making it unclear quite how seriously to take either gesture.[65]

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[64] Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death,* (London: Hutchinson, 1963); Tom Paxton, *Forest Lawn*, Elektra, 1970, 12-inch vinyl. Lyrics include: "Let the drum and bugle corps blow taps while the cannons roar,
Let sixteen liveried employees pass out souvenirs from the funeral store."

[65] Salle, "The Petit Cinema," 144.

In *Choosing,* Baldessari presents the game-player, and us as observers, with a series of unprocessed, unpackaged items: beans without the branded can. As has been discussed the game hinges on the notion of choice, but also the apparent sameness of the 'pawns' being played with, i.e. tokens of seemingly equal, low-value status. In relation to the contemporary discourse on consumerism one could read the work as a comment on the illusionary nature of free choice. The sense of boredom Kelsey alludes to with his description of the work as exercise in 'supermarket browsing' arises from the monotonous similarity of the goods on offer. However, within Baldessari's game we are able to see, even more clearly than in everyday life, that beneath the packaging everything is much the same. The metaphor does not just work for foodstuffs. It can be extended to other larger illusions of choice. Voter fatigue, for example, is thought to occur when candidates are perceived to be much of a muchness. In the context of countercultural politics, the real source of this problem was posited to be that all choices, whether political or otherwise, were part of the same, unchanging system. A central countercultural belief was that real freedom could only be achieved by stepping outside of this system, and removing oneself from all existing socio-political structures.[66] Self-sufficiency was a principal means of achieving this goal.

Coupled with this striving towards self-sufficiency (which manifested itself in the form of the communal and 'back to the land' movements) produce gained a particular loaded significance during this period, due to increased agricultural protests. Led by the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and the United Farm Workers, The Delano Grape Strike of 1965-70, called widespread attention to the unfair payment of migrant workers in Californian vineyards, through a series of strikes, marches, and boycotts. It is worth noting, given what has been discussed about the supposed lack of consumer agency, that the U.F.W. made significant gains via encouraging shoppers to

[66] Note, for example, Roszak's framing of counterculture as a form of opposition akin to Marcuse's 'great refusal.' Roszak, *The Making of the Counterculture*, 39-41.

boycott non-union grapes. That Baldessari decided to use green beans, rather than another vegetable, or indeed a non-food item, for his first iteration of *Choosing* is interesting in light of this context. One could argue that the 'string bean' has a particular association with the popular 1970s trend of growing your own, which filtered down from the communes to gain wider appeal. Green beans are easy to grow, even on small patches of land, and have a long period of harvest, lending themselves well to small hold farming. As John Seymour, a well-known champion of the movement and author of *The Complete Book of Self-Sufficiency* (1976), put it, green beans are "a brilliantly productive 'aerial' crop."[67]

The photographic handling of the beans subtly juxtaposes with any homespun, rustic connotations, relating to small-hold or communally grown produce, however. As I have discussed, the images have a graphic quality, not unlike commercial food photography, or the illustrations used in advertising. Despite conceptual art's supposed lack of concern with aesthetics, one could argue that this visual connection to the commercial realm is a recurrent feature in Baldessari's practice. Curiously though, the artist's frequent use of signwriting and commercial painting, as seen in works such as *Commissioned Paintings* (1969), is reminiscent of older forms of advertising that were less slick and heavily branded. This is a point of contrast to the glossy billboards mimicked in Pop, but the effect is arguably more subversive, due to the images' seeming innocuousness.

When we look at *Choosing* through a historically contextual lens, a set of objects that appears, at first glance, to be deliberately free of significance, becomes charged. In attempting to guess at their possible significances we, too, become players. The game is based on the artist withholding his strategies and motivations from his viewers/participants. I would argue that at its core *Choosing* is concerned with the extent to which individual choice can be thought to have meaning. What remains unclear is whether the work

[67] John Seymour, *The New Complete Book of Self-Sufficiency: The Classic Guide for Realists and Dreamers* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2003), 29.

is about freedom of choice, or the *lack* of ability to choose freely within a pre-conceived system. As I have re-iterated the work holds these points in tension. It could be read as an embrace of the individual freedom of choice made possible via emerging countercultural alternatives. That is, by attempting to step outside of the structures understood to constrain mainstream society in various ways, be this circumventing consumer capitalism through self-sufficient food production, adopting non-hierarchical approaches to pedagogy, or forms of artistic production that move away from unitary authorship. Alternatively, however, it could be interpreted as a critique of this very notion, by instead confirming the inescapabilty of the system it sought to counter.

As various critics of the counterculture have argued, the phenomenon's spirit of individualism and rebellion would eventually be subsumed and co-opted by capitalism, becoming yet another pre-packaged consumer choice.[68] This observation has been made by subsequent historians and members of the counterculture alike, as part of what has been termed a 'discourse of failure' surrounding the optimism of the Sixties.[69] In contrast, the arrival of the 1970s has been portrayed as a period of increased cynicism.[70] Baldessari's 'cool detachment' from the world which he drew on can arguably be said to mirror this. Baldessari's decision to invoke the dynamics of play may offer us a clue as how *Choosing* is best understood. Whilst Marcuse posited that all aspects of the contemporary human experience had been co-opted by capitalism, via the all-pervading effects of consumer culture, the philosopher prophesized a potential route to freedom in the form of the 'great refusal': a total dismantling and rejection of establishment tradition, as well as society's structuring around work and production.[71] In his 1969 "Essay on Liberation," Marcuse located this strategy in a ludic mode of engagement in which, "the

[68] The Diggers' 'Death of Hippie parade of Oct 1967 was intended as a protest against this threat. Bradford D. Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street: Politics and Public Performance in 1960s America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 114-117.
[69] For summary see: Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest,* 1-10.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man.*

hatred of the young bursts into laughter and song, mixing the barricade and the dance floor, love play and heroism."[72] Thus, as I go on to unpack, Baldessari's use of humour and play can be understood to have particular contextual relevance, related to countercultural attempts to make real Marcuse's vision of a liberated society.

"All Play means something" [73]: Perspectives on Play

According to Eklund, Baldessari's Post Studio classes replaced life drawing with the rudimentary art activities of playing with images by pointing, juxtaposing and sequencing.[74] As Morgan and Kelsey propose, Baldessari's *Choosing s*eries can be seen as a demonstration of this re-casting of art as process of selection. The modes of assessment they describe ultimately rely on the subjective realm of taste. Kelsey, however, replaces 'subjectivity' with the more loaded term, "narcissism." Although he does not unpack his deployment of this word, its connotations reinforce the notion that matters of personal taste are a form of self-affirmation.[75] For Kelsey, the inclusion of the artist's own finger in the images underscores this. Diverging slightly from Morgan, his account of *Choosing* frames the work's 'dismantling of decision making' as a comment on the medium of photography. Quoting from Walter Benn Michaels, he asserts that the camera has historically always been "a tool of choosing."[76] In reducing the process of 'point-and-shoot' to a game, Baldessari, Kelsey asserts, emphasizes the basic principles of photographic picture making.

As these previous interpretations show, discussions of Baldessari's game of decision-making have focused primarily on the significance of the act of choosing itself, in relation to an art context. Less attention has been paid, however, to the dynamics of Baldessari's game, or to what the artist was communicating via his decision to turn the process of conceptual art-making

[72] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Beacon: Boston, 1969), 26-7.
[73] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 1.
[74] Eklund, *The Pictures Generation,* 41.
[75] Kelsey, *Photography,* 293.
[76] Ibid, 299.

into a form of play. Whilst I have already begun to carve out this additional way of reading *Choosing*, I shall now expand the implications of this discussion beyond this single work. As I shall posit, the game-play of *Choosing* sets up a reciprocal relationship between the conceptual artist and audience, via its paradoxical gesturing towards self-containment and open-endedness. Using Baldessari's employment of the ludic mode as model, I shall go on to argue that other conceptual works can be seen to establish a similar, utopian space of play.

Baldessari's game of choosing is both open-ended and self-contained. There is no fixed endpoint; the game has the capacity to continue as long as there are objects to choose from. The lack of a climactic conclusion to the piece, i.e. an image of the winning choice, would arguably allow for further rounds to be added—if not indefinitely, then at least until the original winner perished. As has been stated, the nature of play —if not the strategy or motivation of the players—was, however, constrained, having been determined by a simple set of rules established by the artist. These contrasting elements of Baldessari's game, its simultaneous self-containment and potential for expansion, have been identified as fundamental features of play. Whilst the paradoxical co-existence of these seemingly incompatible qualities bears further unpacking, the psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose work experienced something of a renaissance in America during the late 1970s, provides a neat summary of this notion. In analysing the developmental role of play, Vygotsky, writing in the 1930s, determined that all play involves imaginary situations, and rules that give them shape—or, as he asserted, just as every situation imagined in play is defined by rules, all play involving rules constructs an imaginary situation.[77]

As a viewer we passively watch the selection process of *Choosing* play out. Baldessari's photographic documentation captures the game in action but,

[77] Note date of first English translation by Cole, a proponent of CHAT, a school of psychology informed by Vygotsky: Lev Vygotsky, "The Role of Play in Development" in *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes,* ed. Michael Cole et al., (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 95-96.

there is no opportunity for us to take part. As shall be highlighted, there are examples of conceptual as art play that invite a more direct and active role. However, the participant figure of Baldessari's *Choosing* arguably functions as a symbolic stand-in for the newly active conceptual 'viewer.' Thus, it is my contention that reading the work in this way has larger implications for our understanding of conceptualism as a whole, in terms of establishing its intrinsic utopianism, akin to that of other countercultural activities. The increased tendency towards participatory practices which occurred during this period has already been outlined by art historians such as Claire Bishop and Anna Dezeuze. Whilst both scholars discuss aspects of direct relevance to the account I am offering, their focus and approach are subtly distinct. Before proceeding to provide a historically contextual account of the dynamics of play, it is therefore necessary to situate myself in relation to these authors.

The Community of Play: Participatory Art as a form of Social Engagement

Bishop's writing on participation has centred around social dynamics and the politically charged potential of the spectatorial model they purport to establish. Beginning with her 2006 essay for *Artforum,* Bishop has attempted to account for art's 'social turn' in the late 1990s, by charting historic precedents for the artistic "appropriation of social forms" that proliferated during this period.[78] Notably, two of the key works she cites, Allen Ruppersberg's *Al's Café*, 1969, and Tom Marioni's *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*, 1970, provide the principal focus for my next chapter. Both were concerned with the creation of communal space, which, as I address, can be understood to function on multiple levels. However, Bishop's declared scope is broader than works like these, which are occasionally reductively categorised as forms of interactive installation art. Instead, via her edited volume *Participation* (2006), and subsequent book

[78] Claire Bishop, The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents, *Artforum*, 44, no.6 (2006):178-183; Claire Bishop, "Introduction: Viewers as Producers" in *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art,* ed. Claire Bishop, (London: Whitechapel, 2006),10-17; Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso: 2012).

Artificial Hells (2012), she attempted to outline the history of participatory practices in broader terms, identifying collaborative and communal impulses in art-actions dating from the early twentieth century onwards.[79]

Bishop considers the participatory impulses of art from the 1960s-70s within a larger continuum of concern with the elision of art and life, as well as the collaborative dimension of social experience. She identifies two divergent paths within this continuum. The first retained the traditional notion of authorial ownership, whilst establishing an antagonistic relationship between author and audience. Her model is informed by Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty," outlined in his 1938 *The Theatre and its Double.* As she highlights, this form of participation was based on provocation, as well as a collapsing of the distinction between art spaces, and non-art spaces. She cites Dada's move from the enclaves of cabaret halls to the city streets during the 1920s as a formative example of this. As she states, the second participatory tradition she traces is a de-authored one, which instead focused on the creative power of the collective. As a point of contemporaneous contrast to Dada, she cites mass soviet spectacles, such as The Storming of the Winter Palace (1920), which she claims, "sublated individualism into propagandistic displays of collectively."[80] Both strands Bishop unpacks focus on participation in terms of a form of engagement which, if not enacted publicly, or as part of a group, can at least be visually perceived by others. Spectatorship plays a central role in the participatory model she examines. Thus, her focus is less concerned with participation as a physical action, but with its implications on in-the-world social dynamics and relations. However, her position is notably a critical one. In *Artificial Hells,* she mounts a sustained challenge to the notion that this type of practice has a lasting emancipatory effect on its participants, or social conditions at large.

The principal difference between my proposed notion of conceptual-art-as-play and the participatory practices outlined by Bishop is that my focus is on a

[79] Ibid.
[80] Bishop, "Viewers," 10.

purely conceptual form of engagement. The participatory play dynamics under consideration here relate to a more individualised, reciprocal, back-and-forth, between the artist and would-be viewer– be that a literal relationship, where the viewer is prompted to conceptually complete the work or, as in the case of Baldessari's *Choosing,* where they are to visually follow play-in-action. Works that feature physical involvement, on the part of audience, or emphasize the physical proximity of the artist, thus creating a shared sense of space, thus fall outside of the scope of my discussion. A historically contextualised account of works that better fall into this category is provided in the following chapter. These works, by artists such as Ruppersberg, Marioni, and Barbara Smith might more appropriately be described as conceptual *performance,* a form of conceptual art concerned with "idea-oriented situations." [81]

Although I do not contest the larger lineage of participatory practices Bishop traces, my concern has been to explore their manifestation in conceptual art of the Sixties in contextually specific terms. The notion of participatory engagement I am proposing is one with larger socio-cultural significance, particular to countercultural America, and related to what Marcuse described as the 'new sensibility.' This is where the specificity of play as a mode of engagement becomes crucial. Play establishes a series of distinct and special conditions. In my discussion thus far a shared understanding of play has been assumed. *Choosing's* resemblance to, and self-declaration as, 'a game for two players' has made this possible. Little interrogation of the term itself is required for the average viewer to recognise its semblance to a structured form of game-playing. This is consistent with the way play is commonly defined: as the conduct or action which occurs within a game.[82] In other words, because *Choosing* purports to be a game, it can be taken as a given that the work contains an element of play. However, as I go on to examine,

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[81] Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy: A Memoir by Tom Marioni* (San Francisco, CA: Crowne Point Press, 2007), 104.
[82] *Merriam-Webster,* s.v. "play," accessed Aug 28, 2017 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/play

play has more conceptual complexities than this definition implies. As I posit, play's utopian potential allowed it to emerge as a countercultural strategy of resistance to the contemporary mainstream.

Play, understood simply as action within a game, is arguably almost interchangeable with participation. Even in single player games, the individual is a participant in the game's structure. However, whilst participation refers to being part of something (the action or fact of having or forming, or sharing) play carries layers of additional significance that go beyond the notion of mere involvement.[83] Not all play occurs with a game-like structure of participatory action—at least not in an immediately identifiable sense. Play, after all, is also associated with a child's seemingly unconstrained imaginings. Thus far, my analysis of Baldessari's *Choosing* has focused heavily on situating the work within the immediate circumstances of its production: the artist's creative-teaching practice and the counterculturally charged environment of CalArts where, in its move away from didacticism, the pedagogical approach was arguably closer to play. In order to expand my analysis, a more nuanced understanding of the term itself is required, to account for its varied and complex meanings, as well as its broader socio-culturally particular significance. In outlining common properties that unite play in its ostensibly diffuse forms, I will therefore establish a means through which to identify the ludic potential of the conceptual project at large.

'Do-it-Yourself' Art or Doing Your Own Thing?: The Ludic as a mode of conceptual participation

Play is a more slippery concept than Merriam-Webster's primary definition of 'action within a game' implies.[84] The word has multiple connotations, some of which appear to be contradictory. Play is associated with recreation,

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[83] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "participation" Jul 07, 2017 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138245?redirectedFrom=participation#eid

[84] This is perhaps partially due to its uncertain etymology, the OED claims it may be cognate with the Middle Dutch *pleyen* (to dance, leap for joy, rejoice) but also potentially connected to the Old English *plēon* and related verbs such as plight (Peril, danger, or risk; (also) a struggle or battle.) *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "play" Aug 30, 2017 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/145474?rskey=dXTq4T&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid

spontaneous activity, frivolity and laughter, but yet also competition and strategically motivated actions. It is sometimes used in this sense in relation to gambling and financial gain, as in playing the system. The former attributes relate more closely to the word 'ludic,' when used in its strictest sense. Derived from the French for 'playful' and the Latin 'to play,' ludic is defined as undirected playful behaviour.[85] Recreation and spontaneity evoke other associations, with freedom, and a lack of practical purpose. Play is sometimes used to indicate an absence of earnestness, or as the antithesis to productive activity. Notions of competition and strategy appear somewhat at odds with this, but the word can also be used to in relation to performance, as in a stage-play, or the broader concept of 'play-acting.' Connected to this is an association with trickery and teasing, of one thing masquerading as another, or perhaps a masking of one's real motives behind an illusion of light-heartedness or triviality. Ludic, when given the suffix '-ous,' (i.e. ludicrous) becomes not just something pertaining to play, but also that intended in jest, in addition to the humorous and the laughably absurd.[86] The phrase 'many a true thing said in jest' is pertinent here, in terms of its relevance to play's use as a countercultural protest strategy. Abigail Solomon-Godeau's observation that the absurdity of Baldessari's *Wrong* has caused her to laugh out loud on multiple occasions, also springs to mind in relation to this definition.[87] Finally, although this is now largely outdated, the word play has also been used to refer conjuring tricks or magic spells, thus underscoring the commonalities between play and magic sketched out at the start of this chapter.

Dezeuze's work on participation provides a useful starting point for establishing the more contextually particular understanding of play as a countercultural form of engagement. Her account of what she terms the 'do-it-yourself' artwork, makes overt links to the contextual backdrop of the

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[85] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "ludic" Aug 30, 2017 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/110940?redirectedFrom=ludic#eid
[86] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "ludicrous" Aug 30, 2017 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/110945
[87] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "The Rightness of Wrong" in *Failure*: *Documents of Contemporary Art, ed.* Lisa Le Feuvre (London: The MIT Press, 2010), 30.

countercultural Sixties in which this practice emerged. She defines 'do-it-yourself' art as "a range of artistic practices that require an active physical and/or conceptual participation on the part of the spectator."[88] Central to Dezeuze's thesis is that the 'do-it-yourself' artwork requires the active involvement of the spectator for its completion, or at the very least, the would-be potential for this active spectatorial involvement. In the author's own words: "The do-it-yourself artwork is a practice that exists *only* through a potential participation. The verb 'do' suggests an emphasis on process and actions to be performed by an active spectator in real time and space, while the pronoun 'it' remains open, as the result of this process will be determined by each individual's unique personal experience." [89]

Whilst Dezeuze's notion of the 'do-it-yourself' artwork includes forms of conceptual participation, and focuses on the same quality of open-endedness central to my discussion, her account differs in terms of its grounding in subject-object relations, as well the work's dormant potential to prompt physical/performative action. As opening examples, she cites Yoko Ono's *Painting to Hammer a Nail* (1961) and Lygia Clark's *Air and Stone* (1966). As she argues, the plastic bag, elastic band and stone of *Air and Stone* require activation by the participant's hand and breath, and Ono's score exists as an instruction *to be* performed. What Dezeuze is concerned with is the intrinsic possibility for physical realisation contained within the works she considers.

Much like Bishop, Dezeuze accounts for practices relatively contemporaneous to her time of writing. She includes works dating from the late 1990s-2000s that invite forms of participatory engagement that closely resemble play. For example, Carsten Höller's series of slide installations and Gabriel Orozco's round billiard table *Carambole with Pendulum* (1996) and *Ping Pond Table* (1998), which features a lily-pad sprouting pond at its centre. Although she acknowledges precursors in Dadaist performance, as well as elements of

[88] Anna Dezeuze, *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1.
[89] Ibid, 3-4.

Futurism and Constructivism, she traces the origins of this impulse to the 1960s, due to the "significant development and expansion of participatory artworks" which occurred during this period.[90]

Dezeuze identifies play as a recurrent, even characteristic feature of the work she examines. In her chapter examining the role of play in relation to 'do-it-yourself-art' she opens by detailing Fluxus artist George Brecht and Neo-Concrete artist Hélio Oiticica's mutual interest in the philosopher Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923).[91] In this work, Cassirer proposes the existence of a 'mythical' mode of human thought, which pre-dates that of science and logic, in which the distinctness between the self and the other were less clearly defined. Dezeuze argues that for both artists this notion of the 'mythical' denoted a mode of perception characterised by an emphasis on direct experience over discursive thought. Brecht, she claims, was occupied by the individual's ability to oscillate between these two modes, and thus employed the use of symbols and in combination with material items, selected for their 'thingness,' whilst Oiticica frequently used dance to stimulate an immersive 'mythical' form of experience. As shall be examined, Dezeuze likens the conditions this mode of engagement establishes to the free but contained space created via play, in particular the kind associated with children. However, she also highlights its similarity to ritual practices.

Dezeuze's discussion of Brecht's and Oiticica's attraction to Cassirer's privileging of direct experiential perception highlights a number of important themes connected to the understanding of countercultural spirituality outlined in my previous chapter. The resurgent interest in magic was part of an attempt to reject logic and return to pre-scientific modes of perception—a state arguably equivalent to the 'mythical' mode proposed by Cassirer. His notion that the mythic was characterized by a less distinct boundary between

[90] Ibid, 4.
[91] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Vol.3, The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Yale University Press, 1957).

the self and that outside it bears a resemblance to the countercultural emphasis on universal oneness Tipton describes as "countercultural monism."[92] This link to countercultural thought is overlooked by Dezeuze. This is perhaps because her principal focus is on Fluxus, which has strong associations with Beat culture and zen spirituality, and on the work of the Brazilian artists, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark. Prior to this discussion, Fluxus and happenings have been the art form most frequently examined in relation to play.[93] I would argue that it is partially as a consequence of this that Conceptualism's ludic potential has largely been obscured. However, it is undoubtedly also due to assumptions about its earnest and intellectually driven nature, properties at odds with frivolity and play.

Moving beyond Brecht and Oiticica's interest in Cassirer, Dezeuze expands her account of the Sixties' concern with alternative modes of perception and the "human engagement in the world of things" to include Clark and Ono.[94] Her central thesis is that the work of these artists created an experiential space for spectators "between subject and object, mind and matter, and inside and outside."[95] It is here that she makes explicit a potential connection to play, via D W Winnicott's notion of the 'transitional object.' In his influential 1971 study on child development, "Playing and Reality," the psychoanalyst argued that infants first develop an understanding of their sense of self and their relation to the wider world through their interaction with 'transitional objects.'[96] Winnicott posited that the particular attachment infants form with certain objects, such as a favourite toy, enable them to determine their own bodily separateness, initially just from their mother. He argued that prior to forming these outside attachments, infants struggle to comprehend their independence from the mother's body, and vice versa. During the period of

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[92] Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 14.
[93]See for example: Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[94] Dezeuze, *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork*, 211.
[95] Ibid.
[96] D W Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, (London: Routledge, 1971).

attachment, transitional objects acts as intermediaries to a world yet to be established as beyond both themselves and their mother. Their role is intermediary precisely because this bond initially resides within the infant's immediate sphere of self-and-mother. They have the potential to act as a surrogate in the absence of their mother, as well as a means to explore the world beyond her. Thus, Winnicott claims, the infant's recognition of the transitional object as 'not me,' represents a developmental milestone, of equal significance to the recognition of the self as 'I,' of Lacan's mirror stage. Winnicott argues that the transitional object's function as an exploratory tool is part of a direct developmental process leading to individual play, and then to shared play at a later stage of childhood, and then finally to the shared cultural experiences of the adult world.[97]

As outlined by Winnicott, play is an exploratory activity. It firms up the boundaries separating the self from all that lies beyond it, whilst also serving as a conduit for the self's connection with the wider world, and other players within it. The notion of the individual-as-part-of-a-collective is one that I have repeatedly flagged up over the course of this chapter, in relation to the dynamics of Baldessari's *Choosing,* the pedagogical approach adopted at CalArts, and as a concept of key importance to the counterculture. Thus, this aspect of Winnicott's theory is of relevance to my own attempt to delineate how play functions as a thematic hinge, capable of linking conceptual art to the countercultural Sixties.

Dezeuze constructs a similar argument in relation to 'do-it-yourself' art. She emphasizes the concurrent proliferation of participatory art and the community-focused 'direct action,' advocated as means of political resistance by New Left activists and self-styled 'freak agitators,' the Yippies. These include demonstrations, sit-ins, teach-ins and community projects.[98]

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[97] Ibid, 1-34.

[98] Dezeuze references Stolz's argument that the level of interplay between politics and culture was an unprecedented aspect of the Sixties. Dezeuze, *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork*, 223; Matthew Stolz, 'Introduction' in *Politics of the New Left*, ed. Matthew Stolz (London: Glencoe Press, 1971), vii-xii.

However, I would argue their scope can be expanded to include other alternatives to mainstream traditions and culture—many of which have been highlighted during the course of this chapter. Surprisingly, Dezeuze does not explicitly reference the growing popularity of 'do-it-yourself' activities such as 'growing your own,' building your own home/community or publishing your own newspapers/press etc.[99] However, it is this countercultural *call* to action which provides Dezeuze with her main contextual comparison. The appeal for individual action was encapsulated by Yippie-founder Jerry Rubin's well-known slogan 'Do it!'—a succinct, and arguably compellingly direct variation on 'do your own thing.' As Dezeuze argues, 'do-it-yourself' art similarly impelled individuals to act, be this in a real or imagined sense. It is at this juncture of her argument that Winnicott's notion of the transitional object becomes of importance.

Dezeuze posits that through their appeal to participation, these artworks open out an impermanent, liminal space, similar to that temporarily occupied by an infant's transitional object, in which the boundary separating subject and object is less clearly defined. According to Dezeuze, do-it-yourself artworks are 'activated' via the spectator's physical or mental engagement. Their status as art lies less in their material value, and more in the potential space or moment of engagement they offer outwards. As such, they can be located within the wider rejection of art as an object-bound commodity, associated with conceptualism.

The process of activation Dezeuze describes is akin to the transformation which frequently occurs during certain forms of imaginative play. When children play, the significance of an object is often changed from one thing to another, via feats of imagination (not unlike the magical transformations thought to occur in certain ritual practices). The activation of the 'do-it-yourself' artwork, in which mere objects, become *art* through participatory engagement, thus relies on a kind of tacit agreement between the artist and

[99] Abe Peck, *Uncovering The Sixties: The Life and Times of The Underground Press* (New York: Citadel Press, 1991).

would-be participant. This reciprocal relationship mirrors the 'climate of trust' between infant and mother, which Winnicott asserted was a necessary prerequisite for the creation of the transitional object, and the conceptual space of play it subsequently opens up. Both the transitional object and Dezeuze's 'do-it-yourself' artwork require a suspension of disbelief on the part of all players, or, perhaps more appropriately, an agreement to 'play along,' and maintain a shared illusion to that effect. It is, therefore, through this reciprocal acceptance of the work's intrinsic terms of engagement, that the 'do-it-yourself' artwork can be thought to create a communal dynamic similar to that of play.

Conceptual Art: 'A Place to Which We Can Come, and for a While, be Free…'

Dezeuze raises two ideas which are of particular importance to my analogy of conceptual art as play. The first is that play can be thought to open out a separate conceptual space, which we might think of as 'game-space' or the 'space of play.' The second is that the creation of this space is made possible by all parties 'playing along,' in other words, by a mutual agreement to 'play by the rules.' Rules are of fundamental importance to play, with multiple theorists asserting that they are an essential and ever-present feature. One of the first to make this claim was the Dutch cultural theorist Johan Huizinga, author of *Homo Ludens* (1938).[100] This text, although not without its flaws, has been referenced in virtually all subsequent studies on play. However, new attention was drawn to Huizinga's work in the 1960s via sociologist Roger Caillois' *Man, Play and Games* (1961), which critically builds on his theories.[101]

Far from seeing play as a residual habit from childhood, Huizinga viewed it as a central aspect of the adult world, elemental to the foundation of human culture. He thus framed all cultural activity as the work of 'man-the-player.'

[100] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 1-28.
[101] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1962). Note its appearance of Stein and Miller's reading list: Stein and Miller, *Blueprint for Counter Education.* Unpaginated.

Despite the breadth of activity this covers, he emphatically asserts that "all play has its rules."[102] This includes not only forms of play which exhibit a clear, ordered structure, but also ostensibly chaotic 'free' forms of play, which can be said to more closely resemble the imaginative play of children. Huizinga accounts for this via the same notion of 'play-space' highlighted in Dezeuze's discussion of Winnicott. According to Huizinga, play is characterised by its separateness from every-day, ordinary life. In this respect, for Huizinga, the act of playing involves the creation of temporary self-contained worlds. These 'spaces of play' are structured by their own internal logic, that is, rules which all players must follow in order to maintain this sense of autonomy. Whilst in some cases these rules are pre-defined, for example, in games with a long established structure, in others they are created through the act of play itself. Again, this is via a "community of play," mutually agreed by its players, similar to Winnicott's 'climate of trust.'[103] In the case of 'free' play, the apparent absence of rules *recognizable* from the adult or everyday world enables its players to construct new, alternate ones. In such instances, the autonomous 'space of play' is thus partially created via the suspension or violation of rules that govern aspects of the external, everyday world. As a result, Huizinga crucially insists that all 'play is free, and is in fact freedom.'[104]

According to Huizinga 'all play is free,' because it is voluntary, superfluous and unconnected to the needs of everyday life. Perhaps more importantly, play can also be thought to be 'about freedom' because in setting up a temporary, alternative realm in which everyday order is suspended, a world of possibilities is made available to those inside its "magic circle." [105] In building on *Homo Ludens*, Caillois re-asserted this conception of play as a free activity, occupying a time and space separate from everyday life, but emphasised its open-endedness positing that all play is uncertain, as its results cannot be

[102] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens,* 11.
[103] Ibid, 12.
[104] Ibid, 8.
[105] Ibid, 20.

predetermined. Thus, as Caillois underscores, whilst play concerns the creation of self-contained, temporary and alternative worlds, these worlds paradoxically offer access to infinite possibilities.[106] As a result, play can be seen as a fundamentally utopian pursuit, due not only to its idealism but also its seemingly impossible nature. It is on this notion which both my analogy of conceptual-art-as-play, as well as its particular connection to the countercultural Sixties hinges. As I have suggested, Baldessari's *Choosing* has the potential to be read as a game which highlights the contemporaneous, countercultural emphasis on individual freedom. However, there is another conceptual work which arguably makes this link even more overt. This is Robert Barry's *Marcuse Piece* (1970) [Fig.2.21].

As highlighted in my previous chapter, Barry's conceptual practice engaged with the notion of impossibility. Thus, a suspension of disbelief or *leap* in sense-evidence-based logic is frequently required of those encountering his works. The artist often used materials imperceptible to the human eye, as in his *Inert Gas Series* (1969) and *Radiation Piece* (1969), or gestured to notions that were either too transitory or expansive to grasp, for example, *All the Things I Know but of Which I Am Not at the Moment Thinking; 1:36PM, June 15, 1969* (1969). As its title indicates, the latter of these refers to both the vast and unknowable contents of the artist's mind, but also to a contained, albeit small, unit of time, now in the past: exactly 36 minutes past 1 on June 15th 1969. In *Marcuse Piece*, Barry paraphrases the concluding lines from the philosopher's *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), to construct the following conceptual statement: "A place to which we can come and for a while 'be free to think about what we are going to do.'"[107] In its original context, this line refers to the space for thought and action which Marcuse argued would become available to all, once society was finally liberated.

Much like sociologist Theodore Roszak, whose *The Making of the Counterculture* was published in the same year, Marcuse argued that the

[106] Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*.
[107] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation,* 91.

repressive mechanics of industrialised capitalism (or the logic-driven, techno-bureaucratic forces that Roszak terms "technocracy") had suppressed man's real needs and desires.[108] In a crucial development which distinguishes *An Essay on Liberation* from his previous work, Marcuse goes on to claim that gaining collective control of the means of production would still not establish a truly free society. In other words, he challenged the validity of the solution originally proposed by Marx. Instead, building on his notion of the 'great refusal,' Marcuse posited that liberation could only occur outside of systems centred around mass production, in a space and time in which individuals could re-discover their real, philosophical needs. Within such space, individuals would be free from the pressure to "perform productively in order to earn a living"—or, in other words, liberated from having to *work*.[109] What Marcuse proposed then, was a society shaped by human activity which, I would argue, can be thought to more closely resemble play. According to the philosopher, in the absence of what he terms exploitative work (in distinction from the liberated kind), society would not only continue to function but progress, propelled forward by man's previously suppressed urges and drives. Man's innate instincts, he claimed, would motivate a solidaric effort to cater for the needs of mankind, as well as "to work for the creation of a sensuous environment."[110]

The line Barry appropriated from *An Essay on Liberation* was a response to a question pre-empted by Marcuse: in the absence of work, the activity which currently structures and defines contemporary society, what will people *do*? The answer given by the philosopher is itself a quote, taken, as he states without additional context, from a "young black girl": "for the first time in our life, we shall be free to think about what we are going to do."[111] It could be argued that simply the act of drawing on this particular source material, makes explicit the connection between conceptualism and the era's

[108] Roszak, *The Making of the Counterculture.*
[109] Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation,* 91.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

countercultural spirit of rebellion. Although Marcuse finished working on *An Essay on Liberation* prior to the events of May 1968, in his preface, he asserted that he optimistically saw the protests, along with the American Civil Rights movement, as attempts to make real his visions of a free society.[112] Roszak's account of the burgeoning counterculture also drew heavily on Marcuse, with the author asserting that this youthful opposition to mainstream society could be seen as evidence of the 'great refusal' in action.

I would argue, however, that *Marcuse Piece* highlights more than just Barry's awareness of, or potential interest in, a popular philosophical, and by extension socio-political, set of ideas. (It is worth re-iterating that Marcuse was widely read on college campuses during this period, as well as by countercultural dropouts.) Barry does not simply appropriate Marcuse's words wholesale, but instead adapts his text, crucially supplementing the quote with the following phrase: "A place to which we can come and for a while…" In making this addition, the artist adds not only sense of place to the philosopher's vision of liberation, but also a sense of impermanence, as alluded to by his reference to an unspecified—but crucially not unending—moment of time.

When shown in a gallery setting, *Marcuse Piece* takes the form of wall-text. As a result, the work seemingly designates the physical space where it is exhibited as a sanctuary from everyday life, where man can momentarily be free. Thought of in this way, *Marcuse Piece* appears to mark out the art gallery as a utopian, autonomous space—a notion tied to the sanctity and specialness of the modernist gallery. This interpretation is supported by Barry's adaption of the work for an exhibition mailer, dated March 30 to April 8 1971. Appearing before a list of gallery tour locations, *Marcuse Piece* has been changed to read "Some *places* to which we can come." [Fig.2.22] However, this reading runs counter to conceptual art's otherwise anti-institutional impulses. I would instead argue that in adapting this quote from

[112] Ibid, ix.

Marcuse, Barry designates art itself as a space where man can temporarily experience a liberated state. Vital to such an interpretation is the fact that the work is *not* site-specific. *Marcuse Piece* can be thought to open out this space, on a conceptual level, wherever it is encountered, whether within, or outside of, the physical confines of the gallery. This notion of a conceptual space autonomous from the physical reality of the world, where man is temporarily free to think and act, mirrors the understanding of play first offered by Huizinga. As stated, for Huizinga, all cultural activity bears the characteristics of play; thus, it is my contention that via *Marcuse Piece* Barry positions conceptualism as an art form which makes manifest this understanding of culture in its purest form.

As Barry's *Marcuse Piece* highlights, Huizinga's self-contained yet simultaneously open-ended realm of play provides a productive analogy for conceptual art's paradoxical stance on autonomy. Conceptual art, as it was conceived by artists such as Joseph Kosuth and Sol LeWitt (both associated with what I have termed 'orthodox conceptualism'), purported to be purely self-reflexive. Its central concern was supposedly the rejection of traditional, visual forms of representation. However, as is more obvious in practices such as Barry's, it can alternatively be understood as motivated by a desire to expand *beyond* the visual. In striving to achieve this goal, the conceptual artist instead presents the 'viewer,' with a more open-ended, expansive, set of imaginative possibilities. Conceptual art is supposedly 'about' nothing save its own internal concerns, and confined to the domain of art itself. Yet, the conceptual space Barry establishes is one opened-out and hints at the possibility of pure utopian freedom.

A number of other conceptual artists made explicit references to their works' fragmentary, open-ended nature, thus allowing for greater agency on the part of the traditional 'viewer.' In "Paragraphs On Conceptual Art" (1967), LeWitt implies that the conceptual artist's control over his work's interpretation is limited, and ultimately unimportant. He states: "It doesn't really matter if the viewer understands the concepts of the artist by seeing

the art……different people will understand the same thing in a different way."[113] Whilst this arguably indicates an, at best, neutral position towards his work's openness to numerous interpretations, Lawrence Weiner goes beyond LeWitt's seeming indifference. In his "Declaration of Intent" (1968) Weiner re-imagined the traditional relationship between artist and audience by replacing 'viewer' with the more active-sounding 'receiver.'[114] This notion of receivership transfers a degree of control from artist to audience, in terms of the work's potential means of realisation, be this in the subjective mind's eye, or more literal interpretations of his text-based statements. The conceptual 'author' simply transmits his open-ended gestures out into the ether, and his dominion over their manifestations is understood to end there.

The conceptual experience Barry posits in *Marcuse Piece* is seemingly a radical one, in which the viewer (or 'receiver)' is free and empowered to act—albeit momentarily. However, the declared transience of this state arguably gives the work an inherent sadness. The liberated space it establishes is fleeting, and its promise of action is deferred to an unspecified point in the future—or, alternatively, to a time which may never come: "we are free for *a while* to think about what we are *going to* do." This is perhaps fitting given the work's reference to Marcuse, and, by extension, its connection with the counterculture. It is utopian in terms of its promise of freedom, but also its fragility. It is worth stating that Marcuse did not view his vision of liberated society as a utopian 'no-place' (this being the word's etymological origin), but instead emphatically asserted its capacity to become a lived reality. With the benefit of historical hindsight, it is all too easy to dismiss the potential of which Marcuse speaks. We now know, for example, that countercultural expressions of 'youthful opposition' did not bring an end to technocracy, as Roszak postulated. However, what is crucial about *Marcuse Piece* is that Barry offers us—and it is notably a communal 'us'—the

[113] Sol Le Witt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 12-17.
[114] Lawrence Weiner, "Declaration of Intent," *January 5-31 1969* (New York, Seth Sieglaub, 1969).

possibility of empowered action. Moreover, in spite of its simultaneous allusion to temporariness, I would argue that this sense of possibility can be seen as eternal, or at least renewable, forever contained within the work's conceptual space.

As I have proposed, this reading of conceptual art as a space for potential action aligns with Huizinga's theoretical understanding of the element of play in culture. Such ideas are also intrinsic to the word itself. In addition to "free action," play's listed definitions include, "opportunity, or room for action; scope for activity.[115] Thus, play contains an inherent promise of a realm of possible action. As Roszak highlighted, the alternative forms of culture, as well as modes of living, proposed during the countercultural Sixties were viewed by many as pathways to a Marcusian-like state of liberation. However, more immediately recognisable forms of play were also employed to make defiant counterculturally-infused declarations of freedom.

Every day can be a Magic Carpet Ride: Countercultural Play as Room for Action; Scope for Activity.

At a meeting for the Vietnam Day Committee at the University of California in 1965, Allen Ginsberg suggested that protestors respond to any form of aggression by chanting nursery rhymes, or doing mass calisthenics. Rather than carrying political placards, he also advocated holding up signs bearing pictures of fruit. Todd Gitlin recalls another rally in Berkeley, where demonstrators spontaneously began singing The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*.[116] In response to increased police patrols in Haight-Ashbury, local activists put out handbills encouraging children to shoot water pistols at 'cops' [Fig.2.23]. These gestures, and others like them, are compatible with the popular emphasis on a return to childhood, in which being childlike, i.e. engaging with the world through play, was conceived of as a state of pure freedom. This notion, and its currency within the counterculture, was

[115] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "play."
[116] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), 210.

succinctly captured by The Byrds' via their 1968 cover of Goffin and King's *Goin' Back,* referenced in the title of this subsection.[117] Thus, Abbie Hoffman's 1967 attempt to levitate the Pentagon, discussed at length in the previous chapter, can be considered as much imaginative play-acting, as it can magical ritual.[118]

Whilst the playful gestures described above might appear frivolous, as Julie Stephens has argued, they functioned a countercultural strategy of resistance.[119] As she highlights, Ginsberg's seemingly nonsensical proposals had a rationale. He believed responding in kind to the establishment—that is, by using actions and language associated with traditional politics—signalled an acquiescence to its ultimate authority. Conversely, play-as-protest had the subversive power to undermine. It demonstrated a refusal to acknowledge the existing rules of the game, as well an attempt to offer creatively-driven alternatives. Thus, it provided a means to step outside of the dominant socio-political system. One group of countercultural activists made this notion literal. The San Francisco Diggers would take a large empty picture frame to their free events. Those receiving food or goods would walk through 'the free frame of reference,' leaving behind capitalism to enter a new world, free of commodification. Much like *Marcuse Piece,* this prop conceptually designated a temporarily liberated space. However, the intent was to demonstrate the potential for this to become a permanent living reality, just as Marcuse asserted.[120]

The use of play within countercultural protests distinguished their strategies from their New Left contemporaries, who adopted a more earnest,

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[117] The Byrds, "Goin' Back," *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*, Colombia Records, 1968, 12-inch vinyl.

[118] Ponderosa Pine claims his fellow New York organisers initially saw the event as an 'imaginative media project,' until Michael Bowen, a Californian, arrived with ideas, borrowed from Mexican Shaman, of how to actually make it levitate. "It Was 20 Years Ago Today.," Granada Television, June 1, 1987, television broadcast.

[119] Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24-48, 96-120.

[120] For more on The Diggers see: Bradford D. Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street: Politics and Public Performance in 1960s America,* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 86-124.

traditional approach.[121] As the Diggers' 'Free Frame of Reference' illustrates, it was a means through which countercultural 'players' were offered the opportunity to explore alternatives to mainstream society. The frame of reference was 'free' because those who crossed it were entering a play-space not yet fully defined—specifically, one without the organising structures of capitalism. This notion of discovering alternate possibilities through play shall be examined further in the final section of this chapter, in relation to the prevalent use of game-like strategies to open out multiple, open-ended approaches, or creative problem-solving solutions.

Un-games: Conceptual Art and Counterculture

Game-like strategies were used as creative tools in a variety of contexts and fields during the countercultural Sixties. As discussed, Stein and Miller advocated a pedagogical approach that re-positioned learning as a form of creative play. Their counter-educational model mimicked structures similar to an open-ended game. Via a series of diagrams and flow charts, individuals were offered prompts designed to enable their own learning. The blueprint's foldout posters thus served as both portable classrooms and educational gameboards. During the same period, architect and visionary Buckminster Fuller adopted game-playing as a strategy for solving global problems. Prior to writing *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969), in which he conceived of the world as an isolated spaceship with limited resources, Fuller developed a collaborative simulation game based around the same concept.[122] The objective of The World Game was in Fuller's words, to "make the world work for 100% of humanity…without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone."[123] This vast, lengthy game was staged at numerous

[121] Pine claimed countercultural protests attempted to replace their "excessive seriousness" with "playful youthful energy," and were informed by the fun associated with psychedelics. "It Was 20 Years Ago Today."
[122] Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth,* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969).
[123] "World Game," *About Fuller,* Buckminster Fuller Institute, accessed September 18, 2017, https://www.bfi.org/about-fuller/big-ideas/world-game

international locations, and attracted large numbers of young, ecologically-aware 'players' [Fig.2.24]. Game playing also became an increasingly popular aid for developing interpersonal relations. In 1972 Californian Rhea Zakich developed a game to facilitate better communication with her family. 'The Ungame' was, again, structured around a series of prompts, designed to stimulate free discussion and thinking. It went on to be sold as a pop-psychology/home therapy tool [Fig.2.25].

These games all utilized rule-bound structures in order to expand the realm of possibilities for their players. I have identified this same simultaneous sense of containment and open-endedness in my reading of conceptual-art-as-play. Whilst it may be initially difficult to reconcile orthodox conceptualism to the seeming frivolity and chaos of imaginative play, I would argue its resemblance to structured game-playing is more immediate. This is in terms of its emphasis on a pre-determined, systematic approach. The similarity of this to games where players' sequential moves are dictated by rules is perhaps most readily apparent in LeWitt's *Serial Project* (1966) [see: Fig.1.29]. With its series of geometric forms placed on a square grid, the work appears much like game-pieces on a playing-board. There is a clear sense of containment and order to the work, with the grid defining a specific space of play. Yet, as I argued previously, its horizontal and vertical lines also allude to capacity for its outward expansion.

In concluding, I wish to briefly return to Baldessari's *Choosing*. The games that have been discussed here all notably feature an absence of competition. This includes *Serial Project*. The Ungame was given its name precisely for this reason. Unlike numerous other games, the desired outcome was qualitative rather than quantitative. The aim was not to score points or accumulate winnings, it was to gain deeper insight into the self and others. A player's progress was thus harder to define in concrete terms, and any 'wins' less easy to measure. The same may also be said of *Choosing.* At its conclusion, neither party made any obvious gains. Moreover, there were *fewer* game-pieces in play then at the beginning. (The continued removal of green beans is

arguably the game's only clear objective.) Developed within a year of each other, both games can therefore be considered non-competitive and non-productive in a quantifiable sense—that is, there is nothing earnt or acquired through playing them which can be numerically counted. In this respect, the kind of play they engage in can be considered even further removed from play's conceptual antithesis: work. This is arguably contextually fitting given the countercultural rejection of the capitalist definition of work—that is, its situation within a monetarized system distinct from the liberated kind proposed by Marcuse. [124]

For Kelsey, Baldessari's interest in chance procedures connects his practice to the work-driven realm alluded to by LeWitt, via his analogy of the conceptualist art as clerk. Kelsey likens works such as the aptly named *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)* (1973) [Fig.2.26], to 'playing hooky.' His assertion is that in relying on chance, Baldessari fulfils his obligation to "record the results of his premise" in a manner akin to leaving the office running on auto-pilot.[125] According to Kelsey's interpretation, for all its apparent playfulness, Baldessari's approach to conceptual art-making thus remains a utilitarian pursuit, grounded in, and constrained by, the closed-off world of administration. To challenge this, and re-assert conceptualism's utopian engagement with the freedom and expanded possibilities of play, I would point towards another photo-series by the artist. In *Cigar Smoke to Match Clouds* (1972-3) [Fig.2.27], Baldessari attempted to re-create the shape of photographed clouds, via blown smoke. In the resulting images, the cigar itself is visually absent, the smoke-cum-clouds appearing as the artist's exhaled breath, directed at the photographic images beyond. The work

[124] This notion of conceptual art as play thus differs from Julia Bryan-Wilson's analysis of the Minimal and Post-Minimal 'art worker,' in which artistic production was conceived of as a radical form of labour in an attempt to align art practice with art activism and the era's labour movements. Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (London: University of California Press, 2009).
[125] Robin Kelsey, "Playing Hooky/Simulating Work: The Random Generation of John Baldessari" *Critical Inquiry*, 38, no. 4 (2012): 746-775; Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966," *Aspen* 5+6 (1967): Unpaginated.

invites the viewer to engage in an impossible game of spot-the-difference, that is, to compare one equally amorphous shape with another. In his multiple attempts to achieve this goal, Baldessari thus floats the possibility of reaching the impossible within conceptual art's autonomous space of play.

Whilst game-play was deployed as a strategy for real-world problem solving during the late 1960s-70s, as in Fuller's World Games, a number of conceptual artists engaged in a form of imaginative play, concerned with mimicking the spaces, roles and behaviours of the everyday, adult or "straight" world. Taking on the role of clerks, albeit in a very different sense to that proposed by LeWitt, they constructed play-spaces in which to 'play shop,' serving up, for participants-cum-dinning guests, the artistic equivalent of children's mud pies. The chapter which follows goes on to examine the communal, participatory dimension of such endeavours, with principle focus on 'communal consumption' in the works of Tom Marioni, Allen Ruppersberg and Barbara T. Smith.

Edible Utopias: Conceptual Art and Communal Consumption

Playing with your Food: Martha Rosler, Queen of Loveburgers

Now, you may say, the people who come to McTowers know what they're getting.

Maybe that's what brings em in.

But I didn't even know what they were getting, so how could they?

…So who says people get what they want? Who ever took a poll about McTowersBurgers?

So I began to think—why not be a little creative?

Martha Rosler, *McTowersMaid: A Food Novel*, 1974.[1]

In 1974, Martha Rosler embarked on a mail art project called *McTowersMaid* [Fig.3.1—3]. Made in the same year that the artist earned her MFA from UC San Diego, the work consisted of fourteen typed postcards, mailed to fourteen individuals from October to November. [2] The work details the journey of a woman who begins working at a large burger chain, the name of which immediately calls to mind its real-life, globe-conquering rival, McDonalds.

Rosler's McTowersMaid begins as an 'unwrapper,' charged with separating towering piles of patties. The pay is $1.25 an hour. In an allusion to those icons of American world trade, the Twin Towers, she likens this task to "peeling stories off skyscrapers."[3] After a year, she is promoted to grill-cook, where she earns an additional 50¢. There begins her transformation from subservient staff-member, to a subversive agent of change. This process takes her from daydreaming about the food's imaginative possibilities (she

[1] Martha Rosler, *McTowersMaid: A Food Novel*, postcards from Martha Rosler to Hal Gilcksman, Oct-Nov 1974, box 8, folder 8, Hal Glicksman Papers, 2009.M5, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 7. Format/Spelling as original.
[2] Later published in Martha Rosler, *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization* (New York: Printed Matter, 1978).
[3] The World Trade Centre opened in April 1973, Rosler's return address listed as New York.

also likens separating patties to pulling off the layers a stack-heel shoe and picking at a thick dinosaur scab), and a critical questioning of its contents and origins ("What's in this stuff?" She *guesses* McTowers meat was once a cow and pictures an animal twitching with flies); to an increasingly daring series of culinary interventions (starting with spices, before introducing pot, magic mushrooms and aphrodisiacs—hence 'flyburgers' and 'loveburgers'); before finally bringing about a McTowers mutiny on a grand scale. The work concludes with the manager being kidnapped, re-educated, and forced to unmask the giant "agriglomerate" behind the company. The final lines are: "We are preparing to fight. Workers' Power!"[4]

Rosler declares from the outset that *McTowersMaid* is fictitious; the work's full title includes the description "A food novel." As such, there is no ambiguity about the project's unreality; the boundary between art and life remains relatively distinct. In this respect, *McTowersMaid* differs from other works I examine in this chapter, as well as from other contemporaneous works set against the backdrop of commercial food production and the service industry. My central case study, Allen Ruppersberg's *Al's Café*, (1969), *was* a functioning establishment serving drinks, in addition to less traditional dishes of food/art, while Bonnie Sherk actually *did* the work of a cook and waitress for the duration of *Short-Order Cook* and *The Waitress,* 1973-74 [Fig.3.4—5]. Julia Bryan-Wilson has described this work, which took place at a San Francisco doughnut shop, as "hushed or inverted drag" because it involved the performance of an overlooked, everyday role.[5] In crucial distinction from Rosler's *McTowersMaid*, however, Sherk's 'character' did not 'break out,' and performed her duties as any dutiful worker would.

In line with Bryan-Wilson's reading, I would suggest it is possible to view these works as play-acts, with the artists 'dressing up,' or adopting, their

[4] Rosler, *McTowersMaid,*14; For an extended discussion of the radical potential of labour as art (and art as labour) within feminist practices see: Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (London: University of California Press, 2009), 127-172.
[5] Julia Bryan-Wilson, "To Move, To Dress, To Work, To Act: Playing Gender and Race in 1970s California Art," in *State of Mind: New California Art Circa 1970,* ed. Constance Lewallen and Karen Moss, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 203.

respective roles of café owner and server. For Sherk, donning the "cultural costume" of a diner-waitress—a black-and-white nylon uniform and a kitsch bouffant wig—was of particular symbolic importance.[6] In doing, this both Sherk and Ruppersberg engaged with whom they came into contact in a reciprocal dynamic: by behaving like service providers, their 'participants,' in turn, behaved like customers. As Rachel Federman has observed, "to enter into Al's Café was, in a sense, to play at being a customer."[7] However, it is worth reiterating that participants in these works actually *were* customers, many of whom were unaware of their involvement in an art-game. This is particularly true of Sherk's *The Waitres*s, as the artist's intervention in the everyday life of a working diner was undetectable to the casual observer. These works therefore contained an element of both play and reality. They can be viewed as acts of mimicry or parody, which resist clear interpretation as an appreciation of American dining culture, or alternatively, as a subversion of its food and service industries. This ambiguity will be examined in the first section of this chapter, "Chewing up Amerika," which contextualises such works in relation to the countercultural concern with creating food and dining alternatives, an endeavour that can be understood as part of a broader challenge to dominant American culture and societal norms. These sites will also be examined in terms of their significance as spaces where like-minded individuals could gather, communicate and exchange ideas.

Just as Sherk constructed and performed the archetypal diner waitress, Rosler's *McTowersMaid* initially plays along with her role as an all-American fast food worker. She assumes the stereotypically cheery uniform of white and yellow, complete with suspenders, "perky" paper cap, kitschy rick-rack embroidery, and, at first, complies with the servitude expected of those in the low-paid service industry. There are rules in place and a strict order to

[6] Ibid.
[7] Rachel Federman, "Express Yourself: *Al's Café* in Context" in *The Taste of Art: Cooking, Food, And Counterculture in Contemporary Practices,* ed. Silvia Bottinelli and Margherita D'Ayala Valva (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press 2017), 223.

follow: patties are taken from the pile, grilled, then so is the pre-slit bun, the burger is then assembled, lettuce is added, and so on. However, it is crucially when she adopts a looser and more playful approach that the McTowersMaid begins to subvert her place within the corporate system—as well as the structure of the system itself. What begins as daydreaming soon turns into acts of creative experimentation. Food and its preparation is thus positioned in the work as an immediate, radical tool, capable of bringing about change. This idea, which I refer to as "Revolution Through the Stomach," again has particular countercultural significance. Along with the communal act of eating, certain foods and food practices were used to signify countercultural belonging, as well as a non-aggressive strategy to recruit the masses. As I examine, this notion of inciting revolutionary change via the stomach was mirrored in a number of contemporaneous artworks featuring acts of 'communal consumption.'

In her prescribed role, Rosler's McTowersMaid felt disempowered, even dehumanised. Her work is dull and laborious, the lack of variety and space for independent thought makes her feel "like a machine."[8] However, she soon realises she has a captive audience for creative ideas, in the form of the restaurant's clientele. She begins to sneak in spices—If she can't change the content of burgers, she thinks, she'll try and alter their taste. At first, she adds a sprinkle of basil and oregano, then Japanese Miso and Mexican chilli sauce, before experimenting with her own inventions, thus creating a truly global (or more representative in terms of its cultural diversity) alternative to McTowers' homogenized 'American' offerings—which, one might assume, was being peddled in branches throughout the country, and even internationally. Thus, the act countered both culinary and cultural blandness.

Experimenting with food, or more specifically taste, enables Rosler's protagonist to intervene on an individual level. Her agency increases, as does her culinary bravery. The benefits are not just a question of personal growth,

[8] Rosler, *McTowersMaid,* 6.

however. They extend to both customers and her fellow staff members. Even those on the lowest rung of the ladder, the unwrappers, get involved in her scheme. In a stereotypically Sixties mistrust of authority figures, her manager is the only person excluded. As she states, her motivation to act arose from concerns for the health and well-being of the customers. She worries about the threat of stomach cancer from the burnt fat in McTowersburgers. Moreover, as they passively consume whatever the corporation sells them she wonders whether they are even alive inside. This prompts her to create 'cooksburgers,' made with natural ingredients, and later drug-laced 'flyburgers,' designed to offer a form of nourishment, satisfying more than basic bodily need.

Through both the production and consumption of the protagonist's creations, the ordered corporate system, along with its staff and customers, were subverted from within. 'Revolution through the stomach' occurs in a literal sense, as customers begin to demand more "real food" and "(surprise!) cooked vegetables." [9] When their attempts to meet this demand are thwarted the workers stage a takeover. Other branches become involved, and their sights are set on the conglomerate as a whole. Rosler's narrative thus highlights the subversive potential of food and the re-organisation of its production. Her protagonist's culinary interventions bring about an increased consciousness regarding workers' rights, leading to higher wages and a fairer distribution of labour. To an extent, her customers participate in this by exercising consumer preference for her cooksburgers. However, via the introduction of global flavours, fresh ingredients, and, more obviously, the incorporation of mind-altering substances, food itself is shown to be a vehicle for widening experience. Rosler's 'queen of loveburgers' adds chemical enhancements such as pot, 'special' mushrooms, and aphrodisiacs, including cantharides (which elicit a physiological reaction, as well as a change in mood—as she notes they can be dangerous if misused) to the food of consenting customers. Late night visitors to the restaurant would probably

[9] Ibid, 12.

like "some special experience to come into their lives…why not through their food?" she muses. The hackneyed 'have a nice day!' is thus replaced with 'have a good trip!'[10]

Rosler's reference to drug-induced experiences was not exceptional. However, surveys of the era's artistic engagement with drug-altered states have tended to focus on visually recognisable forms of 'psychedelia,' works produced in direct relation to countercultural activities, such as poster art or psychedelic-environments, or those sharing a similar colourful and/or highly-patterned aesthetic.[11] References to hallucinogens within conceptual art and performance have often been overlooked or simply dismissed. I would cite Tom Marioni's *The Trip* (1972), which I examine in my concluding chapter, as an example. Although it is difficult to determine whether the limited discussion of the performance and its incorporation of marijuana is a symptom of East Coast bias, the prevalence of such themes within Californian practices can be cited as a contributing factor to the region's historic critical dismissal.[12] My concern here is with exploring how such works articulate the ritualistic and transformative potential of acts of consumption—be this of food or other substances. Although food established a communal dynamic among McTowers' staff, *McTowersMaid* is not concerned with the creation of a shared physical space in which individuals participate by engaging in 'communal consumption'—as many of the other works examined during the course of this chapter *are*. However, what Rosler's drug-laced burgers propose, for her imaginary customers, is the creation of a new, metaphorical and experiential 'head space.'

[10] Ibid, 10.
[11] See for example: Christoph Grunenberg, *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era* (London: Tate 2005). Despite its more expansive scope, Tate primarily defined the psychedelic experience in these aesthetic terms.
[12] Even in Karen Moss' recovery of the work this central component is given a cursory mention. Karen Moss, "Beyond the White Cell: Experimentation/Education/Intervention in California Circa 1970," in *State of Mind: New California Art Circa 1970,* eds., Constance Lewallen, and Karen Moss (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 141.

The notion of 'head-space' is of particular importance to the final section of this chapter, *Ritual Meal*. This section examines the way in which Barbara T. Smith's performed acts of communal consumption established a quasi-spiritual relationship between the artist and her participants, which I refer to as a sense of communion with the artist. The experiential space constructed within Smith's performances, has previously been understood exclusively in gendered terms. However, as I posit, it also has particular countercultural relevance in terms of notions of shared experience and communality. Rosler's work is often also read in gendered terms. It is perhaps because of her frequent categorisation as a 'feminist artist' that *McTowerMaid* is the most overlooked of the artist's *Service* Trilogy. This is not to say that the work contains no feminist themes. Rosler's maid undergoes what could be perceived as a feminist awakening. She discovers her own creative potential, becomes empowered, and, moreover, empowers others. Her culinary skill enables this. Thus, cooking is reclaimed from being an undervalued form of labour, associated with women's domestic work, to a creative, communicative tool. In spite of the restaurant's oppressive organisation, Rosler recognizes its potential as a space for liberation. Reflecting on her newly found opportunity to test her ideas—and thereby disseminate her edible, revolutionary ideology—she states: "at home there was just me, but at work I had a vast public."[13]

The work's subsequent publication alongside two other explorations of food and female servitude, helps further this gendered reading. *A Budding Gourmet* (1974) recounts the slavish determination of a bourgeois housewife to 'keep up with the Joneses via a cultivation of refined taste, whilst *Tijuana Maid* (1975) relates the subjugation of a lowly paid, migrant domestic worker. In *Work Ethic*, a 2003 exhibition at The Baltimore Museum of Art, Rosler's *Service* trilogy was interpreted as a demonstration of how the underpaid labour of women forms a vital component of America's domestic economy, and thus has larger, global ramifications. As curator Helen

[13] Ibid, 7.

Molesworth claims, Rosler's work illustrated the various roles cooking plays in women's lives: as a form of unpaid and undervalued oppression, as an aspirational activity, and as a source of pleasure.[14] However, due to the contemporary, countercultural emphasis on alternative methods of food production, as well as the embrace of what I have termed 'communal consumption,' I would suggest there is more to be said about *McTowersMaid* than this emphasis on its gender politics has previously allowed.

Food did play a problematic role in the lives of countercultural women. Much like Rosler's protagonist, it offered them the opportunity to become agents of change because, as I will outline, alternative methods of food production and consumption were popularly conceived as ways of bringing about broader, socio-cultural changes. However, it also served to re-inscribe traditional roles and a gendered division of labour. Although the countercultural interest in food alternatives gave rise to a number of female entrepreneurs and authors, many female communards found themselves confined to the kitchen, rather than offered a seat at the table.[15] Whilst I do not wish to disregard these issues, I have used *McTowersMaid* as a means to introduce broader contemporaneous debates surrounding food. My approach to Smith is similar, in an effort to extend previous analyses of her work relating to consumption beyond the vital but well-trodden ground of feminist critique.

This chapter is thus concerned with both sites of communal consumption and the significance of that being consumed—whether food or other substances. My central contention is that much like the conceptual magic or play-spaces examined in my previous chapters, in designating sites of communal

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[14] Helen Molesworth, ed., *Work Ethic,* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2003), 137. Lisa E. Bloom has argued Rosler's *Service* works need to be viewed as a whole, as their various subject positions expose an interconnected system of oppression, relating to food and identity politics. This is at odds with my position, as well as the work's original stand-alone status. Lisa E. Bloom, *Jewish Identities in American Feminist Art: Ghosts of Ethnicity Paperback* (London: Routledge 2006), 95.

[15] For an extended discussion of countercultural gender roles see: Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 2009), esp. 86-112.

consumption—that is, physical or conceptual spaces in which food, alcohol or drugs could be shared, both literally and metaphorically—the practices examined here can be understood as simultaneously inclusive and autonomous, in a way that mirrors the utopian project of the contemporary counterculture.

Although food frequently featured in conceptual and performance practices of the Sixties, few critical analyses have focused on its significance. Silvia Bottinelli and Margarita D'Ayala Valva's 2017 edited volume, *The Taste of Art*, provides one of the first forays into the relationship between art and countercultural food practices.[16] However, the term is deployed in a broader sense, rather than used to refer to the specific historic moment of the countercultural sixties. My intent, therefore, is to provide a contextually driven account of this overlooked aspect of work dating from the late 1960s-70s. Food and its production was a concern of particular political and socio-cultural importance during this period, giving its appearance within contemporary art practices an added significance. As I shall outline, within both art and countercultural contexts food was frequently used to engender both communal activity and individual bodily change, including the inducement of altered or expanded states of consciousness.

The Art of Drinking Beer: Conceptual Art as "idea-oriented situations" [17]

My focus is on conceptual works in which food functioned as a participatory tool of engagement, taking place on multiple planes: conceptually, socially and bodily. Through this use of food, the participatory relationship established between artist and audience can be understood beyond the participatory models accounted for by Claire Bishop and Anna Dezeuze.[18]

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[16] Silvia Bottinelli and Margherita D'Ayala Valva, ed, *The Taste of Art: Cooking, Food, And Counterculture in Contemporary Practices,* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press 2017).
[17] Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy: A Memoir by Tom Marioni* (San Francisco, CA: Crowne Point Press, 2007), 104.
[18]Claire Bishop, "Introduction: Viewers as Producers" in Participation: *Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Claire Bishop, (London: Whitechapel, 2006), 10-17. Anna Dezeuze, *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

This is not only because food has the capacity to engage all the human senses, including, most obviously, taste and smell, but because via the act of consumption food is corporally internalised. Thus, consumable artworks (or art with consumable elements) have the potential to become part of the participant, or even internally alter them, even if just temporarily.

The works I examine ostensibly bear little resemblance to earlier 'orthodox' conceptual practices predominantly associated with New York, and instead may be said to relate to a specific, regional iteration of conceptualism. My understanding of these works as conceptual is informed by the definition proposed by Tom Marioni, founder of the Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco (MOCA). Prior to MOCA's founding, Marioni was curator of the Richmond Art Center. Under his direction, Tom Wolfe once referred to it as California's "great outpost of invisible and conceptual art."[19] In spite of this accolade, however, Marioni was frustrated by the limitations placed on him by the local government that controlled the institution, and sought the opportunity to embark on a more radical venture.[20] When he opened MOCA on Third Street in 1970 [Fig.3.6], his intention was to create a public space for art that privileged actions over objects.[21] His decision to designate MOCA a 'museum,' was a deliberate attempt to legitimize art forms which were institutionally excluded, particularly in the relatively conservative Bay Area.[22]

In mission statements for MOCA, Marioni defined conceptual art as "idea-oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects."[23] This emphasis on 'action' is a vital component of his understanding of

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[19] Tom Wolfe *The Painted Word*, (New York: Picador, 1976), 95.

[20] This discontent was mutual; Marioni claims the institution were looking for reasons to dismiss him prior to his eventual firing in 1971. Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy,* 90.

[21] In 1972 MOCA re-located from 86 to 75 Third Street, above Breen's Bar, until its closure in 1984. Marioni would refer to Breen's as MOCA's saloon. For details of activities held there see: Tom Marioni*, Sculptures and Installations: 1969-1997* (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 1997), 6-7.

[22] As detailed in: Tom Marioni, MOCA history, draft, 1976/77, box 46, folder 9, 1995.46.9, MOCA Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley.

[23] See for example: Letter from Tom Marioni to Peter Stern, Vanguard Foundation, Oct 22, 1973, box 46, folder 5, 1995.46.5.76, MOCA Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley. Note further description of MOCA's objectives: "dedicated to the presentation of performance sculpture that can effect social change."

conceptualism, distinguishing Marioni and his MOCA associates from the majority of their East Coast peers. Many of the artists shown at MOCA might more appropriately be described as engaging in forms of conceptual performance. For example, although the Museum's first exhibition was dedicated to sound art, it featured a number of works with performative elements. Among other works, *Sound Sculpture As* (1970) featured Terry Fox hitting a bowl of water against the floor in order to produce a series of loud gongs, Mel Henderson firing a single shot with a thirty-calibre rifle, and under the pseudonym Allan Fish, Marioni urinating from the top of a step ladder into a steel bucket—a work he called *Piss Piece* (1970).

This emphasis on action is something that Marioni reiterated in the reflections on MOCA that featured in his 2007 memoir, *Beer, Art and Philosophy*: "My museum was for action art, actions by sculptors, and site specific installations."[24] His notion of "idea-oriented situations," however, is key to understanding how the artist defined such action-based work as conceptual, rather than merely performative.[25] Distinct from 'performance,' the word 'situation' implies the creation of not only a series of actions, but also a set of spatially and temporally defined conditions. This term was notably of particular importance to MOCA contributor Fox, who used it to refer to the performative space in which he experimented with objects and their materiality—as well as, I would argue, the sense of shared space and time that connected him, more directly, with his participants.[26] As Marioni asserts, this notion of a form of conceptualism concerned with the creation of spatial and temporal conditions lends itself to practices that resemble installation art, as well as art with a social or communal dimension. This is due to the importance placed on presentness and a shared sense of time and space.

[24] Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy,* 94.
[25] Ibid, 104.
[26] For extended discussion, see: Nikola Doll, "Situations" in *Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures*, ed. Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert (Berlin: Verlag Kettlar, 2016), 117-126.

Marioni's *The Art of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art,* (1970—) [Fig.3.7—8], exemplifies the artist's notion of an idea-oriented situation, concerned with the creation of shared social space. On a Monday in 1970, the artist invited sixteen friends to Oakland Museum to drink and talk. Marioni chose a Monday because it was a day the Museum normally closed. The work was not a performance, but instead a closed participatory activity. Thus, the social space Marioni created fostered a sense of communality and inclusion for those within it, but was discreet and autonomous from the world at large. Those excluded from this temporary conceptual play-space, that is, the general public, encountered the work via the debris the group left behind. Reflecting on the work Marioni states, "drinking beer was one of the things I learned in art school."[27] The artist's wry observation alludes to the often undervalued importance of open exchange and informal artistic collaboration. In designating beer-drinking with fellow creatives as an artwork in its own right, Marioni distilled and then elevated these overlooked components of the creative process. In doing so, he was referencing both the art historical tradition of the salon, as well as, crucially for our discussion here—the contemporary, countercultural emphasis on communality. This emphasis was expressed via festivals and mass gatherings, such as the Human Be-In, held in San Francisco in 1967 (famously billed as a 'gathering of tribes'), as well as the rise of communal living. As Timothy Miller charts, by the 1970s many city communes relocated to rural areas in order to establish self-sufficient countercultural communities, where individuals lived as part of an expanded family.[28]

With *The Art of Drinking Beer with Friends*, Marioni authored one of the first social artworks, establishing a legacy that would peak in the 1990s with the arrival of what Nicolas Bourriaud termed Relational Aesthetics, art practices centred around human relations in social space, where the artist acts as a

[27] Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy,* 93.
[28] Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999). For an account of the centrality of communal activities see esp, 192-224.

catalyst for activity.[29] A number of the works examined in this chapter can be understood as prototypes of this tendency, as well as examples of installation art or other participatory practices. Indeed, Bishop included a number of them in her survey of socially-oriented forms of participation. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bishop identifies the 1960s practices of artists such as Marioni and Ruppersberg as art which "appropriates social forms in order to bring art closer to everyday life." [30] Although I do not necessarily dispute this, my intent is to frame the works discussed here as a strand of conceptualism, using Marioni's definition of conceptual art as "idea-oriented situations."[31]

Marioni's influence as both an artist and curator cannot be overstated. Not all of the artists I discuss here share an immediate connection with the artist, or with MOCA. For example, when asked, Marioni could not recall any interaction with the L.A.-based Ruppersberg during this period. [32] However, the artist's particular understanding of conceptualism is employed here to explore a broader artistic tendency—one which, I would argue, is indicative of an expansion of conceptual art's terms from the late 1960s onwards. It is my contention that Marioni's proposed definition does not, as it may at first appear, offer a narrower understanding of conceptual art, based exclusively around action. It instead gestured toward the expanded possibilities arising from conceptualism's rejection of the traditional emphasis on object making. In other words, Marioni's position highlights the medium-blurring potential of an art form that claims to privilege ideas over objects—that is, works in which the concept, as a totality, is of greater importance than the means used to communicate it.

In the proceeding chapters I demonstrated conceptual art's open-ended potential, via its analogous relation to counterculturally specific notions of magic and play. In embarking on this study of communal consumption, I

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[29] Bishop, "Introduction," 10; Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les Presse Du Reel, 2002).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy,* 104.
[32] Conversation with Tom Marioni in the artist's studio, San Francisco, 20th June 2016.

intend to further highlight the utopianism of the conceptual project at large by reading these works as artistic sites (or "situations"), paradoxically characterised by both openness and self-containment. As alluded to previously, one might more readily perceive the 'magic circle' or 'play space' these works engaged in constructing, owing to their ostensible bounding by constraints of time and physical space. However, as I shall assert, they can also be thought to function on a conceptual plane. Thus, in response to a question posed to Marioni regarding his Museum of Conceptual Art: "is it a real place, or is it in your head?" I would venture we might say of these works, both—an answer that feels suitably countercultural.[33]

Revolution through the Stomach: Ruppersberg's *Al's Café,* 1969

For several weeks in Fall 1969, *Al's Café* [Fig. 3.9.i—x] occupied a storefront at 1913 West Sixth Street, in MacArthur Park, downtown Los Angeles.[34] This area was chosen by the artist for its low cost, and proximity to his former school, the Chouinard Art Institute.[35] It was thus a neighbourhood home to a number of artists' studios, as well the kinds of establishments cheap rent attracts. A halfway house was situated just next door. Ruppersberg has previously highlighted that this location resulted in a mixed clientele—publicity was limited to word-of-mouth, and guests were often walk-in locals.[36] The café was open weekly, on Thursday evenings from 8pm till anytime, according to the artist, up to 2am.[37] Its dining area was located on a mezzanine floor above street level. On entry, guests were greeted with a wooden and glass cigar counter. Behind there were advertisements for

[33] Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy.* 111.
[34] Ruppersberg has previously claimed the Café was operational for three months, other sources state it was only open from October 9 to November 13, 1969, Allan Ruppersberg and Frédéric Paul, "Interview" in *Allen Ruppersberg: Books, Inc*. (Limoges: Limousin 2000), 36.
[35] Ruppersberg received a BFA from Chouinard in 1967.
[36] On neighbours from the halfway house: "They would buy a beer or whatever…everybody was cool, so it didn't really matter why they were there, they were enjoying themselves, everybody else was there and it was all fine—until the white shirts appeared." Kadist Art Foundation, "A Conversation with Allen Ruppersberg about Al's Cafe, 1969 Hosted by Constance Lewallen," Vimeo video, 5:32, posted by "Kadist," Sept 27, 2011, accessed, October 20, 2017, https://vimeo.com/29648784
[37] Ruppersberg and Paul, "Interview," 36. Official opening hours were listed as 8pm-11pm.

cigarettes and ice cream cones, wooden lettering spelling "Donut Tree," and a calendar featuring the American flag. Adjacent to the counter were a set of stairs, leading up to wooden and metal-topped table seating. On the left hand-side there was a chef's counter complete with three bar-stools for 'singles.' The counter itself was decorated with frayed felt edging, standard diner accoutrements, such as large metal coffee canisters and display cases. The shelves behind this area –Chef Ruppersberg's domain—were lined with crockery, knickknacks, vintage signs and assorted memorabilia. Clearly visible in surviving photo documentation, a large Donald Duck and Micky Mouse head provided a visual nod to Chouinard's connection with Disney. In short, *Al's Café* looked much like a long established, all-American eatery—one filled with memories, and "nurtured for 40 years by a caring café-owner." [38]

The café's odd sense of age, and what Allan McCollum, Ruppersberg's LA contemporary, describes as its "hyper-familiarly,"[39] was partially fostered by its reclaimed fittings. The artist salvaged furniture from The Seahorse Inn, a former restaurant in the defunct Pacific Ocean Park in Santa Monica. Ruppersberg had formerly rented a studio in the derelict tourist attraction, which was originally intended to rival Disneyland. Ruppersberg also purchased items from a restaurant supply store. This included the menu jackets, which featured images of Yosemite National Park, specifically, El Capitan rock viewed from Yosemite Valley—Federman has observed, one of its most recognisable views.[40] The café's tablecloths were also a kitsch 'everyday plaid.' Even Ruppersberg's curated collection of "personal" clutter added to the diner's generic 'Middle-American' feel.[41] According to McCollum, the stage-set created by Ruppersberg seemed to timelessly date

[38] Allan McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg; What One Loves about Life Are the Things That Fade" in *Allen Ruppersberg: Books, Inc*. (Limoges: Limousin 2000), 8.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Federman, "Express Yourself," 216.
[41] Ruppersberg claims his work was influenced by his experience of "exploring LA as a kid from the Midwest," remarking on its sense of familiarity in the 1960s: "When I arrived here in 62 to go to Chouinard, it was still kind of a little Midwestern city." Allen Ruppersberg, interviewed by Alexis M Johnson, Artist's Studio, El Segundo, CA, Feb 09, 2011, 6. (Unpublished transcript kindly supplied by Johnson.)

from anywhere between 1925 to 1969. "Exorbitantly familiar," he claimed, "it was a place where any American would have felt at home." [42]

For the most part, *Al's Cafe* functioned much like your average, reasonably-priced, American eatery. A team of waitresses provided table service, and behind the restaurant's counter, Ruppersberg acted as chef/artist-*cum*-clerk and diner-manager. Customers ordered from plastic-encased menus, given to them on entry, and, in exchange for real money, were provided with coffee, beer and a range of freshly prepared "dishes." The "food" they were presented with, however, was something other than standard restaurant fare. Combining "natural," but not necessarily edible, ingredients, sample menu items included: "toast and leaves" ("from the broiler"), "branches, twigs and leaves," (Al's take on a BLT), "desert [sic] plate with purple glass," as well as the impossible sounding, "cotton covered with star dust." Priced at only a few dollars—for example, Ruppersberg's "small dish of pinecones and cookies" was available for only $1.50—all food/art was affordable and assembled on site. All orders could be supplemented for an additional cost.[43] As stated on the menu, "fossils are extra for all meals."[44]

Those who have written about *Al's Café* have remarked on the work's synthesis of physical and conceptual space. Positioning the work in relation to the artist's longstanding interest in narrative, McCollum referred to this as a consolidation of "real social space" with the "fictitious."[45] John Slyce similarly observed that the café, along with Ruppersberg's subsequent work *Al's Grand Hotel* (1971) was constructed on "a set of intricate actual and conceptual armatures." According to Slyce, this real and conceptual framework acted as a support for the café's "adjusted vernacular image…showing, through the interaction of participants, the real as a site of

[42] McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg," 8.
[43] Nothing was priced at more than $2, 'real' (i.e. consumable) coffee was listed as $-.15, and beer $-.45.
[44] Allen Ruppersberg, Al's Café Menu, 1969. Federman's claims this line relates to the café's LA location, via an allusion to the La Brea Tar Pits. Federman, "Express Yourself," 220.
[45] Allan McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg,"19.

the fictional, and in turn, fiction's ability to animate reality."[46] Such descriptions seemingly posit the notion that *Al's Café* can indeed be read as a space of play. Yet, for the duration of its existence, it functioned as a real, working establishment—or rather, as Ruppersberg has stated, as real a business as he cared to make it.[47]

Chewing up Amerika: *Al's Café* as Appreciation/Parody of 'Straight' Culture

I am a child of Amerika

If I'm ever sent to Death Row for my 'revolutionary crimes,' I'll order as my last meal: a hamburger, French fries and a coke.

Jerry Rubin, *Do-it!*, 1970 [48]

Accounts of *Al's Café* oscillate between situating Ruppersberg's diner within an imagined location that is either generically and anonymously American, and one that is specifically Los Angelino, with the nearness of Hollywood frequently cited as the hinge that made this simultaneity possible.[49] The artist's creation has frequently been conceived as a movie-set, designed to function as a simulacrum of the archetypal American diner. McCollum's recollections have been especially influential in establishing this reading, owning to his direct experience of the work, but also the vividness of his description: "This was *Al's Café,"* he states, "the American café of all American cafés."[50] In likening it to a film-set, McCollum aligns the work with the artist's interest in a particular way of capturing landscapes or locations. This type of picture-making employed for the purposes of tourist postcards, stock images and location shots, which Ruppersberg saw as neutral, having

[46] John Slyce, "Something Out of the Ordinary" in *Allen Ruppersberg: You and Me or the Art of Give and Take*, ed. Constance Lewallen, (Zurich: RP Ringier 2009), 95
[47] Ruppersberg and Paul, "Interview," 36.
[48] Jerry Rubin, *Do-it!: Scenarios of the Revolution* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1970), 12.
[49] Ruppersberg's discussion of LA's particular vernacular "plainness" provides an alternative account for this. Referring to the city's generically American feel, he stated, "…gooky diners, just the whole nature of LA was vernacular." As he goes on to note, this homogenized version of American culture was once unique to LA, but has now spread nationally and internationally. Ruppersberg, interview. 6.
[50] McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg," 8.

been, "taken for anybody and by nobody," that is, by anonymous photographers.[51] Devoid of 'decisive moments,' such photographs captivated Ruppersberg precisely because he viewed their ostensive emptiness as pregnant with possibilities, evoking an imaginary sense of space in which stories were *about to* happen. I shall return to this notion, that the intent of *Al's Café* was to create just such a site in which action could unfold.

In contrast to McCollum's apparent implication that *Al's Café* could be found anywhere in America, subsequent authors have highlighted elements that relate it to its actual location in late-1960s Los Angeles, California, drawing on state-specific aspects beyond the symbolic function of Hollywood. Along with the images of Yosemite featured on its cover, Federman has observed that items on Ruppersberg's menu "engage with the region's singular topography." [52] The gastronomic adventures on offer promised trips to (in)edible landscapes ranging, "from the desert to the sea." According to Federman, this phrase, alluding to the varied terrains of Southern California, was frequently used by Ruppersberg, and was borrowed from the well-known opener of long-time Los Angeles' newscaster, Jerry Dunphy.[53] She also notes regionally specific references to John Muir, first president of The Sierra Club, which helped establish Yosemite's status as a National Park (honoured by the "John Muir Salad"), and conversely to Johnny Cash's destruction of a section of the Los Padres National Forest, which came to light a few months prior to the café's opening (commemorated by Ruppersberg with, "Stimulated Burnt Pine Needles a la Johnny Cash Salad Served with a Live Fern").[54] The delicate ecological balance required to permit access to such landscapes without simultaneously destroying them is a debate which Federman takes time to contextually unpack (one I would argue there is little purpose in simply repeating). However, via the latter dish's allusion to flames,

[51] Ibid.
[52] Federman, "Express Yourself," 217.
[53] Ibid. According to Federman, Dunphy's complete line was: "from the desert to the sea to all of Southern California."
[54] Stanley Williford, and Howard Hertel, "Singer Johnny Cash Pays $82,000 to U.S. in Fire Case," *Los Angeles Times,* July, 3, 1969, 3.

she also connects Ruppersberg's reference to the destruction/attempt to protect California's natural landscapes to "Los Angeles' capacity for self-immolation," citing the lingering memory of the Watts Riots.[55]

Putting aside the geographical specificity of *Al's Café* that Federman proposes, I wish to linger on McCollum's suggestion that Ruppersberg condensed and hyperbolized the expected features of an American diner, resulting in the creation of an environment which was "familiar to the point of strangeness."[56] In doing this, the artist subverted a traditional, all-American experience, staging an intervention in mainstream culture that, I would argue, has strong countercultural overtones. Ruppersberg's attempt to replicate the archetypal diner, albeit to the point of exaggeration—via the deliberately generic second-hand fittings and overabundance of "personal" brick-a-brac—extended to his waitstaff. Accounts of *Al's Café* frequently remark on its "beautiful" team of waitresses. At least one of the servers, Jo Allen (wife of artist Terry Allen), was a model and actress.[57] Although being waited on by part-time actresses is an undeniable L.A. cliché, an attractive female server is arguably the expected face of idealised, American hospitality. This expectation was exploited in contemporary fast-food advertising, by Hugh Heffner's Playboy Clubs, which boomed during the 1960s, as well as by their later problematic love-child, the restaurant chain Hooters. Ruppersberg for his part, also played his role as proprietor. Positioned behind the counter, ready to greet his regulars, he wore a yellow-and-blue bowling shirt, embroidered with the title "Al Mgr."

Al's Café fits within an American artistic tradition of representing diners that includes Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* (1942). However, it has most frequently been discussed in relation to Edward Kienholz's *The Beanery* (1965) [Fig. 3.10]. [58] The to-scale tableau of West Hollywood eatery Barney's

[55] Federman, "Express Yourself," 219.
[56] McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg," 8.
[57] Terry Allen, interviewed by Paul Karlstrom, "On Everything: An interview with Terry Allen," *East of Borneo*, Nov 29, 2011, accessed Oct 25, 2017, https://eastofborneo.org/articles/on-everything-an-interview-with-terry-allen/
[58] This is likely a result of McCollum's influential account. McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg."

Beanery was first unveiled in the establishment's parking lot. Kienholz's facsimile provides a narrative snapshot of the squalid diner/dive-bar, complete with endless chatter and the pumped-in odour of stale beer and cooking oil. Patrons sit frozen, paralysed by the prospect of closing time, as symbolised by the replacement of human features with clock-faces. Behind the counter, Kienholz's 'Barney' listlessly reads a newspaper, its headline "children kill children in Vietnam," matched by the aggressive bar-sign above: "fagots [sic] stay out."

McCollum claimed that Ruppersberg made reference to Kienholz, not only via his living diner-as-tableau, but also his assemblage-like dishes, comparing them to miniature, [in]edible land art.[59] Thus, with his food/art Ruppersberg created work with the capacity to be consumed—if not in reality, then at least symbolically. However, *The Beanery* is pertinent to our discussion here because it highlights the symbolic importance of the diner as a space where American mainstream and countercultures repeatedly intersect. Barney's Beanery, located on Santa Monica Boulevard since 1927, acquired legendary status because of its mix of ordinary clientele with 'stars' from neighbouring Hollywood, the Sunset Strip, famous Beat and countercultural figures, and Ferus Gallery artists—as well as a future generation aspiring to these roles, including Ruppersberg and fellow Chouinard students.[60] Even Barney's 'ordinary,' or rather non-famous customers, were drawn from various neighbouring 'scenes,' resulting in an eclectic clientele. In addition to being a haven for alternative culture, Barney's attracted patrons with its menu of "pure American comfort."[61] The capacity for this type of food to fondly remind customers of home and country was hyperbolically encapsulated by a critical appraisal of the diners' burgers, dating from the 1940s. Positioning the quest for the perfect patty as an act of American patriotism, Richard

[59] Ibid, 8.
[60] For a detailed list of famous clientele, and infamous incidents, including Jim Morrison's barring for public urination and last reported sighting of Janis Joplin before her death in 1970, see: Domenic Priore, "The History of Barney's Beanery," *Barney's Beanery*, accessed Oct 27, 2017, https://barneysbeanery.com/about/.
[61] Ibid.

Sharpe concluded his glowing review: "A beautiful hamburger is as rare as a benign Nazi."[62] Sharpe's unwitting parallel between food and global conquest, was echoed further by his observation that the diner's take on onion soup was far superior to that of any French bistro; he appeared to be of the opinion that all cuisine improved by being thrown into the American melting pot. In contrast to *Al's Café* then, Barney's non-conforming clientele, be they beatniks, or subsequently members of the counterculture, were served traditional diner fare. However, as I go on to discuss, a number of Ruppersberg's dishes seemingly offered an opportunity to chew-up and spit-out, elements of mainstream America.

Barney's Beanery's co-mingling of the mainstream with the alternative, is further evidenced in the nuanced history of John 'Barney' Anthony's infamous 'fagots' sign [Fig.3.11]. Although the proprietor's personal homophobia was well-known, the sign was largely installed in response to police crackdowns on establishments frequented by homosexuals. According to *Los Angeles Times* journalist David Barry, with its heavily bohemian and countercultural atmosphere, "in the older crazier days" the sign functioned as something of an ironic joke. To customers "in such an advanced stage of social decay," he claimed, "gender seemed an unnecessarily picky distinction."[63] Whether viewed in this way, or as an attempt to appease police, the sign thus has the potential to be interpreted as a masquerade of "straightness," both in terms of sexuality but also, as the word was employed at the time, culturally conservative—that is, the culture of mainstream America.

The notion of the American diner as a site of cultural collusion has repeatedly been drawn on film and literature. As the real-life example of Barney's Beanery illustrates, this collusion occurs not only on a gastronomic level, that is, via the melding together of different ethnic foods to form an 'all-American' cuisine, but also via the diner's symbolic function as a gathering place for

[62] Richard Sharpe, quoted in ibid.
[63] David Barry, "A Night in at Barney's Beanery," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 13 1977, 80.

those on the fringes of society, and as a crucible for transgressive, or youthful acts of rebellion.[64] Pre-empting later countercultural quests for American authenticity, Jack Kerouac's Beat outsiders in *On the Road* (1957), were fuelled by homely diner-staples, apple pie and ice cream, which they ate "all the way across the country."[65] A pivotal scene in *Easy Rider* (1969) [Fig.3.12], sees its long-haired protagonists hastily leave a local eatery as its blue-collar regulars, including a cop, became hostile. The homophobia directed at them is ironically contrasted with the interest they garner from a group of teenage girls—highlighting the contemporary use of the word 'faggot' as a slur also extended to describe 'hippies.' In *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) [Fig.3.13], Jack Nicolson again disrupts the peace of a roadside café by forcefully insisting they accommodate his individualised order, in spite of the common-place rule prohibiting "substitutions." Nicolson plays a character who rejects his comfortable upbringing, and this defiance of the diner's standardised, but illogical, system is framed as another example of 'sticking it to the man'—an act not dissimilar to Rosler's creative disruption of McTowers' formulaic assembly line.

In using the American diner as the scene for his own, living tableau, Ruppersberg engaged in what can be seen as a simultaneous appreciation and subversion of mainstream American culture. As the above examples illustrate, the diner was a cultural trope well-equipped to enable this simultaneity due its position within, but arguably also on the edges of, America. This is also true in a literal sense. Often located next to highways, they frequently occupy in-between spaces, serving as temporary stops on the traveller's journey to somewhere else. As a consequence of this, clashes between 'locals' and 'outsiders' is a familiar plot device in diner narratives. The metaphorical implications of these kinds of liminal, on-the-road spaces, and the phenomenological experience they foster, will be revisited in my

[64] Andrew Hurley, "From Hash House to Family Restaurant: The Transformation of the Diner and Post-World War II Consumer Culture" *The Journal of American History*, 83, no. 4 (1997): esp. 1286-1287, 1300-1301.
[65] Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (London: Penguin, 1958), 18.

closing chapter, which examines the dual significance of countercultural 'trips.' Of relevance to my current focus is, instead, Ruppersberg's subversive appropriation of elements of dominant American culture—not only via the diner itself, but its visual references to Disney, American sports, Coca-Cola, Hollywood, and so on.

Julie Stephens has observed a similar, countercultural tendency of borrowing from popular culture, in order to supplement new, counter alternatives. As Stephens argues, this 'borrowing' often functioned as both a celebration of the vernacular, as well its ironic parody. A magpie-like approach of appropriating and mixing various aesthetic references was used as a means of reclaiming—or alternatively resisting—mainstream America.[66] The 'aesthetic protests' of Yippie activists Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin provide illustrations of Stephen's notion. Brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee for his involvement in Anti-Vietnam War protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, in 1968, Hoffman wore a shirt made from the Star Spangled Banner in a statement of mocking, hyper-patriotism. Rubin would later appear in December dressed as a guerrilla Santa Claus, brandishing a toy gun, in a seeming conflation of American Capitalism with the threat of violence [Fig.3.14]. The counterculture's dual attraction to and resistance of America's dominant culture was also expressed, via the medium of food, in Rubin's 1970, *Do It: Scenarios of the Revolution.* As a child of the morally-sick "Amerika," Rubin's revolutionary continues to crave his nation's signature dish: hamburger, fries and coke.[67]

The countercultural appreciation of 'low' culture may appear counter to the desire to subvert consumerism. However, it was tied to a romanticisation of elements of working-class life, revered for its supposed authenticity. Particularly admired were labourers, those who worked by hand, or on the land. The low-cost American diner can be seen as part of this. *Al's Café* was

[66] Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 31-36.
[67] Rubin, *Do-it!,* 12.

not the highly-polished chrome fast food joint now commonly associated with American diners, but, as has been suggested, one more akin to a "beanery"—a cheap restaurant, serving simple, filling meals (historically beans, hence the name.)[68] However, as I have highlighted, it was via his menu that Ruppersberg subverted the expectations of the stereotypical diner.

In addition to the (in)edible landscapes, patrons could also order a "Patti Melt," a wild variation on the classic diner dish, consisting of toasted marshmallows, atop a photograph of Patti Page, the songstress famous for American standards such as "Tennessee Waltz" and the kitsch "How Much is that Doggy in the Window." However, Ruppersberg's description suggests her individual significance was of less importance; diners would either receive an image of Page, or "a reasonable facsimile."[69] The star therefore functioned as a signifier of wholesome, homespun Americana, via her image as an all-American sweetheart, literally oozing with sickly sweetness. One version of the "Patti Melt" featured popular TV and B-movie actress Connie Stevens. An autographed copy of Steven's headshot was served along with five marshmallows, toasted to the point of blackening, literally tarnishing her glossy public image.

In designating these pop- references food, one could argue that Ruppersberg ironically parodied 'consumer' American culture, in a distinctly unpalatable, *non*-consumable form. Even the edible elements of Ruppersberg's dishes seem deliberately unappetizing. For example, Patti's 'toasted' marshmallows look more like campfire coal. This notion of chewing up, and then unceremoniously spitting out, "Amerika" has a particular countercultural relevance. As I shall go on to discuss, during this period, food became increasingly politicised, with various groups and individuals engaged in bringing about a revolution in culture, via the American stomach.

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[68] For an account of this transformation, and a discussion of the diner's class history, see: Hurley, "From Hash House to Family Restaurant."
[69] Ruppersberg, Al's Café Menu.

Appetite for Change: The Emergence of an American "Countercuisine"

You can get anything you want at Al(ice)'s Restaurant

Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree," 1967 [70]

In line with previous art historical accounts, thus far I have read *Al's Café* as a subversion of the American diner, and all this archetype signifies: mainstream or "straight" American culture. However, a contextual backdrop which has to-date been overlooked, is its coincidence with the development of a variety of new, alternative approaches to food. As charted by food historian, Warren J. Belasco, from whom I have borrowed the title of this subsection, these changes emerged as an aspect of the countercultural Sixties which radically re-shaped the nation's tastes and eating habits.[71] This strand of the counterculture, to which I refer using Belasco's term "countercuisine," was not only related to the production of food, but also its preparation and consumption.

The counterculture's holistic approach to food reconsidered the simple act of eating in terms of its impact on individual and societal well-being, and ultimately that of the earth as a whole. 'Well-being,' was crucially defined in spiritual as well as physical terms. As expressed in Stewart Brand's ecologically-focused *Whole Earth Catalog,* first published in 1968, the underlying sentiment was: "Everything's connected to everything; everything's got to go somewhere; there's no such thing as a free lunch."[72] The countercuisine therefore addressed man's engagement with food at all stages, from farm to plate, with individual benefits weighed against global human and ecological costs. Although not necessarily countercultural 'inventions,' the following experienced a growth in popularity during this

[70] Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree" *Alice's Restaurant,* Warner Bros, 1967, 12-inch vinyl.
[71] Warren J. Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (London: Cornell University Press, 2007.)
[72] Stewart Brand, *The Whole Earth Catalog*, (Melano Park, C.A.: Portola Institute, 1968), 43. Brand's catalog offered "access to tools" for self-sustained living, via 'do-it-yourself guides' and directories of related products and books.

period: pesticide free organic farming; the grow-your-own movement; veganism, vegetarianism, low-meat or other 'low-impact' diets; Macrobiotics; 'slow' food/cooking; whole foods; and Eastern influenced food and 'fusion' cooking.

This countercultural re-thinking of America's food consumption included attempts to alter the way in which it was distributed.[73] This was in partial acknowledgement that not everyone had the means to 'grow their own,' and can thus be seen as an attempt to spread the countercultural message beyond the confines of the commune. A variety of alternative food ventures emerged during this period, in direct opposition to the consumer-driven businesses associated with dominant culture. This included food cooperatives, communal gardens and kitchens. The intention of such initiatives was to foster a sense of shared ownership, dismantling the artificially-induced separation of 'consumers' from producers—a barrier believed to be erected and upheld by Capitalist 'Amerika.' The value of fresh seasonal produce was also stressed, as was purchasing (and therefore consuming) no more than one required.[74]

Instead of focusing on food consumption at a macro-level, that is, by considering consumers in terms of their 'whole earth' impact, these communal schemes sought to create small, produce-sharing communities. However, this local thinking was not at odds with the countercultural concept of global 'oneness,' but rather a component of it. In 1968, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* highlighted the catastrophic potential of global overpopulation.[75] In his first chapter, he proposed the need for new systems of food distribution, as well as increased production, in order to prevent mass

[73] For an extended discussion of the "alternative infrastructure of the countercuisine" see: Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 68-108.
[74] As Belasco notes, countercultural cooperatives distinguished themselves from New Deal-era precedents, designed to "supplement not subvert capitalism." As one cooperative worker stated: "The old cooperatives are still trying to get people to consume more, we want people to consume less." Ironically, however, many of these 'hip enterprises' would go on to be subsumed as another form of consumer choice. Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 87.
[75] Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968).

starvation. Three years later, Frances Moore Lappé proposed a strategy for ecological survival that advocated change on a micro, and even individual, level. Also founded on the notion that earth was too small to sustain the growing population's current use of resources, Lappé's best-seller, *Diet for a Small Planet* (1970) was thus an environmentally driven analysis of America's food industry, and one of the first widely-known 'low-impact' recipe books.[76] As James Nisbet has highlighted, during the late-1960s the earth's relative 'smallness' was additionally re-enforced via widely disseminated images of the earth in space.[77] In 1960 NASA's TIROS I satellite captured the earth in its entirety, enabling the planet to be viewed as a single entity. The public release of these images in 1968 was partially due to the campaigns of countercultural figures such as Brand, who went on to use them on the cover of his *Whole Earth Catalog* [Fig.3.15]. Thus, this image of our 'small planet' became an emblem of the ecology movement, helping to influence a countercultural worldview which was simultaneously local and global.

Sherk's *Cross Roads Community (The Farm)* (1974-87) [Fig.3.16], provides a notable example of this kind of community-based approach. Situated beneath San Francisco's present-day Cesar Chavez Street Freeway, the artist transformed a stretch of wasteland into a communal site of food and cultural production. In addition to vegetable plots and livestock, the farm housed a theatre-cum-circus. Jana Blankenship has called attention to *The Farm's* similarity to countercultural projects which fused communal living and production, theatrical performance and ecological activism (as well as other activist concerns). [78] These include the guerrilla street theatre of the San Francisco Diggers, Aviva Rahmani's *Synapse Reality* (1970) centred around a communal self-sufficient base in Los Angeles, and Integral Urban House (1972-1984) a communal and ecological 'demonstration' home in Berkeley.

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[76] Frances Moore Lappé, *Diet for a Small Planet* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971).
[77] James Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems in Art of the 1960s and 1970s* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2014), 71.
[78] Jana Blankenship, The Farm by the Freeway in *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.), 42-55.

In setting up a self-sufficient microcosm of the environment at large, Sherk and her countercultural contemporaries can be said to assert food's position within a broader, 'whole earth' context, that is, its place within an interconnected eco-system. Although this concern was undoubtedly a central facet of the countercuisine, the account I intend to provide here is one distinct from the era's ecology movement. This is partially because the connection between Sixties art and counterculture has been well-established along these lines, owing to discussions of the environmentally-based work of artists such as Sherk, and Helen and Newton Harrison.[79] My interest instead lies in the countercultural significance of food at the level of social interaction. This is in terms of use as a tool of countercultural engagement, as a symbolic signifier of belonging, in both a political and spiritual sense. In other words, my principle focus is the point at which Sixties countercuisine reached the communal table.

It is against this backdrop that *Al's Café* opened its doors in the late 1960s, alongside other experiments in alternative dining. In addition to the countercultural equivalent to the supermarket, the co-operative store, the countercuisine, in its multiple forms, was also disseminated, via newly established eateries. Although these were inevitably concentrated within 'hip' urban areas, these were scattered across America. Well-known Californian establishments include Alice Water's Chez Panisse in Berkeley, established in 1971, and the Communion Restaurant in San Francisco, established 1973. However, Belasco cites examples in small towns in New York State, Vermont, Massachusetts and Arkansas. These locations were chosen for their proximity to countercultural outposts, with rural communes, functioning as their suppliers and/or customer base.[80]

[79] See for example: Amanda Boetzkes, Techniques of Survival: The Harrisons and the Environmental Counterculture in *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.), 307-324.
[80] See: Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 94-96.

With their emphasis on filling but affordable fare, purveyors of the countercuisine can be said to have continued the low-cost tradition of the American 'beaneries.' Many operated a policy of paying what one could, or asking for a nominal fee in exchange for as much food as one needed. This crucial distinction between 'want' and 'need' was often made explicit via restaurant signage, along with other sentiments of a similar nature; thus replacing the advertising slogans common to mainstream diners with more counterculturally-appropriate messages.[81] Some countercultural food providers charged nothing at all. Activist group The Diggers used free food events as a mean of highlighting the positive potential of a society not structured around commercial exchange [Fig.3.17]. Thus, they saw food and its democratisation as a radical medium of communication. For the most part, the principle means of differentiating these new eateries from those of a more traditional nature was the food served within them, and the way in which it was prepared—much like Ruppersberg's café.

In contrast to the homogenised fare of America's fast food chain restaurants (assembled, as Rosler's McTowersMaid details, on a robotic factory production line), or standardised diner menus which could not be deviated from (no substitutions!), countercultural establishments adopted a more individualised and improvisatory culinary approach. As Belasco notes, this was typical of the style of cooking propagated by countercultural food writers. The advice dispensed in alternative cookbooks or food columns featured in the underground press was to throw things together, and 'go with your gut.' Cooking thus appeared to be seen as another means of expressing one's inner 'authentic self.' In contrast to the mindful approach directed at food in its raw state, when it came to cooking, the rule was 'anything goes.' As Belasco describes it, "recipes were scripts that could be altered at will," as opposed to prescribed instructions.[82] A consequence of this was the blending

[81] At the Communion Restaurant in San Francisco signs reminded patrons that: "…Want is all ideas need is real." Practicing what they preached, they lowered their price for an unlimited vegetarian meal to 60c when they started generating profit. Ibid, 96.
[82] Ibid, 45.

of unlikely ingredients and techniques, garnered from a variety of sources. These were deployed with a disregard for geographical boundaries, and led to a cuisine characterised by a 'fusion' of international flavours. Culinary self-expression was privileged over slavish commitment to tradition.

For pioneers of the countercuisine, new flavour combinations were often discovered whilst in drug-altered states, or were deliberately designed to enhance such experiences—giving rise to what was sometimes termed 'head food,' an extension of 'freak' culture. Ita Jones, of the widely syndicated column "Grub Bag," saw food within the kaleidoscope of things to be rediscovered whilst under the influence of hallucinogenics, whilst Jeanie Darlington once advised readers of *Good Times'* "Eat and Enjoy" to try her Venezuelan-influenced dish as follows: "cook it straight and eat it stoned, because that's what it's made for." [83] As these quotes suggest, the emphasis on sensory exploration associated with psychedelic drug-taking frequently bled into countercultural attitudes related to cooking and eating, as did an inclination toward experimentation. As Belasco concludes, with a reference to Ken Kesey's infamous LSD-laced party punch, "If acid could go in Kool-Aid and marijuana could go into just about anything, why *not* put onions and oranges in the same salad, garlic and zucchini in pancakes, peanut butter in ice cream?" [84]

Countercultural eateries were thus premised on pushing gastronomic possibilities, with patrons offered individualised, or 'one off' dishes. Even when servings came from the same communal pot, the presence of an improvising chef and rotating seasonal menus resulted in a meal unique to every visit, if not every visitor. Folk singer-song writer Arlo Guthrie (son of Woody) succinctly captures this aspect of the countercultural dining experience in *Alice's Restaurant Massacree,* (1967). The song makes

[83] As quoted in: ibid, 44-45.
[84] Kool-Aid incident famously immortalised in Wolfe's journalistic account of Kesey's Pranksters: Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (London: Bantam Books, 1971), 243-252; Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 45. "Hip enterprise" Ben & Jerry's notably took this approach, first selling to Vermont's counterculturally "experienced" clientele.

reference to a real-life establishment in Massachusetts, frequented by Guthrie, run by friend Alice Brock. The opening lyrics, "you can get anything you want at Alice's restaurant," initiate a rambling narrative, culminating in an arrest for littering, which later ironically enables the singer to draft-dodge. The ultimate message is thus one of resistance—both to the Vietnam War, and mainstream authority more broadly.[85] Although not directly *about* the Restaurant, the song's opener alludes to the individualised focus of the countercultural eatery, framing it as a site of open-ended possibilities. Given the overall anti-authoritarian sentiment, one could infer that Brock's patrons had the option to go 'off menu' in more than just a literal sense: that it also functioned as place to 'pick up,' or hide-out (a reading somewhat supported by earlier drafts describing it as a sanctuary from the police).[86] Within the song's narrative, food is arguably positioned as evidence of America's growing cultural divide in a broader sense, due to the fact that the events detailed take place on Thanksgiving—a patriotic American holiday centred around eating.

In real-life, 'Alice's restaurant'—actually called The Back Room, because as Guthrie states: "walk right in, it's around the back"—occasionally served food in tinfoil-lined hubcaps, in a playful twist on the notion of fast food.[87] As Belasco notes, the use of improvisational props were common in such establishments. According to the food historian, spontaneity was key.[88] This approach was similar to that adopted at *Al's Café*. Ruppersberg's decision to make his dishes on site, rather than pre-assembling them, is important. In doing so he playfully suggested a sense of 'freshness,' further supplemented by his willingness to 'sub-in' alternative ingredients based on availability. However, it can also be seen to mirror the post-minimal and conceptual privileging of process-over-end-product, an emphasis ostensibly shared with proponents of the countercuisine. Among the contemporary sources Belasco

[85] Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree."
[86] Arlo Guthrie and Debbie Elliot, Remembering 'Alice's Restaurant,' *NPR Music*, Nov 26, 2005, accessed 22 Jul. 18 https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5028273
[87] Arlo Guthrie, "Alice's Restaurant Massacree."
[88] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 46-48.

cites as evidence is a bread baking column featured in underground newspaper *Northwest Passage,* dating from 1972. Written by 'Mother Bird,' readers of a "Garden of Kneadin'" were advised that all burnt "bricks" should be considered "building blocks."[89] Inedibility was not perceived as a wholly negative outcome, as 'mistakes' were recast as part of one's overall culinary journey. Furthermore, the joy of cooking was frequently attributed to the act itself, with the words "fun," "enjoyment" and "play" commonly featuring in countercultural food writing.[90] Whilst this is at odds with the earnestness associated with orthodox conceptualism, it fits with the ideas outlined in my pervious chapter, which frame conceptual production as opposite to the utilitarianism of work and labour.

An aspect of Ruppersberg's assemblage-like dishes that has been overlooked is the artist's incorporation of biodegradable materials. Café patrons were able to take home their own slice of (in)edible art, but these creations were all, at least partially, ephemeral. This dual sense of their 'take-away/throw-away' potential was further reinforced by the artist's use of disposable tin-foil plates, signifying their status as fast food "to go." Referring to this notion, Ruppersberg subsequently mused that although the dishes functioned as independent artworks one was bound to 'get tired of *that* sitting on their shelf.'[91] One could argue that the element of spontaneity present in *Al's Café* is fundamentally at odds with the conceptual method—at least as it was outlined by LeWitt: in an effort to eliminate chance subjectivity, the conceptual artist was to work from a pre-set plan, allowing "the idea to become the machine which made art."[92] Ruppersberg *was* indeed partially constrained by a food-related blueprint: his menu. However, much like Belasco's observations of the countercuisine, this functioned as a script the artist altered at will. Whilst this can be perceived as a violation of the 'rules'

[89] Mother Bird, "Bread Baking: A Garden of Kneadin,'" *Northwest Passage,* January 10, 1972, 4.
[90] Jones, for example, frames cooking as an opportunity to return to the 'magical' world of childhood: Ita Jones, *The Grubbag* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 74-82.
[91] Kadist Art Foundation.
[92] Sol LeWitt, "Serial Project #1, 1966," *Aspen* 5+6 (1967): unpaginated.

of orthodox conceptualism, it does not necessarily conflict with the subtly distinct understanding proposed by Marioni. The notion of "idea-oriented *situations*" implies a sense of presentness and creation in-and-of-the-moment.[93]

Owing to its limited lifespan, food can thus be seen as a fitting medium for an iteration of conceptual art which, by extension, appears concerned with the condition of temporality. One full set of the items on Ruppersberg's menu is known to have survived since the café's closure, albeit in a spoiled state,[94] and in a private collection. Thus, as with much conceptual art and performance, *Al's Café* is now accessed via its documentation. This includes recollections by the artist, as well as participants like McCollum, a handful of photographs, and, as has been used for the purposes of subsequent exhibitions, reproductions of the menu, as well as original order tickets [see: Fig.3.9.ix-x].[95] These tickets bear a generic-customer greeting (the oddly phrased: "drop in again…but soon"), a unique receipt number and each customers' order, filled-out by hand. Thus, individually they function as the 'conceptual contract' set up between the artist and each of his 'patrons,' and as a whole, a definitive record of every transaction.[96]

As I have highlighted, *Al's Café* reflected the delicate counterbalance between the counterculture's preoccupation with individual exploration and

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[93] Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy,* 104.

[94] In the private collection of Stanley and Elyse Grinstein. (Last confirmed by the artist in 2011 See: Kadist Art Foundation.)

[95] Its first re-exhibition was "Al's Café (Reheated)," held Rosamund Felsen Gallery in September 1979. Marking the work's ten-year anniversary, "Reheated" featured original ephemera, as well as of reproductions of the menu available to purchase. Over the years, Ruppersberg has also incorporated fragments of *Al's Café* into exhibitions of new works. For list of instances see: Alexis Marissa Johnson, "Allen Ruppersberg: Art On the Edge Of Visibility, 1968–1972" (masters dissertation: University of Southern California, 2011), 34, 42-43.

[96] Johnson asserts the tickets, which have since been organised into a grid and framed, now function as a discreet artwork. As Ruppersberg stated in 2007: "the receipts represent another aspect of the work…It was the dinners that were produced on the spot at the time and taken away that were the real artwork, and then later on the receipts." Thus, in spite of their subsequent handling, I would suggest, his emphasis has remained on their in-the-moment creation. Johnson, "Allen Ruppersberg,"36; Allen Ruppersberg, "Allen Ruppersberg Artist Talk," lecture, *Art Since the 1960s: California Experiments*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, Sep 20, 2007.

its global 'whole earth' cost. This preoccupation extended beyond the realm of food, and vitally informed its insistent emphasis on the role of the individual-as-part-of-the-collective. Ruppersberg's dishes, made with a combination of raw natural and artificial ingredients, hyperbolised a distinction of particular contemporary importance. The countercuisine frequently defined itself in opposition to the processed "plastic" peddled by Capitalist Amerika by purporting to offer all-natural goodness.

"Plastic food," seen as another aspect of mainstream "plastic culture," was not only portrayed as an ersatz substitute for its 'real' (i.e. 'natural') equivalents, but frequently as hazardous, chemical contaminants.[97] In *McTowersMaid,* Rosler notably alludes to the former, with references to artificially 'pepped up' lettuce, and chemically enhanced buns, sprayed "essence of bread."[98] Thus, individual health was connected with larger, environmental anxieties related to the earth's chemical 'poisoning' through the industrial use of pesticides, and—as weaponised by the U.S. Military in Vietnam—herbicides and defoliants.[99] As historian Harvey A. Levenstein notes, the need to purge oneself from such pollutants was a constant theme in counterculture thinking. As an advertisement for a Californian natural foods store outlined, "The first step in halting pollution" was often framed as halting one's consumption of, "the devitalized, plastic, pseudo foods which turn men into walking cesspools."[100]

Choosing to eat only 'clean,' all-natural foods was therefore considered an expression of resistance to the dominant culture, as well as, potentially, America's military-industrial complex.[101] By extension, what one ate

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[97] Harvey A. Levenstein observed that processed foods were previously been seen as symbols of the triumph of American capitalism, noting that at the Zagreb Trade Fair of 1957 the U.S. Gov. used a well-stocked supermarket as evidence of high living standards. Harvey A. Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 114.
[98] Rosler, *McTowersMaid*, 7.
[99] Awareness of the impact of industrial pesticides was significantly raised by: Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
[100] Levenstein *Paradox of Plenty* 183-184.
[101] For an extended discussion see: Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty,* 178-194.

functioned as a signifier of countercultural identity and belonging. As Bryant Simon describes it, "For some, picking the right coffee and the right cut of meat were culinary equivalents to burning draft cards and putting flowers in National Guardsmen's gun barrels." [102] Much like Belasco, Simon charts the transition of these acts of consumer resistance into the American mainstream, where they were commodified into additional expressions of consumerist 'choice.' Although contextualised in relation to Land Art, rather than food, McCollum came curiously close to suggesting that Ruppersberg pre-empted this eventuality, stating that via his dishes the artist: "presented nature as a commodity for consumption."[103]

For Federman, Ruppersberg's inedible food/art can be viewed as a protest against the destructive consequences of man's desire to conquer nature, even if just via its exploration.[104] Her reading is crucially based on the indigestible nature of the majority of Ruppersberg's ingredients, including the hyperbolically 'all-natural.' Given the added contextual backdrop of contemporary challenges to the food industry, I would thus suggest they can also be read as protests against 'plastic' foods, that is, the doctoring of natural ingredients with man-made contaminants. It is worth noting that food—or rather refusing to eat all, or certain foods—was frequently used as a tool of resistance during this period: whether this was the boycott of certain products (as in The Delano Grape Strike 1965-9 and The Salad Bowl Strike 1970-71, led by workers in retaliation to poor pay and working conditions), hunger strikes carried out in protest of the Vietnam War (as occurred across Harvard, Radcliffe, and Boston University campuses in February 1968), or acts of self-starvation as a means of draft dodging. However, there is an additional way of reading Ruppersberg's culinary blurring of the boundaries between natural and artificial, edible and inedible, nourishing and 'poisonous.' This is

[102] Bryant Simon. *Everything but the Coffee: Learning about America from Starbucks* (London: University of California Press, 2009), 25.
[103] McCollum, "*Allen Ruppersberg,"* 9.
[104] Federman, "Express Yourself," 218.

its mirroring of the counterculture's own fluid, pick-and-mix approach to consumption.

As has been discussed, the counterculture was magpie-like in terms of its borrowing from various cultural sources. However, what I am referring to in this instance is consumption in a bodily sense, the act of eating itself, as well as what constituted 'food.' Belasco notes that the ingestion of psychedelics stimulated a childlike state in which "you nibbled here, picked there," ate with your hands "…and otherwise played with your food."[105] (An approach surely also needed for Ruppersberg's partially edible offerings.) As the historian suggests, drug-induced experiences fed into, or blurred, more everyday interactions related to food. The countercuisine connected eating, as well as cooking, more intimately with play, sensory exploration, and ultimately self-discovery—a form of nourishment beyond the satisfaction of hunger and nutritional need.

Within the countercuisine there was an increased fluidity in the distinction made between 'foods' and 'non-foods'—at least, that is, in the strict definition of the word, i.e. as a substance consumed in order to sustain life, bodily regeneration or physical growth.[106] This notion was captured in the final refrain of Jefferson Airplane's top-ten American billboard hit, *White Rabbit* (1967): "feed your head."[107] This reminder, issued by the dormouse from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* encouraged individuals to feast on *anything* that had the potential to expand one's consciousness. Both the song and the source it references are rife with references to picking, nibbling, and eating a variety of strange things which, when consumed, provoked changes in mind and body.[108] As has already been

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[105] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 44.
[106] The OED do offer an additional figurative definition: "something providing spiritual, emotional, or mental sustenance." *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "food" Nov 22, 2017 http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/72632?rskey=fyRad0&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.
[107]Jefferson Airplane, "White Rabbit," *Surrealistic Pillow*, RCA Victor, 1967, 12-inch vinyl. The track notably featured in their iconic 1969 Woodstock set.
[108] Under advisement of a communard who highlights the importance of picking and snacking Horton devotes a section 'Geezes and scarfs': Lucy Horton, *Country Commune Cooking* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972), 229.

stated, it was common practice to add marijuana to food, and psychedelics (the counterculture's preferred category of drug) were most frequently ingested, placed on the tip of one's tongue, or chewed.[109] *White Rabbit* additionally highlights the counterculture's seemingly contradictory stance on certain man-made substances, with lyrics differentiating between perception-altering 'medicines,' and those endorsed by 'straight' society, the placebos given to you by "mother."

Members of the counterculture reconciled their use of artificial (and/or 'dangerous') hallucinogens with their natural, 'whole earth' mentality, because they enhanced the individual's connection with others, their immediate surroundings—and ultimately the environment at large. In other words, many believed hallucinogenic drugs stimulated a harmonious oneness, akin to the 'countercultural monism' described by Steven M. Tipton.[110] As Nisbet highlights, psychedelic experiences—chemically induced or otherwise—were fostered 'hyperreal' states, enabling one to become more attuned to the earth's 'natural vibrations' or "energy transactions." [111] The psychotropic properties of certain species of mushrooms were therefore not perceived as harmful or poisonous, but instead as 'magic.' In spite of being chemically formulated, even LSD was classified within expanded definitions of 'edible' and 'natural.' (Again, both were re-discoveries and not countercultural inventions.) LSD's chemical make-up made this possible. Although a man-made compound, one of its principle ingredients is Lysergic acid, which derives from ergot fungus, found occurring naturally on grains such as rye.

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[109] A well-known example of is Toklas' "Hashish Fudge." Designed to induce "euphoria and brilliant storms of laughter …on simultaneous planes," Toklas wryly notes it would provide entertaining refreshment for ladies' bridge club and D.A.R. meetings. First published in 1954, her cookbook continued to be a best-seller during the 1960s. Alice B. Toklas, *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (London: Serif, 1994), 259.

[110] Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 14.

[111] Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems,* 60.

It is worth noting, however, that countercultural attitudes towards psychedelics became more ambiguous during the 1970s. This was perhaps due to the increasingly pronounced distinction made between the 'natural' and the 'artificial.' According to Belasco, by 1969 countercultural food writers rejected *anything* that could be perceived as artificial—including, in some cases, LSD.[112] Rosler's *McTowersMaid* can be thought to document this shift. After her initial experiments with a variety of hallucinogenic substances, the rebellious burger-chef eventually settles on a policy of "no more drugs except grass."[113] This decision takes on an added significance given the infamous incident involving an acid-laced burger that occurred four years earlier. In an attempt to prevent her testifying, members of the Charles Manson family gave Barbara Hoyt, a prosecution witnesses in the Tate-LaBianca Trial, a burger laced with a lethal dose of LSD. Carried out by cult members under the influence of both acid and Manson's brainwashing, the Tate-LaBianca murders are often cited as the symbolic end of the psychedelic Sixties, with many viewing it as the counterculture's wake-up call to the drug's destructive properties.[114] Thus, whilst acid-spiked punch was still being used to enhance psychedelic revelries in the late-1960s (most famously at Ken Kesey's large-scale public parties, the Acid Tests), by the mid-1970s Rosler's LSD-laced burgers would likely have had darker, more dubious connotations—even within the counterculture itself.

Ruppersberg has observed that the meals at *Al's Café* bore a visual likeness to drug paraphernalia—presumably as a result of their combination of tinfoil and fragments of glass, alongside his mysterious, and often burnt,

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[112] Belasco, *Appetite for Change*, 27.
[113] Rosler, *McTowersMaid*, 11.
[114] The popular press used the Manson murders as an opportunity to warn of the 'Hippie' movement's dark undertones: "Hippies and Violence," *Time*, Dec 12, 1969, accessed June 22, 2016, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601691212,00.html#ixzz2YBnFaBQT; Increased concerns about LSD were also reflected in legislative changes: although ordinary possession was illegal across states by 1968, in 1970 LSD was classified a schedule I substance, as it no longer considered to have safe or legitimate uses within medical/therapeutic practices. For an extended history see: Martin A Lee and Bruce Shlain, *Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD and the Sixties Rebellion* (New York: Grove Press, 1985).

concoctions.[115] As I have shown, Ruppersberg's menu pushed the boundaries of gastronomic possibility in a way which mirrored the countercuisine. Within the counterculture, 'food' was viewed as yet another vehicle for expanded experience, resulting in a lack of distinction between fuel for the body and that which nourished the mind, including (but not limited to) substances with psychotropic, consciousness-altering properties. As I have posited, Ruppersberg's menu similarly contained the promise of gastronomic journeys of discovery—albeit via one's head, rather than one's stomach. In other words, the artist's (in)edible landscapes can be viewed as open-ended invitations to 'trip.' This notion and its multiple connotations is furthered by a song fellow Californian artist, Terry Allen, recorded especially for *Al's Café.* Framing Ruppersberg's project as a metaphorical wander in the desert, Allen narrates a journey of natural exploration, and ultimately, I would argue, self-discovery: "going down the desert to pick up a rock, it won't be worth nothing but it'll be worth a lot, because I found it, found it, found it myself…"[116]

Turn on, Drop in: Other 'Spaces to Which We Can Come'

Timothy Leary, psychiatrist and well-known proselytizer of LSD's therapeutic benefits, once likened the psychedelic experience to a form of neurological art, "capable of activating in the brain of the beholder, the desired reality."[117] In a letter dating from July 1970 to Karl Katz, director of the Jewish Museum in New York, Marioni stated that he saw "concept art" as a form of "head" art.[118] This observation was made in reference to Katz's proposal for an exhibition of 'hallucinogenic art,' inspired by one Marioni organized at

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[115] Kadist Art Foundation.
[116] Terry Allen, "Al's Café," *Blue Plate Special*, self-released, 1969, 7-inch vinyl (EP). According to Allen this recording was lost for a number of years. However, he went on to release an album called *Live at Al's Grand Hotel. Recorded May 7, 1971,* following his performance at the opening of Ruppersberg's subsequent artwork. Terry Allen, interviewed by Thomas D Mooney, "Interviews: Terry Allen on Lubbock (On Everything)" *New Slang,* Feb 16, 2016, accessed 23 Nov, 2017, https://newslangtakeover.wordpress.com/2016/02/16/interviews-terry-allen-on-lubbock-on-everything/ Excerpt can be heard at: Kadist Art Foundation.
[117] Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: An Autobiography* (London: Heinemann, 1983), 227.
[118] Letter from Tom Marioni to Karl Katz, 22 July, 1970, box 46, folder 2, 1995.46.2.142, MOCA Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley.

Richmond Art Center that summer. In Marioni's own words, *Acid Painters of San Francisco* combined "new surrealist" painting, as well as art influenced by "psychedelic posters," "ideas relating to the occult" and the "rock music and drug culture that started in San Francisco." The term 'acid,' as defined by Marioni for the purposes of this exhibition, related not only to LSD, and "all hallucinatory drugs in general" but, more broadly, to the increasingly drug-oriented culture of the young. [119]

Marioni's *The Art Of Drinking Beer with Friends is The Highest Form of Art* can be understood as an artwork concerned with the temporary creation of a 'desired reality,' via the free interaction of its participants. The work constructs a social, as opposed to physical space, which, in line with the understanding of the psychedelic experience proposed by Leary, we might refer to as 'head space.' Thus, it can be considered a realisation, through art, of Marcuse's utopian vision of liberation, as it was understood by Barry in his *Marcuse Piece* (1969): "a place to which we can come, and for a while, be free to think about what we are going to do." Much like Barry's Marcusian conceptual "place," invoked in the minds of viewers via language, Marioni's *The Act Of Drinking Beer with Friends,* was communal, temporary, and at its core, about freedom. Since its first iteration in 1970, the work has been held in various locations, with different participants, thus affirming Maroni's concern with the creation of social, as opposed to physical space.[120] Marioni saw the social, participatory nature of the work as part of a move towards art's democratisation. It could therefore also be likened to the Diggers' 'Free Frame of Reference,' discussed in the previous chapter. To step into the

[119] Tom Marioni, document related to upcoming Richmond Art Center shows, 1970, box 46, folder 2, 1995.46.2.58b+c, MOCA Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley. There is limited extant information on "*The Acid Painters of San Francisco,*" which ran from 2 June-2 August 1970. This document appears to be intended for the council/board, thus Marioni pointedly stresses not all featured were necessarily "under the influence." He goes on to cite 'occult ideas, Zap comics, *Yellow Submarine,* custom-painted motorcycles and 7-Up commercials' as evidence of drug-oriented culture.

[120] Since the 1970s, iterations have regularly taken place on Wednesdays. Free beer was provided at MOCA from 1973-4, then at Breen's till 1984. "Café Wednesdays" are now at the artist's studio-cum-bar; on 22 June 2017 I was honoured to attend. For full list of iterations/locations, see: Marioni*, Sculptures and Installations,* 6-7.

artwork was to fleetingly enter a 'free' space outside of the world of commodity exchange associated with traditional, object-bound art.

Al's Café shared many of these features: it was not just the dishes that constituted the artwork, but the café in its entirety, including the relationships and activities it engendered. Ruppersberg created a functioning establishment where like-minded individuals and locals alike could gather to think and communicate. Notably, this inclusiveness was also a goal of contemporary countercultural equivalents. As the artist recalls, the café became a popular local hangout, with many patrons unaware of its status as art. It can therefore be seen as social and participatory in much the same way as Marioni's *The Act of Drinking Beer*. Despite the assemblage-like quality of Ruppersberg's menu, it provides a stark contrast to Kienholz's, eternal, frozen-in-time *The Beanery*: the patrons of *Al's Café* made the work temporary living art. As has been stated, in addition to the inedible 'food' art, beer was served at the establishment, which although not free, was sold at a low enough cost to enable poorer members of the local community to frequent the space. Whilst Ruppersberg has not discussed his reasons for serving this particular choice of alcohol, Marioni specially chose beer because of its democratic connotations—its low cost, 'everyman' image.[121]

Although, unlike Marioni's work, *Al's Café* took place at a static location, it can be seen as a space defined by action, the interaction of its patrons, as well as Ruppersberg's in-the-moment creation of his food/art. As McCollum suggests, Ruppersberg's furnishing of the Café's interior seemingly functioned as scene-setting.[122] Thus, it was these activities that made the work complete. However, its participatory dimension crucially also came from the communal acts of consumption that occurred within its walls. Thus the artist's use of 'food,' in an expanded sense of the word, similarly paralleled The Diggers' understanding of food-as-medium, that is, as a tool

[121] Emphasized to author by Marioni. Conversation with Tom Marioni in the artist's studio, San Francisco, 20th June 2016.
[122] McCollum, "Allen Ruppersberg," 8.

for communication and a conduit for communal belonging—or alternatively in this context, as a means of establishing a sense of communion between Ruppersberg and his 'patrons.' [123] Within *Al's Café*, these acts of communal consumption, whether real—beers shared between friends and strangers—or only symbolic—Ruppersberg's inedible meals—can therefore be viewed as forms of participation, via both the head and the stomach.

In relation to *Al's Café,* the notion of 'communion' operated as a sense of immediacy fostered between artist and audience, via the shared act of 'eating,' and drinking beer—that well-known social lubricant. In taking part in this shared activity, Ruppersberg's patrons contributed to the work's conceptual whole, functioning as vital components of the Café-as-conceptual-system. As has been outlined, this 'system' refers to the consumer interactions that made the Café a real, working establishment. These commercial exchanges both mirrored and subverted that of the traditional art object, via Ruppersberg's replacement of the 'priceless' and the sacred, with the affordable and biodegradable. However, it also refers to the socio-personal interactions that defined *Al's Café* as a social-art space. In spite of these democratic impulses, it is worth noting that in assigning himself the role of 'chef/manager,' Ruppersberg visibly retained his position of authority. In addition to establishing the conditions for this network of interactions, from the Café's carefully curated interior to its prices and ordering system, he was also solely responsible for the symbolic core around which they were structured: the food/(in)edible art.

Ritual Meal: Food as Conduit for Communion with the Artist

We are without doubt the manifestation of both heavenly and earthly sustenance.

[123] For an extended discussion of The Diggers' Free Food program see: Bradford D. Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street: Politics and Public Performance in 1960s America,* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 97-102.

Paul Hawken, "The Macrobiotic Way," 1971.[124]

The notion that artistic acts of breaking bread, can be understood to establish a sense of communion between artist and audience has immediate religious connotations. This is in terms of the significance placed on consumption as a communal act, but also the special status this seemingly confers on the artist. The conflation of artistic authority with divinity is a long established art historical tradition.[125] However, rather than asserting a position akin to God the creator, I would posit, that in feeding a group of assembled participants (be this literally or symbolically), the artist might more appropriately be likened to one of his/her earthly representatives. Thus, it represents a model of artist—audience relations that whilst more egalitarian, affirms the artist's higher authority. This tension is similar to that of conceptual art's claim to self-contained autonomy whilst paradoxically gesturing towards open-endedness. In their creation of seemingly everyday situations and spaces, Marioni and Ruppersberg's works were simultaneously of world, yet temporarily *apart* from it. Both retain the notion of art as a sacred domain, exclusive from the outside world, just as they retain their artistic authority. However, once the threshold was crossed, and participants were drawn into their magical-circle, they inclusively became part of the artwork.

Likening Ruppersberg's role in *Al's Café* to a priest conducting 'service' behind his kitchen-countertop-cum-altar may seem a tad fanciful. However, the comparison provides an opportunity to introduce an aspect of the countercuisine that I have not yet discussed at length: the ritualistic, often quasi-spiritual, dimension found in the countercultural approach towards food and its consumption. As outlined, the increased reverence towards food and its origins (counterbalanced with the joyous, individualised pursuit of

[124] Paul Hawken "The Macrobiotic Way" (Leaflet) Boston, Massachusetts, reproduced in William Shurtleff, *History of Erewhon - Natural Foods Pioneer in the United States (1966-2011)*: *Extensively Annotated Bibliography and Sourcebook* (Layfette, CA: Soyinfo Center, 2011), 57.
[125] For an extended discussion: Peter Conrad, *Creation: Artists, Gods & Origins* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007).

culinary and gastronomic exploration) can be seen as an extension of the 'whole earth' mentality. This was partially fostered by the era's growth in ecological awareness, but was also indicative of a larger spiritual worldview which, although it manifested itself in multiple forms, commonly privileged notions of interconnectivity and oneness.

With the exception of its extraordinary menu, *Al's Café* was ostensibly grounded in the realm of the vernacular, constructed in order to present a hyperbolised version of the ordinary and the familiar. As Ruppersberg said of the work's Los Angeles setting: "I liked a kind of plain vernacular world that you could find [t]here, the signs, the billboards, the street, just everything. And so the plainer, the better, the more vernacular, the better."[126] One could therefore argue that attempting to read the work in spiritual terms (much less conceiving of Ruppersberg in the role of 'high priest') runs counter to the artist's own declared interest in the everyday. Although I would contest the notion that Ruppersberg's words can be interpreted as evidence that the artist was purely concerned with the profane, in strict opposition to the sacred, a more overt expression of the connection between food and countercultural spirituality can be found in the work of one of Ruppersberg's Californian contemporaries: Barbara T. Smith.

Much like Rosler, Smith's works have chiefly been examined within a feminist context. Thus, the food related performances that the artist made from 1969-73, *Ritual Meal* (1969), *The Celebration of the Holy Squash* (1971), and *Feed Me* (1973), have predominately been discussed in terms of their gendered implications.[127] In her article "Feeding the Body," Jennie Klein, for example, acknowledges the many layers of Smith's mediations on "the metaphorical, spiritual and literal meaning of food," but frames these in relation to an overarching concern with its "importance to the female body… uniquely

[126] Ruppersberg, interview, 6.
[127] Smith's lesser known food related works include: *Mass Meal* (1969), *White Meal* (1970) *The Longest Day of Night* (1973) (an all-night banquet), and *Pure Food* (1973).

capable of both taking in and producing food."[128] As Klein highlights, both *Ritual Meal* and *The Celebration of the Holy Squash* transform the traditionally female task of domestic food preparation into ritualistic, quasi-spiritual acts. The latter work, which involved the creation of an entire religion from a single vegetable husk,[129] has, as Klein suggests, the potential to be interpreted as an ecstatic celebration of the female capacity to nourish and sustain life, reasserting the power and significance of this role. It could be argued then, that much like the culinary-induced awakening of Rosler's *McTowersMaid,* in Smith's works food is transformed from a tool of patriarchal servitude, to one of self-affirmation and discovery.

My aim in re-examining Smith's food-based works is not to challenge interpretations such as Klein's, but rather to set the well-trodden feminist discourse surrounding them to one side.[130] It is worth noting that the artist's unapologetic embrace of gender essentialism has been proved divisive among critics, and that Klein's work partially attempts to mount a feminist recovery of her practices. However, my intent is to expand the discussion of Smith's work beyond its emphasis on gender, to explore how the artist's engagement with food reflected contemporary aspects of the countercuisine: the connection between food, countercultural spirituality, selfhood and communal belonging.

Smith's *The Celebration of the Holy Squash* [Fig.3.18—22] literalises food's potential spiritual significance, as well as the shared act of its consumption by using this as the basis for a series of quasi-religious, ceremonial actions. Its genesis was a communal dinner held at her mother's home, which brought together two separate groups of friends. On arrival, Smith's guests meditated in an unlit room for twenty minutes, before introducing themselves, and then

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[128] Jennie Klein, "Feeding the Body: The Work of Barbara Smith" *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 21, No. 1 (1999), 25.
[129] A paraphrase of Coulson's neat summary: Amanda Coulson, "Barbara T. Smith: Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt am Main, Germany," *Frieze*, June 1, 2009, accessed Sep 8, 2016, https://frieze.com/article/barbara-t-smith
[130] Note Smith's frequent inclusion in surveys of Feminist art, such as: Lisa Gabrielle Mark, ed., *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007).

finally feasting on the celebration's centrepiece: a giant Hubbard squash. Smith's recollections emphasize the deliciousness of the squash but also its visual beauty, likening its appearance to a precious gemstone, "a big hunk of gnarled jade."[131] After taking home the hollowed out squash, Smith began to think of it as a "a relic of a holy event, a holy object."[132] As she described in an interview with Moira Roth in 1973, the subsequent ten days of celebratory events, centred around this relic, originated from her desire to preserve the squash from decay.[133] With the assistance of friends, Smith spent a night in the gallery of UC Irvine casting the relic in a mould, in order to construct a reliquary. Along with her 'disciples' she then engaged in a series of ceremonial actions, including a squash baptism and mass.

Smith's squash baptism took place in a large fountain on UC Irvine campus. Smith and her assistants were relieved of the physically arduous task of moving the 150lb cast by the fortuitous arrival of a university trash truck, an event Smith would later designate a 'miracle.'[134] Once the squash was submerged in water, Smith released several fish, in an attempt to create the illusion that they miraculously appeared in its presence. Due to the chlorine, however, they had to be retrieved immediately, and were unceremoniously bagged and returned to the biology department. Although accounts have largely focused on the baptism, a surviving film recording reveals other, smaller, and seemingly spontaneous actions carried out by individual participants.[135] Flower petals were scattered on the relic as it lay on the gallery floor, and post baptism, participants can be seen interacting with the squash in a variety of ways: leaning on it, whispering to it and rubbing it. Focus falls onto a large cooking pot, containing fresh squash, cut into discs,

[131] Barbara Smith, Interview by Moira Roth, Berkeley, California, October 7, 1973, in *Barbara Smith*, ed. Moira Roth (San Diego: San Diego Art Gallery, University of California, 1974), 20.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Klein, "Feeding the Body," 28.
[135] Barbara T. Smith, *The Celebration of the Holy Squash* (1971), DVD, Barbara T Smith Papers, box 289, DVD23 2Z1, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

which Smith can later be seen eating. Smith and a male assistant circle around the squash in opposite directions, their movements close to a dance.

Celebration concludes with the relic enshrined in state at UC Irvine gallery. Its reliquary was decorated with moss trimmings, seashells and tall votive candles. Its presentation was akin to an offering-adorned shrine, but also, I would suggest, like an exotic or extravagant dinner-party dish. Smith's archives notably contain a small collection of photo-recipe cards, including one for gourd-shaped duck with stuffing, surrounded by ornamentally carved vegetables [Fig.3.23] This likeness is furthered by the inclusion of what appears to be a handle in the reliquary's lid. From a side angle it resembles a crockpot, thus evoking the holy relic's origins: a communal dinner.

As Klein suggests, *Celebration* can be interpreted as a parody of Christian beliefs and practices. An everyday food stuff was made holy and placed at the centre of a series of rituals; a decaying squash rind was resurrected and consecrated. In other words, Smith imbued an item from the farmers' market with the same level of symbolic significance as the Christian Eucharist. For Klein, however, who interpreted Smith's food-based works in terms of their "re-insertion of the human body into the disembodied rituals of Christianity," the Holy Squash represents an earthier, more flesh-like representation of the divine, in contrast to the delicate common wafers used to signify Christ's absent body.[136]For Klein, the human/divine body which Smith reinserts into religious ritual is, however, decidedly female. In her catalogue essay for Smith's 2005 retrospective at Pomona College Art Museum, she conflates Smith's squash with the female body, via its "ability to nourish and sustain," and "its feminine anthropomorphic form[s]."[137] Her comparison presumably refers to the vegetable's resemblance to a rounded pregnant stomach, a feature commonly exaggerated in representations of fertility goddesses. She goes on to refer to pre-Christian forms of worship, citing the likely socio-

[136] Klein, "Feeding the Body," 28.
[137] Jennie Klein, "The Body's Odyssey," in *The 21st Century Odyssey Part II: The Performances of Barbara T Smith,* ed. Marjorie Harth (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2005), 11.

cultural significance of the squash— "able to be eaten and used as a container"—among prehistoric peoples.[138] Despite alluding to a possible connection between Smith's vegetable worship and primitive forms of religious practice, she concludes that the artist avoids merely re-constructing a model of primordial Mother Goddess-worship—that is, replacing a patriarchal system with a matriarchy—but instead, via food, proposes a celebratory form of feminist spirituality, seemingly free of gendered hierarchy.[139]

Whilst *Celebration* makes overt references to Christian ritual practices, as Jenni Sorkin has posited, it can be understood as an earnest exploration of burgeoning forms of alternative spirituality, as well as, paradoxically, a parodic take on 'New Age' and countercultural belief systems—frequently appropriated from a variety of eclectic sources, past and present. Expanding on Klein's passing description of the work as a "hippie passion play,"[140] Sorkin emphasizes the importance of the contemporary countercultural climate which surrounded the artist, making reference to the "myriad of alternative religion, lifestyle and spiritual practices" on offer in Los Angeles and Southern California more broadly. She asserts that Smith frequently engaged in a mockery of the West Coast's "love-affair with self-discovery."[141]

Unlike Christian rituals, the ceremonies that took place in *Celebration* did not follow a prescribed order, but instead relied on improvisation—and therefore cannot truly be called 'ritual' in the strict definition of the word. Its structure was loose and open-ended, allowing for the influence of fate (enabling "miracles" to occur) and a degree of individual spontaneous response. It was

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[138] Ibid.

[139] Contra to her assertion that *Celebration* "provided a religion that was based not on the problematic notion of a mother goddess: but a ubiquitous vegetable," Klein has subsequently written about Smith's work in relation to Goddess worship: Jennie Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s" in *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture: Experiment in America, 1965-1977,* ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 225-240; Klein, "The Body's Odyssey," 12.

[140] Ibid, 11.

[141] Sorkin, "Performance as Parody: Barbara T Smith in Situ," in *The 21st Century Odyssey Part II: The Performances of Barbara T Smith,* ed. Marjorie Harth (Claremont, CA: Pomona College Museum of Art, 2005), 51.

thus closer to expressions of countercultural spirituality, focused on the enhancement or expansion of individual experience. As Tipton documents, explorations of the self were, however, crucially framed within the context of belonging to a larger collective whole.[142] Smith's participants were not brought together via a series of prescribed ritual actions, as in organised religion, but via the shared focus on the act of the squash and its celebratory consumption. Thus, my intent is to continue Sorkin's task of reading Smith's work within its countercultural context, by using it as a means to examine food's contemporary use as a tool of communal belonging, both socio-politically and spiritually, and as a vehicle for an expansion in consciousness, not wholly distinct from psychedelic drug-taking.

Given the evangelical fervour with which vegetarianism, veganism, and low-impact diets were promoted during the 1970s, Smith's creation of a vegetable-based cult does somewhat seem like a parodic take on the contemporary obsession with all-natural, 'clean' eating, and overall reverence towards nature. The frivolity captured on camera furthers this, with smiles and laughter appearing to indicate that all involved were well aware of the absurdity of their actions. However, the artist would later assert that the squash held a personal psychic and spiritual significance, related to a realisation that: "the fate of me and the fate of the earth are irrevocably connected."[143] Following time spent with a Seneca medicine woman Twylah Nitsch, Smith subsequently came to believe the squash's arrival was fated and had placed an obligation on her to perform with it. As Nitsch had informed her: "contrary to what I might think, I did not decide to use the squash in performance…it came to me."[144]

Although Smith's recollections over a decade later were informed by her subsequent awakening to ecofeminism, her perception of a mystic connection between (her)self and nature is pertinent to countercultural

[142] Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties.*
[143] Smith recounting her conversation with Nitsch, in Klein, "Feeding the Body," 29. (Original source not cited.)
[144] Ibid.

spirituality's emphasis on interconnectivity and oneness. (It is worth stating that this component of ecofeminism is not entirely distinct from countercultural spirituality but, rather, is related to its monistic shift in focus.) The reverence towards natural foods during this period can be understood as an extension of this. Eating all-natural, 'clean' food was often framed as an act of energy transfer from the land to one's self, or as an absorption of the earth's "goodness." Crucially, this transfer was deemed to be pure, due to natural food's purported ecological soundness. Furthermore, its benefits were frequently understood in terms of physic well-being, as well as physical health.

The popularity of macrobiotics, based on principles of dietary balance derived from Zen Buddhism, exemplifies this holistic approach.[145] The opening lines of a 1971 leaflet, "The Macrobiotic Way," encapsulates the movement's alignment of food, individual well-being and, ultimately a sense of spiritual-connectedness with the natural world and cosmos:

> We are without doubt the manifestation of both heavenly and earthly sustenance. From the earth we receive our food which forms our blood, cells, nerves, bowels, bones and skin. From heaven we receive vibrations which are manifest in our desires, inspirations, dreams, thought and love. To live in harmony with heaven and earth is every man's goal, which is called happiness. To feel this in everyday life is to feel the power of the creator and destroyer, of infinite change and movement, which men for thousands of years have been naming Allah, God, Aum, Jehovah and many others. [146]

Following this opening paragraph, environmental activist and health food entrepreneur Paul Hawken goes on to list the principles of macrobiotics. Furthering this notion of oneness he begins: "Everything is the differentiated manifestation of one infinity."[147] As another "devotee," quoted in a *Time*

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[145] Belasco notes this complex Japanese import was often simplified to a meagre diet of soy and brown rice (For many advocates these "Oriental" staples "symbolised solidarity with poor but spirituality strong Vietnamese peasants.") Belasco, *Appetite for Change,* 55-56.
[146] Hawken "The Macrobiotic Way."
[147] Ibid.

article, "The Kosher of the Counterculture," succinctly expressed it: food was seen as a means to "attain the order of the Universe." [148] Within Macrobiotics this sense of cosmic order was achieved via a dietary program that was tailored to individual need, as well as the needs of the individual's environmental surroundings. The aim was to achieve a sense of harmony between the self and all beyond it.

This contemporaneous emphasis on the individual *in situ* highlights an important aspect of Smith's work. *Celebration* transforms the connection between (wo)man, food and nature into a series of loosely structured ceremonial acts. However, it can also be understood as a meditation on the centrality of food within human activity, specifically, social and interpersonal relations. Sorkin has highlighted the overlooked influence of Gestalt Therapy on Robert Irwin and Robert Morris, with whom Smith studied at UC Irvine.[149] Whilst Morris' seminal series of essays, "Notes on Sculpture," employs the concept of gestalt in terms of its relation to the spatial perception of objects as totalities (as informed by the gestalt theories of the philosopher Edmund Husserl), Gestalt Therapy approaches the self in a similarly totalising or holistic fashion. Developed by psychotherapist Fredrick Perls, Gestalt Therapy emphasizes the importance of complete awareness of all aspects of body, mind and spirt, in order to better understand the interconnection of the self to one's surroundings, and by extension, others.[150]

As Sorkin discovered in conversation with the artist, much like Irwin, Smith engaged in on-going open dialogues with Ed Wortz, a Gestalt therapist, who also co-founded the Los Angeles International Buddhist Center.[151] The influence of these dialogues on Smith's 1970s practice are hinted at in a

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[148] "Modern Living: The Kosher of the Counterculture" *Time*, Nov 16, 1970, accessed Jan 22, 2018, http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,904481,00.html
[149] Sorkin, "Performance as Parody, 51.
[150] Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Gregory Battock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968),222-235; F. S. Perls, Ralph F. Hefferline and Paul Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Julian Press, 1951).
[151] Sorkin, "Performance as Parody, 51.

contemporaneous essay by UC San Diego gallery director, Wortz's wife, Melinda Wortz. Featuring in the catalogue for Smith's solo exhibition held at the gallery in 1974, Wortz frames her discussion of Smith's food-based works as an examination of "the complex psychological and spiritual ramifications of the basic biological activity of eating."[152] Although Wortz does not discuss *Celebration* directly, this exploration manifested itself in the work in the form of Smith's sensuous engagement with the squash, as well as the loosely structured, communally performed, ceremonies it engendered. In doing this, the squash was celebrated for it organoleptic properties and the various forms of nourishment these provided, as was, I would argue, the group dynamic established via their individual, multi-layered relations to it.

Wortz ends her essay on the "implications of food themes" in Smith's practice with a reflection on a work dating from the year of its publication. In *Dimensions* (1974), Smith set up a series of six cubicles containing live and dead fish, which focused participants' perception on one sensory encounter at a time. In the sixth cubicle the fish was presented as a masterpiece of culinary artistry, thus removed entirely from its 'natural' appearance. Wortz concludes that the work reflected Smith's central concern with the increasing fragmentation of contemporary life. In a final musing fitting the holistic, individual-focused approach of Gestalt therapy, she states that once one is aware of this fragmentation: "it is then up to us to find means to integration by allowing all aspects of our psyches full play."[153] One could argue *Celebration* proposes such an integration in relation to food, by demonstrating its use as a means to explore spiritual and interpersonal relations, and thus its ability to satisfy psychic, as well as physical, needs.

In its gathering together of individuals (friends who did not initially know each other) for the common purpose of a series of social and quasi-spiritual activities, *Celebration* mirrored the importance countercultural communities

[152] Melinda Wortz, "Implications of Food Themes in the Work of Barbara Smith," in *Barbara Smith*, ed. Moira Roth, (San Diego: San Diego Art Gallery, University of California) 1974, 24.
[153] Ibid, 26.

placed on the shared act of eating. As accounts of commune life have highlighted, the kitchen often functioned as the communes' symbolic heart.[154] Group decisions were frequently made at the dining table, and the food served there often the collaborative result of growing and cooking. Whilst the physical spaces designated for eating served to reinforce participation in the commune's democratic structure, the act itself often took on a ceremonial aspect. Food was a core feature of group activities. Shared meals were used to mark celebratory occasions, to initiate new communards and welcome potential 'converts.'[155]

The value placed on gathering around the dining table to eat and communicate was thus not entirely removed from its centrality to traditional American family values. Many communards saw themselves as participating in an alternative, expanded version of the nuclear family.[156] This likeness to the suburban ritual of family dinner is perhaps unsurprising given the demographics. Much like the counterculture at large, a significant portion of the commune movement was white and middle class. Sorkin suggests that "Smith's *Celebration* gently mocks Christian community gatherings[…]where food is pressed into service less as spiritual nourishment then as social lubricant."[157] However, there is potential to read Smith's holy squash, with its bohemian dinner-party origins, as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the blurred boundary between "edible radicalism," and the cultish middle class following of food and lifestyle fads, adopted as an expressions of social status. Smith's enshrined squash resembles at various points the communal crockpot and the kind of mysterious and exotic dish, found served on a platter in the pages of *Good Housekeeping*. This reading gains greater traction when considered in relation to an earlier work, which combined the trappings of a bougie dinner-party, with elements more befitting a psychedelic happening.

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[154] See for example: Horton, *Country Commune Cooking*, 13-17. In researching her part recipe book, part anthropological study, Horton observed, contrary to press portrayals, that most communes were not "centred around lurid sex or violent politics but on food."
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Sorkin, "Performance as Parody, 53.

Ritual Meal (1969) [Fig.3.24—28] was a six-course dinner served for sixteen guests, held at the home of noted art patrons, Elyse and Stanley Grinstein. In contradiction to its setting in an affluent area of Los Angeles, the event was not typical of sophisticated dining. Although, as the artist's preparatory notes indicate, the evening's order of service was tightly choreographed, Smith's participants experienced it as a chaotic—and quite literally nauseating—overload of the senses. On arrival guests were greeted by two 'butlers' dressed as frogmen, who were accompanied by a high-volume tape loop of a pounding heartbeat. The service was conducted by waitstaff dressed in surgical scrubs. Among other dishes, they served puréed fruit in plasma bottles, and raw meat to be cooked at the table, by the guests, using surgical instruments. These activities took place against a backdrop of swirling audio-visuals. Scenes of waves crashing onto a beach, a heart beating in a surgically opened chest, and naked men and women exploring a field of thick undergrowth, were projected onto the walls. On the celling, there was a slideshow of images of the cosmos and human circulatory and digestive systems. An intense soundtrack was provided by the experimental composer Joseph Bryd, featuring synthesisers, a Chinese gong and, at the end, a lyrical flute.[158]

Both Klein and Wortz comment on *Ritual Meal's* atavistic quality, as well as its semblance to tribal rituals. Klein likened it to a "journeying back to the primeval soup of the collective unconscious," whilst Wortz was prompted to think about ritual beliefs and practices involving blood, specifically gaining spiritual power from what (or who) one killed, via the act of its consumption. (Much like *Celebration,* Wortz suggests the work highlights the primitive origins of the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion.)[159] Prior to eating, Smith's guests were given make up to apply to their faces. Photo-documentation shows them with bold stripes of colour swiped across their

[158] Bryd has connections with both the New York avant-garde and Californian counterculture. Having studied with John Cage, he was a participant in proto-Fluxus experiments of the early 1960s, and also the leader of the rock band The United States of America (1967-8) whose music integrated electronic sounds with radical left-wing politics.
[159] Klein, "Feeding the Body," 26; Wortz, "Implications of Food Themes,"25.

cheeks, evoking the tribal ritual of painting one's face before hunting, or going into battle—a practice sometimes performed for ceremonial purposes, such as adolescent rites of passage. Again, Wortz frames Smith's performance in relation to the challenge it posed to the fragmented experience of modern life. She alludes to the participants' feelings of revulsion and the contemporary disconnect between meat as food product—packaged and sanitised for commercial purposes—and meat as flesh, belonging to a once living thing.[160] Smith, in her analysis, restores man's relationship to food, and the cosmos at large, to its raw, primitive origins.[161]

Smith attributed *Ritual Meal* to a belief in the need for a "spiritual renaissance[…]to rediscover transformational rituals, rites of passage that were meaningful[…]to include other cultures that had tools for psychic expansion and reconnection with the landscape of the mind."[162] Whilst Smith's reflections give credence to Klein's and Wortz's interpretations, what has been underplayed in discussions of the work is its similarity to countercultural activities. Specifically, Smith's attempt to construct 'rituals for psychic expansion' bears a resemblance to not only ancient or tribal practices, but also those of psychedelic happenings, or 'be-ins.'

The most well-know of these happenings, The Acid Tests, offered its participants an immersive, and often equally disquieting, sensory experience. These open-invite parties, organised by author Ken Kesey and followers, known as the Merry Pranksters, also centred around acts of communal consumption. They took place across California from 1964-66, before the state made LSD illegal. LSD was disseminated at the events in punch and Kool-Aid. Audio-visual stimuli included film projections, light shows, psychedelic rock and experimental sound recordings. As Phil Leash of The Grateful Dead recalls, "Prankster music" was often "punctuated by shrieks, moans, expostulations, cries, murmurs, and laughter," recorded from the

[160] Ibid, 24-25.
[161] Ibid, 26.
[162] Smith quoted in Ibid.

crowd and played back via "Mobius loops of microphones and speakers."[163] These were played in jarring sequences, at high volume. The intent was to intensify the communal 'trip,' by replicating acid's sensory effects. Other foods, both adulterated and unadulterated, were also a frequent fixture, providing sustenance for the lengthy duration of the events, but also additional stimulation—via both taste and touch.

Advertising handbills for Kesey's happenings featured the slogan, "Can you pass the Acid Test?" Thus, attendance was posed as a feat of individual endurance, as well as a rite of initiation. Passing the test signified a symbolic induction, a notion further supported by the creation of diplomas, membership cards and Kesey's eventual "Acid Graduation" ceremony, held in 1966 [Fig.3.29—30]. Smith similarly framed *Ritual Meal* as an initiation. After the dinner concluded the guests were adorned with wreaths of fresh flowers, and guided out of the room by pairs of naked waiters, a process consistently described in accounts as "a release from [a] ritual ordeal."[164] This multi-sensory "ordeal" can be likened to an acid trip, down to the synaesthesia experienced by many LSD users. The 'dishes' Smith served were no longer recognisable as food. Their various tastes and textures became associated with the swirling backdrop of colours, sounds and images. One guest claimed the event was the closest thing to a living dream he had ever experienced, whilst another found it so deeply unsettling he was unable to attend work the next day.[165]

As the artist's recollections indicate, however, the intent of *Ritual Meal's* trial-by-ordeal was not only to bond its participants—via what appears to have been a semi-traumatic experience—but also to enable them to individually encounter a state of expanded consciousness. Those who attended the Acid Tests (and users of LSD in general), frequently spoke of the

[163] Phil Lesh *Searching for the Sound*: *My Life with the Grateful Dead* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006), 68-69.
[164] Klein, "Feeding the Body," 26.
[165] Transcript of Malcom Lubliner (participant in *Ritual Meal*) interviewed by Petrie Mason, 1969, box 160, folder 12, Barbara T Smith Papers, 2014.M14, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

experience in similar terms. In words which bear a marked resemblance to Smith's own, Lesh described LSD as "a tool[s] to enhance awareness, to expand our horizons, to access other levels of the mind, to manifest the numinous and sacred, tools that had been in use for thousands of years by shamans, by oracles…." before going on to state that, "…these experiences were explorations into the super-real, voyages designed to bring a larger sense of reality back into human consciousness…" [166]

Nisbet has previously delineated a connection between the creation of psychedelic spaces designed to facilitate an expansion of psyche and the contemporaneous gallery-based 'environments' of artists such as Allan Kaprow, a mentor of Smith.[167] Nisbet focuses on the construction of such spaces for the purposes of psychedelic experimentation, as conducted by Leary at the Hitchcock Estate in Millbrook, New York. In terms of its relative intimacy and upper middle class setting, *Ritual Meal* can be likened to the Millbrook mansion and the experiments which took place there. Leary, along with artist Allan Atwell, created intimate, multi-sensory spaces designed to replicate the positive aspects of tripping. However, those from Millbrook who attended the Acid Tests described them as distinct in terms of their raw energy and chaos, or, to borrow the words used by spiritual teacher, Ram Dass (formerly Richard Alpert) the sense of sensory 'surrender' they demanded from their participants. Leary himself likened them to authentic pagan intuition ceremonies.[168] Such descriptions equally fit Smith's *Ritual Meal*.

Much like Ruppersberg's *Al's Café, Ritual Meal* partially resembles an installation. However, both artists strove for the creation of temporary experiential spaces—or situations—that transcended the physical bounds of their objecthood. As stated, Leary understood the psychedelic experience as

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[166] Lesh, *Searching for the Sound,* 36.
[167] Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems,* 13-66.
[168] Ram Dass and Timothy Leary interview in: Paul Perry, *On the Bus: The Complete Guide to the Legendary Trip of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters and the Birth of the Counterculture* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1990), 149, 167.

a form of ‘neurological art’ with the capacity to activate a yearned for reality in the brain of the beholder. Marioni, Ruppersberg and Smith can be understood to have produced art which partially took place on this level of participatory ‘head space,’ as established via the social and bodily engagement engendered by acts of communal consumption. Thus, the model of conceptual perception they offer is one which acknowledges the inseparability of mind from body, and body from its surroundings—and with that, one might argue, the impossible utopianism of conceptualism’s quest for autonomy.

On the Road (Again)

The highway is the American's other home, a sign of his restlessness, monument to the awesome spaces he inhabits, host and cause of a uniquely exciting—or appalling—roadside culture. The highway represents the conjunction of our topography and our economy and thus tells us more of what makes America than we may care to learn. Along its edge is our history and our future.

John W. McCoubrey, "Art and the Road." *The Highway*, 1970.[1]

"The highway is the American's other home"—So opens John W. McCoubrey's catalogue essay for *The Highway*, an exhibition of art and documentation of America's public roads, held at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia in 1970. Although the exhibition featured works from across the twentieth century, contemporary representations of this theme were largely confined to Pop. Conceptual investigations of the road and "the centrality of the highway to the American experience" were largely overlooked.[2] Thus, whilst Ed Ruscha featured, he was represented via his screen-prints *New Standard* (1969), *Cheese Mold Standard with Olive* (1969), and an oil on canvas, *Frisk* (1962). McCoubrey justified this emphasis by stating that Pop Art took as its subject matter "mass media and mass production…the products of "highway America."[3]

With his reference to restlessness, McCoubrey established the significance of the road within American history and culture, but also travel, movement, and exploration more broadly. As he asserted, the nation's system of roads signified areas of the American landscape, conquered and peopled: the "march of concrete and asphalt" casting from "gutted cities," the "sprawling suburbs," as well as space rife for future expansion. "The highway," he

[1] John W. McCoubrey, "Art and the Road," in *The Highway*, John W. McCoubrey, Denise Scott Brown, and Robert Venturi (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1970), 19.
[2] Douglas Huebler's *Duration Piece No. 17, Haverhill, Massachusetts* 1969 was a notable exception. Ibid, 20.
[3] Ibid, 20.

suggested, "leads into the land as it always was, that vast stretching emptiness which holds the promise of our future, now fading from one of inexhaustible riches, physical and spiritual recreation, to one perhaps only of real estate."[4]

McCoubrey began his essay with a quote from Walt Whitman's *Song of the Open Road* (1858), in which the poet declared: "O public road…You express me better than I can express myself."[5] However, McCoubrey's prose is tinged with a cynicism towards the ongoing existence of Whitman's romantic vision. In his vivid descriptions, the road takes on an overpowering, almost monstrous quality. As he alludes, its spiritual potential has not only faded, but altogether ceased to exist. That is, if it ever did, outside of art and poetry. He does not unpack the precise nature of its previously "inexhaustible riches," but in quoting Whitman evokes the spiritual enjoyment and recreational pleasure associated with immersing oneself in open natural surroundings. As he suggests, the access to nature offered by America's roadways is now ironically threated by the levelling of the land required for their construction. The destructive power of the modern highway extends to certain modes of living. A symptom of American capitalism, the perpetual drive for expansion eats into individuals' time and freedom, as it does the land. McCoubrey's essay is peppered with allusions to a dissatisfaction with modern urban living. Thus, he positioned the exhibition's images of the 'lonesome road' as symbols of a contemporary, American ennui.

McCoubrey does not make direct reference to the counterculture. However, his expressions of discontent with contemporary American life mirror its core sentiment. Such frustrations motivated vast numbers to 'return to the road' during this period. Travel and movement were a significant feature of the American counterculture [Fig.4.1—7], with the initial stage of the socio-cultural phenomenon marked by a period of migration. Many of those

[4] Ibid, 20.
[5] Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," *Leaves of Grass: Leaves of Grass, 1860: The 150th Anniversary Facsimile Edition*, ed. Jason Stacy (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 315.

'turned on' to the countercultural message moved from locations across the country to find other like-minded individuals. They initially gravitated towards populous urban areas. Countercultural communities could be found in many large American cities, including New York. The majority of migratory movement was directed towards California, with San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury acting as it nucleus.[6] By the end of the 1960s, many took to the road again. This time movement was directed away from urban centres, toward more remote, rural locations. Many re-established pre-existing communes, and thus moved as part of a collective, but equally some sought out new alternatives, and therefore travelled alone.

Many factors motivated this second wave of countercultural migration. One was overpopulation. As was widely reported, Haight-Ashbury struggled to cope with the influx of daily arrivals. Accounts of life in the district, as well as other city communes, frequently describe the disruptive presence of naïve and/or ignorant youngsters, who either needed much guidance, or failed to contribute to the community. After taking communal food and drugs, many simply left. Increasing commercialisation was another issue. "Hip" businesses grew alongside countercultural communities. Many, including the San Francisco Diggers, saw this as profiteering. In Haight-Ashbury, the well-publicized swell of genuine countercultural converts attracted other curious individuals: tourists or "rubberneckers."[7] As detailed in 1967 article for the *Los Angeles Times*, one bus company even briefly offered guided tours of the area to interested outsiders.[8]

Although such frustrations likely had an impact, attempts to "return to the land" were motivated by a more fundamental sense of dissatisfaction. These new, disingenuous arrivals were seen as symptoms of a larger illness: the counterculture's co-option and commodification by the system it sought to

[6] For a contemporary account, see: "Youth: The Hippies," *Time*, 7 July, 1967.
[7] Stephen Ao Golden, "A Challenging Period of Adjustment Has Set in Among Hippies of San Francisco," *New York Times,* Aug 19, 1967, 27, 29.
[8] Horace Sutton, "Hip Ideas on How to Visit Hippieland in the Bay Area" *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 2, 1967, 7.

oppose. Thus, this second wave of countercultural migration can be framed as a realisation that dropping out of mainstream society necessitated physically leaving it. However, the 'back-to-land movement,' was not strictly confined to those the mainstream media described as "hippies." Fostered by increased ecological awareness, self-sufficiency became a broader trend. In addition to countercultural communards, 1970s rural migration included private small-holders, attracted to a slower, less environmentally impactful lifestyle.[9]

Travel was a central feature of the counterculture in a number of other ways, from 'trips' of various kinds across America, to the popular pursuit of 'finding oneself' overseas. As I shall discuss, such activities variously resembled tours of pilgrimage or tourism. Great emphasis was often placed on the traveller's personal progress; yet countercultural journeying also drew on notions of the collective. The climax of the lone traveller's journey frequently involved coming together with other like-minded travellers. For those journeying to large-scale gatherings, such as protests, festivals and 'be-ins,' this communal sense of belonging was a key component of the overall experience. Photographs of festival goers arriving at Woodstock in August 1969 provide an iconic example of this [see: Fig.4.1]. Held in Bethel, New York State, the Woodstock Music & Art Fair attracted over four hundred thousand attendees. Many arrived together on foot, having abandoned their vehicles. According to the *New York Times*, on the opening night, this line of parked cars already stretched more than twenty miles away from the site.[10] The countercultural significance of mass gatherings was also evident in the

[9] Kate Daloz, *We Are As Gods: Back to the Land in the 1970s on the Quest for a New America* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016); Jeffrey Carl Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

[10] Barnard L. Collier, "200,000 Thronging to Rock Festival Jam Roads Upstate," *New York Times* Aug 16, 1969, 1.

phenomenon of the 'Deadheads:' Grateful Dead fans willing to travel all over America simply to gather outside sold-out shows.[11]

The countercultural travellers of the mid-1960s-70s thus arguably strove to recuperate the road's supposedly fading spiritual and recreational potential. That is, they saw it as a means to reconnect with the land and one's self, individually and in relation to nature, as well as with fellow like-minded voyagers. In light of this particular socio-cultural context, my approach in this chapter is distinct to that of *The Highway's* curators. Instead of focusing on images of "highway America," in which the road was made emblematic of mass production and culture, my intent is to explore how conceptual artists responded to the renewed, countercultural significance of road journeys—be this earnestly, in critique, with a knowing sense of irony, or a dispassionate distance.

Due to conceptualism's procedure-led nature, journeys, trips and quests provided well-suited subject matter for its instructional investigations. As Margaret Iversen has highlighted, they function as another form of pre-determined and rule-governed task, to be documented photographically, in what she describes as an automatic, depersonalised process.[12] In other words, they draw attention to the purported conditions of conceptual art-making. It is my contention, however, that conceptualism's supposedly autonomous and entirely self-referential approach was actively challenged by a number of practitioners who overtly engaged with the era's counterculture climate. To this end, I begin with an overt example of this: Tom Marioni's *The Trip* (1972). With its overt references to various countercultural activities, Marioni's work will be used as a means to establish potential links between

[11] Many gave up traditional jobs to follow the band, and survived selling food and souvenirs. "Dead Heads," *A Long Strange Trip*, series 1, episode 5, directed by Amir Bar-Lev (Amazon Network: 2017).
[12] Margaret Iversen, "Auto-maticity: Ruscha and Performative Photography," in *Photography After Conceptual Art*, ed. Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 12-27.

the conceptual handling of road journeys, and their contemporaneous socio-cultural significance.

As an initial case study, my analysis of *The Trip* paves the way for a more contextually-driven account of journeying within conceptual practices of the 1960s-70s. I explore the conceptual investigations of various stages of travel: 'going forth' in pursuit of an external or internal objective, the phenomenological experience of being 'on the road,' and finally, the significance of arriving at, or alternatively returning to, one's final destination. Providing the principle framework for this structure is a work that has, to-date, frequently been discussed at a remove from its immediate contextual circumstances. This owing partially to the artist's European background, but also the mythology surrounding its production: Bas Jan Ader's, *In Search of the Miraculous* (1973-1975).

A Long Strange Trip: Countercultural Road Trip as Conceptual Performance

In March 1972, Tom Marioni and a group of artist-friends embarked on a road trip from San Francisco to Newport Harbour in an airport limousine car—a stretched station wagon with bench-style seating. The passengers included Mel Henderson, Paul Kos, Bonnie Sherk, George Bolling, Larry Fox—and one heavily pregnant rat. The purpose of the trip was the opening of *The San Francisco Performance,* an exhibition held at Newport Harbour Art Museum from 12th March—16th April. Marioni had been invited to present his Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA) to a Southern Californian audience. Henderson, Kos and Sherk, along with Terry Fox, Howard Fried, and the Berkeley collective Sam's Café, were all contributors. The process of getting there, the journey's pick-ups, and both planned and unplanned stops, was also a featured work.

Marioni conceived of *The Trip* [Fig.4.8—17] as a conceptual performance. Bolling and Fox documented the event via film and still photography, though both were also participants. Fox's series of 139 black-and-white photographs begins with the limousine parked in an alleyway, waiting to be filled with

cargo. A sequence of loading images follows. Marioni can then be seen collecting fellow travellers from a number of locations. In one image, framed by the interior of the car, the artist is shown approaching a suburban timber-framed house, whilst the hired driver waits, watching. A further image shows a line of luggage assembled on the sidewalk. Once on the road, Fox took a series of photographs looking back down the inside of the car. Shot from the front passenger seat, these images are the most frequently republished. The artists can variously be seen conversing, gazing out of the window, staring into the middle-distance, reading the paper and sleeping. In one photograph, Sherk puts her finger and thumb to her lips to smoke, offering an early hint at the dual meaning of the work's title. Subsequent photographs show Maroni rolling and then passing around a joint. Crucially, for the artist, *The Trip* was not only a shared experience in terms of the physical journey; it also took place on an additional plane or 'head-space,' aided by their copious use of marijuana.[13]

The artists' various of states of communal engagement, solo contemplation and fatigue was not just a side-effect of smoking pot. San Francisco is approximately four hundred miles from Newport Harbour. Thus, although the journey is manageable without an overnight stop, it arguably edges towards discomfort. Marioni incorporated a number of rest stops and detours. These broke up the journey, despite also lengthening it. Each of these was documented. They stopped at two roadside diners, the first a wooden-panelled and fringed curtained affair (reminiscent of Ruppersberg's *Al's Café*), and the second, a fast food establishment inside a Mobil gas station, complete with plastic seating and bouffant haired waitresses. They visited the Forestiere Underground Gardens in Fresno, a complex of sunken grottos and patios, carved into sedimentary rock, and went to see friend and MOCA associate, Chris Burden perform *Bed Piece* (1972) at Market Street, Venice.

[13] Marioni emphasized this aspect along with the title's pun. Conversation with Tom Marioni in the artist's studio, San Francisco, June 20th 2016.

They also made an unscheduled stop due to engine trouble. Fox captured the artists waiting roadside, with the vehicle's hood popped.

The artists arrived at Newport Beach that evening. A final stop was made to enable Henderson to complete *Attica* (1972), his contribution to the exhibition. Under the cover of darkness, Henderson accessed private land and used Christmas lights to spell out "Attica," in reference to the infamous prison riots of September 1971.[14] Fox documented the act as well the arrival of the Highway Patrol [Fig.4.16—17]. The installation was dismantled and the artist arrested, along with Kos, who assisted. Photographs show their particulars being taken down, aided by flashlight. Both artists spent the night in jail, but the charges were ultimately dropped. Henderson considered the whole event, including his arrest, the basis of the work.

Alongside *Attica*, other works in *The San Francisco Performance* included an untitled participation piece by Kos, which featured a pool table hazardously placed next to a set of animal traps, Fried's *Fuck You Perdue*, a twenty-five-minute-long video loop of drill sergeants shouting back and forth at each other, and Sherk's *Traditional Performance: A Piece within a Piece, within a Piece, within a Piece etc.* Sherk's work featured the expectant rat which travelled beside the artist, in a cardboard box, for the entire duration of *The Trip*. Inside the gallery, Sherk constructed a tent-like cage for the rat to give birth, and on the opening night, performed a series of actions relating to nest-building and motherhood. The rat and its ten babies subsequently had to be removed, and the exhibition temporarily closed, when one of them bit a visitor.[15]

In addition to these solo works, the documentation for *The Trip* also featured [Fig.4.18]. Hung unframed, without borders or space separating them, they

[14] Inmates seized control of Attica Correctional Facility New York, demanding improved living conditions and political rights. Thirty-three inmates and ten officers died before negotiations concluded.

[15] As recounted in: Karen Moss, "Beyond the White Cell: Experimentation/Education/Intervention in California Circa 1970," in *State of Mind: New California Art Circa 1970,* eds., *Constance Lewallen, and Karen Moss* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 141.

allowed visitors to re-trace the group's journey, in a continuous movement around the perimeter of the space. The presentation of the work, and indeed its inclusion in the show, reflects the rationale unpinning *The San Francisco Performance*, consistent with Marioni's understanding of conceptual art as a new form of sculpture, concerned with "idea-oriented situations."[16] In the catalogue, Marioni described a contemporary concern with documenting "the conscious flow of life," stating that within "the new sculpture…the artist functions as an element/material and the relationships of his movement with spaces, sound, light, surface quality, presence, and so on function exactly the same as in traditional sculpture."[17] The road trip, measured in terms of distance and duration, thus provided the artist with the perfect metaphor for this contemporary form of sculpture, centred around the actions and movement of the artist, embedded in both space and time. A sense of immediacy and temporality is implied by Marioni's further assertion that, "the new sculpture demands the artist execute his work in the space that it is to be shown."[18] Although seemingly contradicting the inclusion of documentation in the exhibition, Marioni's statement locates art in-and-of the moment of its creation—for *The Trip* literally the physical and temporal space *between* two institutions—and privileges process over end-product—or alternatively, in this case, its "destination." The narrative of the road trip, with its emphasis on the process of getting somewhere, can be considered the perfect metaphor for this notion.

Karen Moss has framed Marioni's catalogue essay as a re-affirmation of his proposed transition from traditional object-bound sculpture to "time-based media."[19] The artist's interest in the emerging technology of video reflected this concern. As he highlighted, handheld cameras were able to record uninterrupted streams of art/life, as well as "the movements of the artist's

[16] Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy: A Memoir by Tom Marioni* (San Francisco, CA: Crowne Point Press, 2007), 104.
[17] Tom Marioni, *San Francisco Performance* (Newport Beach: Newport Harbour Art Museum, 1972), unpaginated.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Moss, "Beyond the White Cell," 141.

hand and body."[20] He explicitly linked this practice to a new art climate, fostered by "hippie" culture and drug use. As he asserted, for many of his Bay Area contemporaries, "the taking of drugs is important to the execution and even the understanding of the work."[21] Marioni expanded on this attempt to connect video-art, drug-taking and temporality, in a conversation that took place in 2016.[22] He attributed his particular attraction to the medium's early form to its intrinsic slowness. The limited capacity to edit footage resulted in events being captured in tediously slow, "real time." Viewers' subsequent experience thus often felt more protracted than if they encountered the activities directly. For the artist, this suspended or disturbed sense of time was similar to that induced by marijuana.

Boiling's footage of *The Trip* can thus be thought to replicate the altered perception of time experienced by Marioni's participants. This effect was arguably a product of the journey itself. However, their use of marijuana potentially doubled the already disrupted sense of time common to tiresomely long road journeys. Cars enable distances to be collapsed, allowing individuals to travel at speeds faster than by foot. Yet, as can be seen in documentation of *The Trip*, the body's normal patterns are thrown out of balance, and passing time becomes a feat of endurance. In an effort to overcome both issues, Maroni's trippers can be seen attempting to get some "shut eye," with the aid of dark sunglasses, whilst Kos shields his face with a newspaper.

Even without Marioni's explicit reference to "hippie" culture, the countercultural undercurrent of *The Trip* can be established with relative ease. Among shots of joint smoking, Kos can be seen making a peace sign. Even the artists' dress and appearance creates an immediate association with the "youth" trends of day. Marioni alone conveys a certain countercultural coolness, in dark shades, denim jean-jacket, sideburns and afro. The

[20] Marioni, *San Francisco Performance.*
[21] Ibid.
[22] Conversation with Tom Marioni in the artist's studio, San Francisco, 20th June 2016.

importance of hair and clothing as markers of countercultural identity should not be underestimated. Burden notably made this the subject of a 1971 MOCA performance, *I Became a Secret Hippy* (1971). Shaving his head, and exchanging his clothes for a suit and tie, Burden assumed the clean-cut image associated with "white shirts," that is, the establishment and 'straight' society. Thus, his self-identification as a "hippy," whether tongue-in-cheek or otherwise, was rendered covert. [23] The group's encounter with the Highway Patrol only furthers *The Trip's* apparent anti-establishment spirit. Whilst Henderson's reference to Attica can, in itself, be read as an expression of such sentiments, his act of trespass demonstrated a disregard for the inhibition of free movement imposed by private property laws. Moreover, given that he was dealt with by this particular branch of law enforcement, his actions can also be considered oppositional to constraints placed on the 'open road'—a mythical construction that I shall unpack later in this chapter. The arrests of *The Trip* ultimately locate it alongside other narratives of 'outsiders-on-the-road.' After all, no self-respecting road movie would be complete without a brush with the law.

Fox's shots inside the limousine bear a resemblance to other iconic 'on the road' photographs of countercultural figures. These include Allen Ginsberg's photographs of Neal Cassady (the real-life inspiration for Jack Kerouac's Dean Moriarty) on the Merry Pranksters bus, "Furthur," used by Ken Kesey and his followers for their LSD-fuelled journeys across America [Fig.4.19]. These photographs similarly offer a long perspective view of the inside of the vehicle, with the communal activity inside framed by its interior. Given the iconic appearance of Furthur [Fig.4.20], an International Harvester school bus covered with swirling psychedelic patterns, Ginsberg's photographic perspective arguably serves to reinforce the importance of being *on* the bus. That is, the greater significance the Pranksters placed on the shared experience it fostered, over the journey itself. Kesey notably used "on the

[23] Bryan-Wilson previously described the work as an 'inverted drag' of 'ideal' American masculinity. However, it also functions as an inversion of plain-clothes police monitoring of 'hippie' dissidents. Bryan-Wilson, "To Move, To Dress, To Work, To Act," 204.

bus," as an expression designed to keep the Pranksters together. "You're either on the bus, or off the bus" was a warning to remind everyone to re-board in a timely fashion.[24] However, it also alluded to the importance of everyone being on 'the same trip,' in all senses of the word. As Tom Wolfe, chronicler of the group's 1966 journey from their communal home in La Honda, California to New York, outlined, the phrase served as a metaphor for the group's collective thinking, or sense of shared consciousness—a product of their on-the-road bonding, as well as their communal consumption of acid.[25]

As outlined in the previous chapter, within the counterculture, acts of communal consumption were often ritualised, given ceremonial or quasi-spiritual significance. Drugs with psychotropic properties were not only used for self-exploration, but, as with the Pranksters, for communal bonding and initiation rites. Drug-taking, or rather attaining the states they induced, was seen in terms of a transitional process, or journey; hence, "getting high" or "tripping." Kesey's Pranksters thus frequently referred to themselves as the "intrepid travellers," as well as the group, and its activities as whole, as "Intrepid Trips Inc." [See: Fig.1.31—32]. Group membership was awarded less on the basis of having been on Furthur, but rather on *going* further, into the existential beyond. That is, passing the "Acid Test." The "destination" of psychedelic experiences, both for the Pranksters' and other intrepid travellers, can thus be understood as the perceived expansion in consciousness experienced by users. Although this altered state was encountered in the moment, many individuals believed the revelations it induced to have a profound and long-lasting effect. This was particularly true of acid, with proselytizers such as Leary and Alpert arguing for its psychologically, and eventually spiritually, therapeutic potential. The transformative effects of LSD were often conceived as an existential

[24] Quoted in: Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (London: Bantam Books, 1971), 78-79.

[25] Wolfe quotes the following from Kesey as evidence of this: "If you're on the bus, and you get left behind, then you'll find it again. If you're off the bus in the first place — then it won't make a damn." Ibid.

awakening, enabled, to borrow from the title of Aldous Huxley's account of his experiences with mescaline, by a cleansing of 'the doors of perception.'[26]

Much like mescaline, which in the form of peyote has a long history of use within the religious practices of Native Americans, LSD was often treated as an entheogen: a drug used for the purposes of spiritual exploration or transformation. Understood as part of an initiation process, as in Kesey's Acid Tests, "tripping" arguably functioned as a liminal stage within certain countercultural rites of passage. Within anthropology, rites of passage have been defined as sets of cultural practices through which individuals are believed to be transformed, enabling them to establish a new sense of self-identity, or status in relation to others. The middle section of this process has historically been understood as its transitional, liminal phase. This is the period between states, where old identities have been abandoned, but the next not yet reached.[27] In mapping their psychedelic explorations on physical journeys, both the Pranksters and Marioni's trippers hyperbolized the American tradition of the road trip as a consciousness-expanding rite of passage. In doing this, the 'open' roads they traversed, the space *between* cities and institutions, and in case of the Pranksters, various states across America, can be thought to constitute the metaphorical site of a liminal, transformative process.

Although marijuana is not typically classified as a psychedelic, the drug is recognized to have psychedelic properties, with users experiencing similar alterations in consciousness, and occasionally hallucinations. The process of preparing the drug, and even sharing it, also has a certain ritual quality. These include the procedures captured in Fox's photo-documentation of *The Trip*: from assembling a joint, rolling it, to passing it in a circle from person to person. However, the journey potentially also bears a resemblance to other

[26] Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956); for further discussion of LSD's use within new spiritual practices see: Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream* (London: Flamingo, 1993), esp. 137-392.
[27] See for example the foundational text: Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 166.

passages of ritual, or quasi-spiritual, significance. Travelling from institution to institution, with stop-offs at sites of artistic and cultural importance, *The Trip* has the capacity to be likened to a form of pilgrimage. This reading is perhaps is furthered by the group's visitation with Burden [see: Fig.4.14—15].

For *Bed Piece,* Burden lay in silence, for twenty-two days on a single, white-sheeted bed. All other objects were removed, reducing the gallery space to its featureless white-walls, floor and ceiling: the essential Modernist 'white cube.'[28] As Brian O'Doherty would assert in 1976 for his critique of this institutional practice for *Artforum*, the 'white cube' confers an immediate sense of sacredness on the objects placed within it. In the case of *Bed Piece*, therefore, one could argue this status was projected on to the artist himself.[29] Much like his earlier *Five Day Locker Piece* (1971), and subsequent *White Light/White Heat* (1975), both of which involved confinement and denial of all but basic bodily needs, *Bed Piece* was partially a feat of self-endurance. It can thus be framed as another example of the artist testing his corporeal limits, as in his more infamous and overly violent *Shoot* (1971). However, his asceticism and self-imposed withdrawal also invited comparisons to a shamanic figure, sitting in meditative silence, in a seeming attempt to attain a state of bodily transcendence.[30] Burden recalled the impact of his presence, in this fast-induced, trance-like state, as follows: "In "Bed Piece" it was like I was this repulsive magnet. People would come up to about 15 feet from the bed and you could really feel it. There was an energy, a real electricity going on."[31]

They Call Me The Seeker: Defining the Countercultural Traveller

[28] For an extended discussion of the spiritual implications of Burden's use of light and space: Kristine Stiles, "Burden of Light," in *Chris Burden*, ed. Fred Hoffmann (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 22-37.
[29] Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space, Part I" *Artforum* 14, no. 7 (1976): 24-40.
[30] See for example critics who emphasized Burden's 'extra sensory' presence: Robert Horvitz, "Chris Burden," *Artforum* 14, no. 9 (1976): 24; Noel Frackman, "Chris Burden" *Arts Magazine* 49, no. 8 (1975): 9.
[31] Horvitz, "Chris Burden," 23.

The uniqueness of countercultural travel is discussed at length in Sharif Gemie and Brian Ireland's *The Hippie Trail*: *A History*,[32] which highlights its combined aspects of spiritual pilgrimage, as well as simply an alternative form of commercial tourism [Fig.4.21—23]. Using participant interviews and analyses of first-hand accounts, the book provides the first sustained history of the phenomenon of overland travel to East Asia. During the mid-1960s-70s, hundreds of thousands of young, Western travellers embarked on this form of travel. Popular routes departed from Western Europe, with Istanbul serving as the symbolic start of the trail proper, then went via Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, to India and/or Nepal.

Tours of pilgrimage typically follow a pre-determined route, structured around sites of spiritual significance and the ritual actions associated with them. As Gemie and Ireland note, pilgrimages bear a resemblance to other organised tours, including those provided for commercial tourists. However, as they highlight, being perceived as something *other* than tourists was of significant importance to the majority of hippie-trailers. In line with the countercultural approach to travel more broadly, they emphasized the importance of spontaneity, leaving their route—and therefore experiences—partially down to chance or fate. As they observed, a consequence of this was a sense of hierarchy among different types of trailers. Those who travelled in their own vehicles, or via a combination of hitchhiking and train travel, often saw their experience as more authentic than those who used overland coach services. These services were, however, less scheduled 'tours,' but rather simply shared transportation for travellers vaguely aiming for the same final destination. Embracing the countercultural emphasis on communality, how long they stayed in each location, as well as their next detour, was frequently decided by popular vote. This allowed for a spontaneity that again, many felt elevated their status beyond mere 'tourists.' [33]

[32] Sharif Gemie and Brian Ireland, *The Hippie Trail: A History* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2017).
[33] Rival companies balanced this with varying degrees of comfort and reliability: Ibid, 11-18.

Rory Maclean, author of *Magic Bus: On the Hippie Trail from Istanbul to India,* contests the notion that overland travellers were participating in a form of pilgrimage. Reflecting on an encounter with an Iranian guide, he asserted that pilgrimage concerns the ritual re-enforcement of pre-existing beliefs. The mode of independent travel the trailers modelled was instead about "challenging one's idea of living."[34] Thus, one could arguably still view Marioni's *The Trip* as a form of pilgrimage, in that it re-asserted the artist's understanding of conceptual art as centred around the activities of the artist, not confined to static space. Although as Gemie and Ireland observed, Maclean's understanding of pilgrimage relates to a narrow definition associated with organised religious practices, his assertion crucially highlights the trailers' active search for new belief systems and alternative modes of existence. This focus is encapsulated by the term 'seekers' – a popular self-description used by various kinds of countercultural voyagers.

MacLean's resistance to the word 'pilgrimage' underscores the particular challenge of pinning down the countercultural traveller. This slipperiness can partially be attributed to the ostensibly competing motivations of countercultural travel and movement, particularly in an American context— and, in this, I include the activities of American countercultural travellers overseas. The search for otherness— new or alternative experiences, lifestyles, spiritual and existential meanings—existed in simultaneous tension with nostalgic impulses and a desire to 'return home.' This return was to one's 'authentic' self, to simpler modes of existence, as well as a more 'authentic' version of one's own nation. Former tour manager of The Grateful Dead, Sam Cutler, succinctly captured the specificity of this to the American countercultural experience as follows: "People in England don't set out and leave home and go 'in search of England.'" As he states, "That would be quite preposterous."[35]

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[34] Rory Maclean, *Magic Bus: On the Hippie Trail from Istanbul to India* (London: Penguin, 2006).

[35] Interview with Sam Cutler in "This is Now," *A Long Strange Trip*, series 1, episode 2, directed by Amir Bar-Lev (Amazon Network: 2017).

As accounts of the hippie-trailers highlight, attempts to go 'off the beaten track' ironically often involve re-tracing routes taken by others. Although not written specifically about countercultural travel, Paul Fussell's attempt to articulate the difference between the explorer, traveller, and tourist, is of relevance, as it highlights this tension:

> All three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveller that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of mass publicity. The genuine traveller, is or used to be, in the middle of these two extremes. If the explorer moves towards the risks of the formless and the unknown, the tourist moves towards the security of pure cliché. It is between these two poles the traveller mediates, retaining all he can of the excitement of the unpredictable attaching to exploration, and fusing that with the pleasure of 'knowing where one is' belonging to tourism.[36]

Much like Fussell's understanding of 'authentic' travel as an endeavour half-way between exploration and tourism, I would argue the activities of the countercultural traveller oscillated between being open-ended and unguided in one sense, and yet familiar in another. That is, as I go on to discuss, they frequently took place on mapped terrain, with reference to both historical and contemporary precedents.

Many of the journeys undertaken by countercultural travellers repeated or retraced ones taken throughout American history. For example, multitudes of displaced or 'rootless' travellers have historically migrated to California, attracted by its warm climate. Back-to-land movements similarly have a long history, emerging concurrently with urban expansion. The significance of going out 'on the road' itself, that is, the desire to go in search of American authenticity (or perhaps more precisely its narrativization) has also been a long-standing cultural preoccupation. Although the Beat Generation was the

[36] Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982): 19 quoted in Gemie and Ireland, *The Hippie Trail*, 102-3.

immediate precedent for Sixties trippers (with the contemporaneous closeness resulting in some overlap, e.g. Cassady and Ginsberg), Whitman's *Song of the Open Road* (1895) is exemplary of a far earlier romanticisation of itinerant travel across America. Whitman's much quoted poem embraces free movement and direct lived experience, as fostered by America's public roads, as well the encounters with its natural and man-made landscapes they enabled.[37]

For the remainder of this chapter, my analysis of conceptual investigations of countercultural travel will focus primarily on one work, which, had the project been completed, would have consisted of three distinct parts. Ader's *In Search of the Miraculous* (1973-1975) was structured around a journey over land and sea. Beginning in Los Angeles, Ader's intention was to end on an entirely different continent, returning to his native Holland. However, as has been the subject of much speculation, the artist was declared missing at sea during the performance's second stage. Eight months after the artist set sail from Chatham, Cape Cod, the wreckage of his small one-man boat, *The Ocean Wave,* was recovered off the coast of Ireland.

Ader's work has frequently been decontextualized from its immediate surroundings, both his relation to other Californian conceptual practices, and the broader countercultural climate of the early-mid-1970s. Ader's conceptual approach has frequently been framed as idiosyncratic, or even at odds with that of his contemporaries. This is due to his supposedly unique infusion of subjective, emotional content within a rigorously applied conceptual framework. As I unpack, this framing of Ader's work emphasizes the importance of his European roots, as well as his peripheral status within with the local and national art scene. Moreover, *In Search of the Miraculous'* abrupt and inconclusive end has overshadowed not only the project as a whole, but Ader's entire oeuvre. Ader now enjoys a cult-like status, and is frequently portrayed as a tragi-heroic figure. A consequence of this

[37] Whitman, "Song of the Open Road."

hagiographic handling, which casts his disappearance as a grand act of artistic self-sacrifice, is that far less attention has been paid to the first component of his final performance. This is *One Night in Los Angeles* (1973), a series of nocturnal ramblings across the city's urban and suburban landscapes.

One Night in Los Angeles' connections with the counterculture might be considered less immediately obviously than those of *The Trip.* The readily apparent sense of communality captured by Fox in his interior shots of Marioni's limousine car-cum-bus are absent from Ader's road journey. The artist instead appears as a lone traveller. Unlike Fox and Boiling, whose physical participation in *The Trip* was each captured by the other, Ader's photographer is an invisible presence in the work, ostensibly functioning as an uninvolved, impartial witness. Mary Sue Ader-Anderson's frequent lack of credit for this role would appear to support this.[38]Ader also carried out his journey on foot, and thus, in a literal sense, his experience was not shaped by being 'on the road,' so much as travelling alongside it. Moreover, as the artist travelled into the Hollywood hills, and subsequently down to the Pacific Ocean, he eventually entirely strayed away from the city's public roads.

However, Ader framed his journey as a search for something mysterious and potentially spiritual, that is, as a search for the "miraculous," a word loaded with mystical, religious connotations. Much like the journeys undertaken by various countercultural travellers, Ader's peripatetic wanderings can therefore be understood as a form of spiritual quest or pilgrimage. Yet, there were also elements of Ader's journey which moved towards "the security of pure cliché" attendant to tourism.[39] I would suggest the existence of this tension is evident in the artist's reference to both a text of obscure esoteric philosophy, from which the project's title is taken, and as I shall later discuss, to the 1950s Doo-wop group, The Coasters. My re-reading of *In Search*

[38] Ader-Anderson revealed this role in correspondence with the authors (despite this she remains uncredited): Alexandra Blättler and Rein Wolfs, "The Works of Bas Jan Ader," in *Bas Jan Ader: Please Don't Leave Me,* ed, Alexandra Blättler and Rein Wolfs Rein (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2006), 65.
[39] Fussell, "Abroad," 19.

undertaken is thus founded on the notion that Ader's journey contains many of the same tensions present in countercultural travel: taking place on interior and external levels, and in engaged a simultaneous pursuit of both familiarity and otherness.

In an effort to redress the emphasis on *In Search of the Miraculous'* abrupt end, and facilitate a discussion of other conceptual investigations of the road, my principle focus is on its first component. However, my intent is not to read *One Night* as a discrete work. Instead, it is my contention that a nostalgic, but ultimately impossibly utopian impulse, akin to that of the counterculture, runs throughout the work. It is also worth stating that I am making the active choice to avoid lengthy engagement with the speculative narratives that surround Ader's disappearance, and to reflect, as far as possible, on his planned conclusion: a mirroring of his initial actions in Los Angeles on the streets of Amsterdam.

As stated, Ader's work will be used as a means to further explore other conceptual investigations of road journeys, in terms of their relation to countercultural travel. The structure of Ader's journey will loosely be used as framework for this. Beginning with the notion of 'going forth,' I analyse *One Night* in relation to both contemporaneous and historic quest narratives, before then going on to examine how Ader engaged with the cultural and phenomenological significance of being 'on the road.' The artist's approach to conceptual photography, along with that of his peers, will also be re-examined in relation to two alternative modes of travel documentation: the tourist snapshot and the picture postcard. My analysis concludes with an account of Ader's final attempt to go 'back to the land, over the sea.' I consider this in relation to an impulse with a particular socio-historic potency, the drive to both encounter and conquer nature. Thus, this final section explores the act of going 'off road,'—or rather, the significance of carving out new, alternative pathways.

Going Forth: The search for American authenticity, self and nation

I've gone to look for America.

Simon & Garfunkel, "America," 1968.[40]

Yeah, I've been searchin'

A-a searchin'

Oh, yeah, searchin' every which a-way…

The Coasters, "Searchin,'" 1957.[41]

The planned performance of *In Search of the Miraculous* consisted of three parts. The work's first act, *One Night in Los Angeles* (1973) [Fig.4.24—33] consisted of a nocturnal exploration of Los Angeles, aided by a single Maglite torch. This was documented via eighteen black-and-white photographs, which show the artist in a number of urban locations. The second, and most well-known part of the work, involved a solo attempt to cross the Atlantic in a twelve-and-a-half-foot sailboat. Due to the vessel's size, had this crossing been successful, it would have been record-breaking. As a prelude to his launch from Cape Cod in July 1975, Ader exhibited the photo-documentation of *One Night* at the Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles. At the exhibition's opening, a piano-accompanied choir of Ader's UC Irvine students performed sea shanties, including Henry Russell's *Life on the Ocean Wave* (1838). Based on an Epes Sargent's poem, Russell's song provided the name for Ader's own "home on the rolling deep," his boat, the Ocean Wave. For the remainder of the exhibition, Ader played tape recordings of the choir, and had images of the performance projected via a carousel slide machine. Lyric sheets were also put on display. Russell's sheet music featured in a subsequent bulletin, which announced the conclusion of the work at Ader's Amsterdam gallery, Art & Project. Ader planned to mirror his earlier actions there, exploring Amsterdam at night—again, flashlight in hand.

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[40] Simon & Garfunkel, "America," *Bookends*, Columbia, 1968, 12-inch vinyl.
[41] The Coasters, "Searchin'" Atco Records, 1957, 7-inch vinyl.

The contemporary response to *In Search* was limited. It is fair to describe Ader's position within the art world as peripheral. He was positioned on the edges of an already peripheral art scene, that is, relative to New York.[42] Having earned his MFA at Claremont College, California he did not have the same direct connections as CalArts alumni, and was more often shown alongside fellow Claremont graduate William Leavitt and Dutch conceptualist, Ger Van Elk.[43] Perhaps because of this, little attention was paid to the work until the artist's disappearance. Reports then primarily focused on this aspect.[44] A notable example of this is the *Avalanche* interview with Ader-Anderson, published in 1976. Interviewers Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp repeatedly circle back to questions related to the artist's preparedness, competency, mood and intent.[45] The piece concludes with Ader-Anderson re-asserting her 'absolute conviction' that suicide was "nowhere in [her husband's] consciousness."[46]

Following this initial curiosity, Ader's work was largely forgotten until the mid-1980s, when Art & Project staged a solo exhibition in 1985. This was followed by a 1988 retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Recognition was a little slower in America. By the 1990s Ader began to feature in group shows, for example, "Los Angeles 1970-1975," at Christine Burgin Gallery, New York in 1993. By mid-decade, critics and artists wrote about Ader in relation to a contemporary tendency that Alexander Dumbadze argues reflected a growing oppositional stance to the 1990s art market. Dumbadze cites the 1993 Whitney Biennial as a crucial turning point, highlighting its significance as the first institutional foray into the renewed

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[42] Dumbadze highlights L.A.'s limited art press., but also suggests Ader was at odds with the era's "theoretically inflected art criticism." Alexander Dumbadze, *Bas Jan Ader: Death is Elsewhere* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 145.

[43] Examples include: *Bas Jan Ader, William Leavitt, Ger Van Elk,* 18 January—18 February, 1972, Pomona College Art Gallery, Claremont, California; *Bas Jan Ader, William Levitt*, 1—7 April, 1973, Mezzanine Art Gallery, Nova Scotia, Collage of Art and Design, Halifax.

[44] For a short, largely dismissive review of the Clare Copley show, see: Henry J. Seldis and William Wilson, "Art Walk: A Critical Guide to the GALLERIES," *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1975, 8.

[45] Mary Sue Ader, interviewed by Liza Béar and Willoughby Sharp, "A Telephone Conversation with Mary Sue Ader, Los Angeles, May 28th 1976," *Avalanche* 13 (1976):24-27.

[46] Ibid, 27.

interest in subjectivity and identity politics.[47] Thus, in their 1994 *Frieze* essay, James Roberts and Collier Schorr frame their discussion of Ader in relation to concerns amongst Britain's post-Thatcherite generation of artists, who sought to reconcile questions of identity and personal experience with "the chaos of a larger public world"—in the process, swimming against the tide an increasingly commercialised art market.[48] As Dumbadze argues, Ader's critical recovery during this period can therefore be seen as an attempt to "designate a historical figure…radical in his commitment to art, one who represented a kind of authenticity that was understood to be missing from a contemporary scene in thrall to market forces and entrapped by celebrity."[49]

In line with Dumbadze's argument, writing on Ader from this period frequently perpetuated the artist's mythology via an emphasis on the melancholic and tragi-romantic elements of both his work and disappearance. His practice was thus conflated with dramatic narratives of his life-story. This notion of Ader as a romantic figure was given its full consideration by Jörg Heiser, who examined the artist's practice in relation to historic Romanticism, proposing a new term for his approach: "Romantic Conceptualism." Heiser's *Frieze* article, "Emotional Rescue," and the subsequent exhibition *Romantic Conceptualism,* which he curated in 2007, aligned Ader with this nineteenth century European art movement, but also with contemporary artistic practices.[50] As a consequence, Ader's name was linked with artists working in 1990s-early 2000s, including, Felix Gonzalez

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[47] Leta Y. Ming succinctly describes his account as follows: "Dumbadze attributes Ader's rise in reputation to developments in the art world: while the dominant critical lens in the late 1970s and 1980s was a postmodern and poststructuralist approach that devalued the agency of the artist, the art world of the 1990s and 2000s has revolved around the presence and even celebrity of the individual artist." Leta Y. Ming, Review of Alexander Dumbadze *Bas Jan Ader: Death Is Elsewhere, CAA Reviews* Jan 8, 2014, accessed Mar 04, 2018, http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/2086#.WpvZH-jFLIU; Dumbadze, *Bas Jan Ader.*

[48] James Roberts and Collier Schorr, "On Bas Jan Ader" *Frieze,* 17 (1994): 32.

[49] Dumbadze, *Bas Jan Ader,* 157.

[50] Jörg Heiser, "Emotional Rescue" *Frieze* 71, (2002), 70-75; Jörg Heiser, "A Romantic Measure" in *Romantic Conceptualism,* Jörg Heiser et al. (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2007), 137-145.

Torres, Tactica Dean, Rodney Graham, Frances Stark, and Susan Hiller—all of whom featured in Heiser's Kunsthalle Nurnberg exhibition.

The understanding of Ader's work proposed by Heiser centres around the artist's injection of subjectivity and heightened emotional content into the distanced, and supposedly dispassionate, methods of his conceptual contemporaries. Heiser's interpretation thus relies heavily on the notion that Ader's approach is contradictory to that of 'orthodox' (or East Coast) conceptualism. As Heiser suggests, Ader regularly transgressed Sol LeWitt's well-known caution that conceptual art must remain "emotionally dry," in order to maintain its intellectual status.[51] However, rather than simply courting the "emotional kick" LeWitt sought to eliminate, Heiser instead argues that Ader engaged with human emotion on a conceptual level, paring it down to a set of ideas, fit for rigorous study. Heiser's case for this is most clearly delineated in his discussion of Ader's *I'm Too Sad To tell You*, (1971), a 16mm silent black-and-white film of the artist crying. The film's entire three-and-a-half-minutes consists of a single close-up shot. No attempt is made to manipulate the perspective of the weeping artist, nor to account for his emotion. Heiser likened the work, in terms of its distanced handling, to "an educational film on anthropology," depicting "basic human behaviour."[52] Yet, he observed, in its unflinching depiction of sorrow, the work is genuinely moving.

In his catalogue essay for *Romantic Conceptualism,* Heiser builds on his earlier attempt to connect Ader with historic Romanticism. His understanding of Ader as Romantic with a capital 'R,' is a crucial point of distinction, in that it prevents what he identifies as a series of possible misunderstandings: that Ader simply injected some soul back into contemporary art or, in an effort counter conceptualism's supposed clinicality, added a touch of melodrama and atmospheric emotion. Thus, his deployment of the term Romantic was

[51] Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 12.
[52] Heiser, "Emotional Rescue," 70.

not intended as a "synonym for kitsch love and desire" but instead to relate Ader's conceptualism to "ideas of the fragmentary and the open."[53] Notably, it is via this openness that I relate the conceptual project as a whole to the utopianism of the counterculture. However, for Heiser, Ader's works exhibit "a highly abstracted, formalized concern with the attributes of [historic] Romanticism." These are "feelings of alienation and solitude, but also of ecstatic exuberance; a longing for something undefined or unattainable (enjoying and suffering desire itself) self-mutilation and melancholia."[54] *In Search* represents the climax of this impulse. Heiser frames Ader's journey across land and sea as a quest for the Romantic sublime, culminating—whether it was the artist's intention or not, in his eventual surrender to the force of nature.

Ader's work undeniably contains allusions to the Romantic tradition. Heiser draws attention to the resemblance between his *Farewell to Faraway Friends* (1971) [Fig.4.34] and the seascapes of German Romantic painter Caspar David Fredrich. The colour photograph features Ader, standing at the edge of a shoreline, silhouetted by the setting sun. One could interpret the work as a foreshadowing of the artist's later, failed confrontation with the sea. It calls to mind Fredrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), in its depiction of a solitary encounter with the ocean's sublime power. However, Ader's scene also resembles *The Monk by the Sea* (1808-10) [Fig.4.35]. Ader, like the eponymous monk, is visually overpowered by an expanse of sky, and a flat ocean plane stretching out before him. For Heiser, *Farewell* alludes to Romanticism but also, with its warm sunset glow, to the clichéd imagery of picture postcards. The sky is rose coloured. There are no dark clouds looming ominously overhead. The artist appears to be surveying the picturesque landscape of the neighbouring tree-lined shore, rather than the sea itself. The work's overall tone is thus more one of serene calm than Romantic awe. Given Ader's title, and its resemblance to postcard imagery, it is easy to read

[53] Heiser, "A Romantic Measure," 135.
[54] Ibid, 137-8.

into *Farewell* a sense of nostalgia, a longing for home and loved-ones separated by distance. The artist's later ill-fated attempt to return to his native Holland adds to the tragi-romantic lure of this interpretation. For Heiser, however, the distance Ader alludes to is temporal as well as geographical. He interprets its semblance to both Romantic painting and the picture postcard as a wistful lament for the Romantic appreciation of nature, reduced, within contemporary culture, to clichéd and commodifiable 'chocolate-box' imagery.

Farewell signifies a point at which my own interpretation of Ader's work diverges from those who continue to categorise him as a 'Romantic Conceptualist' or focus their attention on his engagement with Romantic themes. This includes other contributors to *Romantic Conceptualism*, such as Collier Schorr and Jan Verwoert, who published an extended study of *In Search* in 2006.[55] Whilst Heiser positions *Farewell* principally as evidence of Ader's romantic influences, its resemblance to a picture postcard is of greater concern to my attempt to analyse his work in relation to the particularities of countercultural travel.

Before presenting this contextual reading, it is important to highlight that Heiser did not intend to set Ader up as an exceptional case. Instead he claimed to use his work as means through which to identify conceptualism's forgotten traits: its fragmentary and open-ended nature, and the challenges it presented to logic and rationality. As I did in my chapter on countercultural magic, Heiser similarly drew attention to LeWitt's notion of the conceptual artist as a logic-defying mystic.[56] For Heiser, his proposed model of Romantic Conceptualism provides a means of accounting for the apparent contradiction of LeWitt's procedural methods and his allusion to its mystic potential, by holding these aspects in tension. However, despite the inclusion of Ruppersberg, Barry and Huebler in Heiser's exhibition, I would

[55] Jan Verwoert, *In Search of the Miraculous* (London: Afterall, 2006).
[56] Sol LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," In *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology,* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 106.

argue that his account largely de-contextualises Ader, aligning him principally with a historic European art movement, as well as 1990s-2000s practices. Verwoert's catalogue essay notably acknowledges this move, and provides an explicit justification for it. He states that 'Romantic Conceptualism' was a means to "open up our view of a specific historical event continuum," a way of "realising conceptual art's potential," by "taking [it] into the present as well as establishing it back in the past."[57]

Curiously, in building a case for Ader's continuation of a tradition over a century old, Heiser emphasizes qualities which directly resemble concerns related to his immediate circumstances: those of 1970s countercultural America. Whilst the critic comes tantalisingly close to identifying conceptual art's engagement with the era's utopian spirit, he ultimately does not make reference to the wider contextual backdrop in which this engagement occurred—that is, beyond drawing a comparison between the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars and the Vietnam conflict. He states simply that just as the "the gaze of the Romantic beholder was contaminated with the viewpoint of the commander looking at the battlefield…one of the reasons why Conceptual art developed in the mid-1960s was a disgust with the beautiful commodification of art in the face of the Vietnam war."[58] Thus, whilst he describes "a longing for something undefined or unattainable" as an attribute of Romanticism, he somehow overlooks contemporaneous expressions of similar sentiments.[59] This includes the activities of the countercultural traveller.

As I have highlighted, countercultural travel was frequently motivated by attempts to satisfy a longing for things believed to be outside of, or unfulfilled by, mainstream American culture. These include notions that are conceptually nebulous or difficult to pin down, such as the quest for authenticity, and alternate forms of spiritual understanding. Some of these

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[57] Jan Verwoert, "Impulse Concept Concept Impulse" in *Romantic Conceptualism,* Jörg Heiser et al. (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2007), 165-7.
[58] Heiser, "Emotional Rescue," 6.
[59] Ibid.

yearnings might also be considered impossibly utopian in terms of their concern with re-capturing an imagined version of America's past: the supposed idyll of rural life. The contemporary emphasis on journeying can ultimately be seen as a symptom of the restlessness that propelled the countercultural phenomenon forward. The conceptual engagement with such activities can therefore be seen as an engagement with the utopianism intrinsic to the counterculture project. However, it is important to highlight that I do not automatically interpret this conceptual response as wholly earnest or sincere. (Heiser, I would argue, appears to read *In Search* entirely in one register.) Instead, as I propose, the conceptual handling of road trips can alternately be viewed as dispassionate, that is distanced and unemotionally invested, or as a form of deadpan satire—if not, at times, oscillating between both.

The Artist Has Gone to look for America

Ader's self-declared search for the miraculous began in Los Angeles. As documented, Ader's journey covered the following terrain: the edge of a freeway bound for Los Angeles (as declared in a road sign, just visible on the horizon), a grassy road side verge, a suburban driveway, the Hollywood hills, a darkened alleyway, a bungalow roof, back to the freeway again, an empty underpass, stretches of suburbia, then finally the Pacific shoreline. In the final photograph of the series, Ader is just identifiable as a small figure, stood at the water's edge. The scene visually recalls his earlier, *Farewell.* According to Ader-Anderson, the journey took place on one evening, from sunset to sunrise.[60]

In contrast to Marioni's *The Trip*, Ader arranged *One Night* in a grid formation. The effect is that the images can be read vertically, in a series of threes, as well as horizontally from right to left. Neither reading makes greater sense in terms of enabling the viewer to re-construct Ader's journey as a linear narrative. The images do not flow into each other, but instead

[60] Blättler and Wolfs, "The Works of Bas Jan Ader," 65.

represent a series of seemingly isolated locations. Detective work is thus required to link each site. The photographs leading up to the Hollywood Hills, and down to the Pacific Ocean are the exception to this. Even then, close observation is required to pick out certain details, such as the outline of the harbour. However, a sense of sequential order was retained by the artist, via his use of handwritten song lyrics. These were added to the bottom of each negative in white ink. The viewer's reading of the work—and with that Ader's progress—is thus guided line by line, with the words of *Searchin'*, a 1958 doo-wop hit.

As Heiser suggested, Ader's use of black-and-white photography and inclusion of text 'prompts' gives *One Night* a visual likeness to silent cinema.[61] This comparison has an added potency given the work's Los Angeles setting and particularly, the artist's Hollywood ramblings. However, Ader's use of cursive script again also evokes the picture postcard. The postcard is both a traditional means of providing the folks back home with a narrative of one's journey, but frequently serves as an aide-memoire and keepsake for the individual traveller themselves. As this resemblance highlights, along with Ader's grid arrangement, the series does not present his journey in full, but rather underscores its peripatetic nature. Each photograph captures a different site where Ader stopped and carried out his searches. His presence, along with his flashlight, can dimly be made out, with varying degrees of clarity in each image. Again, this is in contrast to *The Trip.* Despite the group's various stops, the subsequent arrangement of Fox's photographs, in a single line, without spacing, conveyed a sense of continuous movement. As Dumbadze notes, Ader was highly selective in terms of what he chose to include in the sequence. The eighteen images were not the only photographs Ader had taken; the night's recordings filled seven contact sheets [See: Fig.4.32—33].[62]

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[61] Jörg Heiser, "Curb your Romanticism: Bas Jan Ader's Slapstick," in *Bas Jan Ader: Please Don't Leave Me*, ed. Alexandra Blättler and Rein Wolfs Rein (Rotterdam: Boijmans Van Beuninge, 2006), 26-27.
[62] Dumbadze, *Bas Jan Ader,* 97.

Verwoert claims that via this deliberate "economy of means" Ader freed the work of any extraneous detail. Thus, he pared his journey down to its core, essential concept, a quest with a mysterious purpose: a search for the ambiguously defined "miraculous." Along with its grid formation, Verwoert claims that this is what makes the work a conceptual investigation, as well as supposedly "Romantic" one.[63] In other words, he asserts that in spite of Ader's allusion to mystic spirituality, in its rigorous pre-determined approach *One Night* can be still be seen as a characteristically conceptual undertaking. The irony of the project's overarching title, however, is that the majority of the sites Ader selected, appear to have to been chosen for their apparent *lack* of miraculousness. As Roberts and Schorr described it, with its "images of the freeway, an underpass and suburban houses" *One Night* offers us "[eighteen] views of urban blandness."[64]

One Night maps out the artist's journey via his encounters with a series of 'banal landmarks.' Although a seeming contradiction in terms, I would argue this is a fitting description for the ubiquitous and ordinary features of the urban landscape which Ader engaged with. The subjects of his torch-lit investigations were a series of man-made marks-on-the-land. However, these 'landmarks' were likely to have been passed over by other urban travellers, particularly those casually carrying out daily, routine journeys. These include landscaped verges, an underpass opening and the hard shoulder of the freeway, all 'features' which would ordinarily barely register as items of note, or as landmarks at all—if not for the overall sparseness of the artist's search sites, and subsequent photographic compositions. In many of the photographs, Ader is barely visible, identifiable only as a shadowy outline blending with the ill-lit surroundings. Thus, he does not function as a consistent focal point. As suggested, the photographic landscapes of *One Night* are principally defined by whatever (non)-landmarks the viewer can successfully discern.

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[63] Verwoert, *In Search of the Miraculous, 2*

[64] Roberts and Schorr, "On Bas Jan Ader," 8 Note: the authors refer to shortened version.

The hillside and ocean photographs are the notable exceptions to the "urban blandness" described by Roberts and Schorr.[65] Considered in relation to the mode of the picture postcard, or indeed tourist photography, these images can be said to meet the expectations of these genre. That is, they capture scenes traditionally deemed 'worthy' of this kind of picture-making: the city as seen from a high vantage, ships docked in harbour, a floodlit pier, and the beach at sunrise. However, in replicating commercially popular 'picturesque' imagery these photographs arguably also drift into the realm of the clichéd and predictable. As detailed, Heiser made a similar argument to this in relation to Ader's earlier, *Farewell.*[66] In this context, however, Ader initially replaces the Romantic trope of man's surrender to nature, with a confrontation of the enormity of Los Angeles' urban sprawl.

Shot in the Hollywood Hills, the sixth photograph in the sequence was taken in a location more associated with tourism, than quests for existential truth. It is unclear whether Ader's viewpoint was an officially sanctioned one, or was accessed via trespass. The latter is an equally common practice for 'adventure-seeking' tourists, particularly in this area. To the eyes of the contemporary viewer, the image might seemingly presuppose 'inspirational' internet travel photography, frequently supplemented with hackneyed 'meaningful' quotes. However, in addition to re-staging a popular tourist image, Ader's photograph can also be interpreted as an anonymous individual's realisation of his relative scale and insignificance to the city at large, and with that, a visual allusion to the alienating experience of urban life. Given the countercultural climate, and larger phenomenon of the return to rural living, this has an added contextual relevance. This reading is supported by the way Ader concludes the series. The landscape in his final image is free of man-made impressions, save for the city's lights, dimly receding on the horizon. The artist is the only human presence, a just visible blip on the shoreline. Ader has returned to nature.

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Heiser, "Emotional Rescue," 70.

The idea that Ader punctuated his peripatetic progress with a series of encounters with non-miraculous marks-on-the land invites comparison to another conceptual road trip: Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* [Fig.4.36], made a decade earlier in 1963. The work, printed in the form of an artist's book (Ruscha's first use of the medium), consists of twenty-six, black-and-white photographs of gas stations he routinely passed between his home in Los Angeles, and his parents' in Oklahoma City. As mapped out by the eponymous gasoline stations, the work thus visually documents a particular stretch of Highway Route 66, as well as Ruscha's journey back to the place he grew up. However, as Iversen describes, this record of the artist's route home was captured in depersonalised terms: the work's title can be understood as a contracted instruction of a pre-determined task, realised in the form of twenty-six "uninflected snapshots."[67] Therefore, as she asserts, the photographs can be viewed as "the outcome of a rule-governed performance."[68]

Twentysix Gasoline Stations offers a visual account of a road journey not directly focused on the road itself, nor on the interior of the vehicle being travelled in. Instead, Ruscha's photographs concern items *adjacent* to the road, and they are depicted as such. However, the highway is not cropped out of these images, appearing in the foreground. Ruscha's gasoline stations therefore function as they do in real life: as brief rest-stops—as literal breaks from both the highway and journey designed to fuel further travel—and non-descript landmarks of the road, milestones, roughly indicating the distance travelled.[69] In an ostensive gesture of obsessive accuracy, the name and location of each gas station is indicated in block capital text, printed in the following format: *FLYING A*, KINGSMAN, ARIZONA.[70] However, the artist's ordering of the images was not entirely faithful to his real life journey. As identified by Clive Phillpot, five of the twenty-six photographs are out of

[67] Iversen, "Auto-maticity," 16. *One Night's* title arguably functions similarly.
[68] Ibid, 18.
[69] For these reasons, I believe 'banal/non-descript landmark' to be more appropriate then Iversen's "anti-landmark." Ibid, 16.
[70] The placement of this text varies in relation to each photograph.

sequence with their actual placement en route.[71] Nonetheless, with the turning of each page the viewer/reader experiences the work as a linear narrative of Ruscha's journey. This notion is supported by the general assumption, prior to Phillpott's observation, that the work was an accurate representation of the order the gas stations appear. This is likely also a partial consequence of Ruscha's deadpan, and thus seemingly objective, photographic style. Although the flow of this narrativization is disturbed slightly by the book's inconsistent layout (some pages are left blank, whilst in other instances, two photographs appear side-by-side), the inclusion of images taken at night, arguably also allude to a linear chronology.

However, Ruscha's night-time images obscure as much as they reveal. There are two of these photographs and they do not appear sequentially, thus suggesting two different periods of evening travel. As stated, the journey has the capacity to read as one of continuous progress along a prescribed route, with the gasoline stations serving as stand-ins for the stretches of road traversed in-between. However, the fact this would take roughly nineteen hours confuses this reading, leading one to consider what is *not* pictured, longer pauses or even over-night stops. The viewer might also begin to speculate on the likelihood that Ruscha's photographs were taken on multiple occasions—as was the case. These potential gaps in time and narrative are unscored by the white space surrounding each photograph. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* thus constructs an account of a journey, that is at least partially, fictional.

Viewers might also wonder at the gaps between *One Night's* photographic recordings. An alternative fourteen-photograph version of the work, originally produced due to budget constraints, is notably ordered differently to the longer series.[72] Ader was apparently also unconcerned with forensically reconstructing his journey. Overall, however, his approach to

[71] Clive Phillpot, 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations that Shook the World: The Rise and Fall of Cheap Booklets as Art', *Art Libraries Journal* 19, (1993): 6.
[72] Reproduced in: Blättler and Wolfs, "The Works of Bas Jan Ader," 65, 66-67. The opening freeway photograph is notably absent in this version.

conceptual photography has been framed as antithetical to Ruscha's. As read by Heiser, Ader is understood to engage with both artistic and commercial traditions of picture-making, drawing on their potential emotive powers. This runs counter to the account of the conceptual photography offered by Jeff Wall, who cites Ruscha's work as exemplary of what he identifies as its deskilled approach, resulting in the generation of utilitarian and perfunctory images.[73] For Wall, photoconceptualism parodies and inverts both amateur photography and reportage, rendering the art photograph an ostensibly neutral form of factual documentation unconcerned with aesthetics, but also detached from the social field of actions and "putative theatrical events" associated with photo-journalism.[74] The own artist's statements, to an extent, affirm this position. In a 1965 *Artforum* interview with John Coplans, Ruscha referred to *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as "technical data like industrial photography," pointedly asserting that they were "not 'arty' in any sense of the word."[75] Despite this, both artists documented return journeys 'home.' *One Night* pre-empts Ader's attempt to return to Holland, whilst Ruscha travelled to the place he grew up. Although Ruscha's distanced handling means his homeward bound journey is viewed in non-sentimental terms, the same cannot quite be said of *One Night*. As I will argue, however, both works can be interpreted as responses to the phenomenon of 'going forth to look for America,' as well as the yearning for otherness and nostalgia—a literal "home-sickness"—which drove it forward.

There is an anonymity to both artists' works. This is a consequence of the absence of Ruscha's presence in *Gasoline Stations*, that is, the limited traces of his artistic touch, as well as his literal photographic absence. Although Ader physically features in *One Night* he is notably reduced to a shadowy,

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[73] Jeff Wall, "Marks of Indifference: Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art" in *The Last Picture Show*: *Artists using Photography, 1960-1982,* ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), 43. See also, Nancy Foote, "The Anti-Photographers" (1976), reprinted in same volume.
[74] Ibid, 36.
[75] Ed Ruscha, interviewed by John Coplans, "Concerning Various Small Fires: Edward Ruscha Discusses His Perplexing Publications," *Artforum*, 3, no.5, (1965): 25.

faceless figure. The locations documented also have an anonymous quality. Save for the occasional errant palm tree, I would suggest that the majority of *One Night* could be mistaken for the edges of any American city. Although an overhead sign on the freeway indicates that the artist is Los Angeles-bound, in the series of photographs that follow, the city is at its most recognisable in the view taken in the Hollywood Hills. Even then, the vista before the artist contains no obvious identifying landmarks. Similarly, if Ruscha's captions were removed from his artist's book, I would argue one could locate his gas stations along multiple stretches of the nation's highways. Both works document in-between spaces: Ruscha the stretch of highway-land between two cities and states, and Ader the space between the city and 'the land,' its outskirts and areas of suburbia—with the final photograph concluding this leg of his journey, with a symbolic return to nature.

Given the vast topographical differences that exist across the nation as a whole, there is an argument to be made that a true picture of the American-landscape can be found precisely in these in-between spaces, as well as the banal and ubiquitous man-made features that mark them. This was the underlying rationale of *The Highway* exhibition, held at the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art in 1970. The show framed twentieth century representations of the road as the contemporary American take on the historic tradition of landscape painting. As McCoubrey proposed in his catalogue essay, the generic roadside furniture that features in these landscapes are symbolic of 'Highway America,' a nation and culture rendered homogenous via relentless urban and consumerist expansion.[76]

There is arguably no greater symbol of 'Highway America' than the gas station. An immediate, identifiably American-looking emblem of roadside convenience, it is connotative of some of the nation's core industries: oil, and with that plastics and aeronautics, as well as car-manufacturing. The gas station is a recurring motif in Ruscha's work. He would go on to use the

[76] McCoubrey, "Art and the Road," 20.

image of Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas, featured in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* as the basis for an oil-on-canvas, made that year, and subsequently numerous drawings and screen-prints. Dropping the reference to its exact location, via *Standard Station* (1966) [Fig.4.37], the artist presented the gas station as an American 'standard.' Using foreshortened perspective, he reduced the building, and land surrounding it, to a set of basic geometric shapes.[77] This move has added significance given the company's history. Standard previously had a monopoly on America's oil, until the Supreme Court deemed this illegal in 1911. Standard was then broken up into a series of smaller companies, which continued to control America's oil industry. Unlike *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* considered one of the earliest examples of conceptual photography, these graphic representations of 'Highway America' are associated with Ruscha's contribution to Pop.[78] As previously stated, it was solely in relation to this movement that the artist was represented in *The Highway*.

In contrast to *Standard Station*, and the iterations that followed, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* does not elevate the gas station to an icon of American capitalism, but rather, via Ruscha's distanced photographic handling, documents their ubiquitous occurrence on an otherwise featureless landscape. The supposed characterless of the American highway is partially a consequence of the levelling of the land required for their construction: a *literal* homogenisation of stretches of the American landscape, parallel to the effect of mass culture noted by McCoubrey. Much of this process occurred near contemporaneously to Ruscha's road-journey. In 1956, President Eisenhower signed The Federal-Aid Highway Act, a bill designed to modernise America's system of highways, with the proposed construction of forty-one-

[77]Ken D. Allan, Lucy Bradnock and Lisa Turvey, "FOR PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: Defining the Pop Art Sixties," in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art, 1945-1980,* eds. Rebecca Peabody et al. (Los Angeles: Getty, 2011), 140-141.

[78] Buchloh notably highlights similarities to Warhol: vernacular subject matter, serial arrangement. See 'Ed Ruscha's books': Benjamin H. D Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, Vol. 55 (1990): 119-124.

thousand miles of new road [Fig.4.38]. The intent was to make interstate travel safer and faster, by widening and updating existing roads, as well creating more direct routes.

There were patriotic impulses behind the Federal-Aid Highway Act. As Eisenhower highlighted in his 1955 address to Congress, it was motivated by the desire to establish better cross-country transport links, thus facilitating access across America in its entirety. The new road network would also provide a defence against atomic attacks, allowing for the efficient evacuation of major cities—potential 'targets' for America's Soviet enemies.[79] However, the construction of these vast new highways met with inevitable opposition. The proposed roads were always at least four lanes wide. Therefore, in addition to destroying areas of natural landscape, numerous communities were either gutted or split in half, resulting in the inhabitants' displacement. Some supporters saw this as a desirable outcome, providing the opportunity to replace dilapidated urban and rural areas with clean, modern 'ribbons of concrete.' However, as Eisenhower's plans came to fruition in the 1960s, activists across the country succeeded in halting construction, leading to the creation of numerous urban interstates that ended abruptly, becoming known as 'roads to nowhere' [Fig.4.39.][80]

Ruscha ostensibly documented the uniformity and characterlessness of the modern America highway, via a process of visual repetition—generic gas station after generic gas station. However, his journey actually took place on a pre-Federal-Aid stretch of highway, which many were concerned with preserving from modernisation. Established in 1926, Route 66 was one of America's first highways [Fig.4.40—43]. It is sometimes referred to as 'The main street of America,' as well as, fittingly, given Ruscha's homeward-bound journey, 'the mother road.' Part of its historical significance is that it served

[79] President D Eisenhower, "Message to the Congress regarding Highways, February 22, 1955," Interstate Highway System, accessed Aug 3, 2017, https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/interstate_highway_system.html

[80] Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 179-210.

as a major pathway for migration to the West. This includes the mass migration of those displaced by the dustbowls of the 1930s. Those re-locating from dust-ravaged rural communities on America's prairies were attracted to California's temperate climate, and a perceived wealth of opportunities.[81] As stated, these draws also contributed to the mid-1960s countercultural migration to California. Santa Monica marks the end of Route 66, with its pier sign-posted as the 'end of trail.' It is now a popular tourist photographic landmark. Although the pier in *One Night* is not the attraction-filled pier of Santa Monica, Ader's road journey parallels this famous route, in terms of its conclusion at the Pacific Ocean. In contrast, Ruscha's journey was oriented in the opposite direction, away from Los Angeles. Thus, Ruscha's travel to his own familial home inverted the journey made by numerous previous migrants, from their homes-of-origin in the Mid-West.

Those who sought to protect Route 66 following the Federal-Aid Highway Act were concerned with preserving the particular roadside culture that developed there. By the 1950s the route was not only used by migrants, but also by vast numbers travelling for recreational purposes. Numerous tourist businesses attempted to capitalize on this. As Susan Croce Kelly notes, the motto of these roadside entrepreneurs was seemingly, "you gotta have a gimmick." As she highlights, in addition to novelly-shaped buildings and bright billboards, "Indian dancers, buffalo and giant, prehistoric plastic figures" were variously employed to encourage drivers to stop.[82] This aspect of the route is absent from Ruscha's documentation of it. Rather than capturing the quirks of Route 66's roadside culture, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* instead turns the camera's attention to the overlooked and the everyday: anonymous or generically American-looking marks-on-the-land. As

[81] For extended discussion: James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 36-76.
[82] Susan Croce Kelly, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 176-177.

the artist revealed in a 1973 interview for *Avalanche,* the response he wished to elicit was, "kind of a '*Huh*?'"[83]

In Kerouac's *On The Road,* published in 1957, a year after Eisenhower's proposed changes to America's Highway system, narrator Sal Paradise frames his journeying as a search for an indescribable existential experience out on America's roads. He repeatedly refers to this as "IT."[84] In *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* Ruscha seemingly takes this quest for the authentic American experience, and reduces the mystic potential of the undefinable "IT" down to a shrugged, off-hand "huh?" The work can be read as mediation on the contemporary preoccupation with American authenticity, central not only to Kerouac's Beats, but also those seeking to preserve the nation's historic highways. Ruscha presents 'Americanness' as the bland, banal product of a process of cultural and topographical homogenization, the literal levelling of the land required for urban expansion. This move can be viewed as a subtle satirisation of the romanticisation of America's highways, or alternately, as a neutral, distanced documentation of this process. Understood as the former, the work serves as a deadpan response to the seemingly oxymoronic concept of the beautiful highway, presupposing later federal laws which attempted to preserve some of America's roadways precisely on this basis. This includes the National Scenic Byway Act of 1990, which designated Route 66 a historic "All-American Road." This status was conferred on Route 66 for a quality totally absent from Ruscha's documentation of it: its supposed distinctness. To be an 'All-American' road, a route must have nationally unique features, earning it significance as a tourist destination in its own right.[85]

If, via his distanced documentation of the highway's visual blandness, Ruscha reduced the romanticism of the American road journey down to a "*huh*?," Ader's *One Night* conversely appears to amplify it, rendering it melancholic. However, this move can be similarly read as a form of tongue-in-cheek

[83] Ed Ruscha, Interviewed by Willoughby Sharp, '"… a kind of a Huh?", An Interview with Edward Ruscha', *Avalanche*, no.7, Winter/ Spring 1973: 30.
[84] Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (London: Penguin, 1958).
[85] Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 200-311.

conceptual commentary. As with Ruscha's off-hand snapshots, Ader's photographs capture a series of ubiquitous man-made features that together, build up a generically American-looking image of an urban and suburban landscape. Much like gas stations, along with drive-in diners, convenience stores, as well as the highway itself, the banal features captured in *One Night* were principally designed for the comfort and ease of modern travellers and city dwellers: the cut-through alleyway, underpass, uniform suburban housing.

Given Ader's exploration of a landscape punctuated by such symbols of modern, urban American ease and convenience, his search for 'the miraculous' can potentially be interpreted as a search for the American dream. The artist's status as a migrant to both Los Angeles and the United States, furthers the appeal of this reading, as one might argue that this mythic version of America, as a land of opportunity and higher standards of living, resides most strongly in the imagination of the alien outsider. However, if this is what Ader is searching for, it appears to be a fruitless endeavour. He continues his search at site, after site, until at last reaching the ocean. I would venture this conclusion alludes to a dissatisfaction with the non-miraculous reality of modern urban America, and a desire to return 'home.' This could be to native Europe, as well as, given the contemporary circumstances, back to an earlier mode of living, more directly connected with the natural world. Both the countercultural commune movement and the broader popularity of rural relocation were partially fostered by a rejection of the false promises of the urban American Dream, and its associated consumer trappings.[86]

The idea that Ader encountered failure on his search for the miraculous, is suggested via the documentation of his return to the same stretch of freeway where he began, albeit later in the evening. Seemingly travelling in the same direction, the artist appears lost, as though the mysterious focus of his

[86] Jacob, *New Pioneers*.

wanderings has remained elusive. This hint at the futility of his endeavour has the potential to be read as both tragi-romantic but also tragi-comic, sending up the very impulse to search. However, the photograph is also indicative of an aspect of travel specific to Los Angeles, a city without a definitive centre. Moving across its urban sprawl requires a continual traversing of freeways that link together its *multiple* centres. The centreless nature of Los Angeles is the reason why its skyline, as captured by Ader, is less easy to identify than that of the denser and more compact, New York. It also accounts for the lack of clear distinction between the city's urban and suburban areas. Within Ader's photographs these blur together. Any sense of separation is dissolved via the road's ceaseless sprawling connections. Ader's contemporary Ruppersberg has observed that Los Angeles of the 1960s had a particular vernacular plainness, alluding to its generically middle American feel. He goes on to state that this is no longer a feature unique to the city, as a homogenised version of American culture has since spread globally.[87] Via its visual anonymousness, in *One Night*, Los Angeles arguably functions as a generic-stand-in for American expansion at large—culturally, commercially and in terms of urban growth. The countercultural phenomenon was frequently framed as a rejection of middle American culture and values, with migratory movement to rural areas conceived as a flight from suburbia.[88] Ader seemingly also abandons this landscape in favour of a return to nature.

Ader's addition of hand-written song lyrics furthers the evocative mood of his photographs, tying the visual narrative of his journey to one of unfulfilled romantic love. He chose to use a pop hit released in 1957, four years before he moved to the U.S. at nineteen. *Searchin,* by do-wop group The Coasters, sets the pursuit of elusive love against a variety of picturesque American landscapes. The narrator vows to cross rivers, climb blueberry hill, and with a reference to the North West Mounties, evokes images of the Rockies.[89] Given

[87] Allen Ruppersberg, interviewed by Alexis M Johnson, Artist's Studio, El Segundo, CA, Feb 09, 2011, 6-8.
[88] See for example: "Youth: The Hippies."
[89] The Coasters, "Searchin.'"

the artist was likely to have first heard the song as a teenager, its selection appears deliberately nostalgic. It thus furthers interpretations of the artist's wanderings as an attempt to locate, in reality, an imagined version of America: one dreamed by the artist in his youth, as well as the nation's fondly remembered supposed 'golden age,' the 1950s.

As Roberts and Schorr observed, combined with images of Ader's lonely wanderings, *Searchin'* stripped of its upbeat tune, is rendered grave, and ostensibly sincere. Yet, as they note, the effect is subtly tragi-comic, juxtaposing seeming sincerity with the absurdity of Ader's endeavour.[90] As stated, *One Night* potentially functions as a deadpan study of the American romanticisation of the road, exposing the flawed nature of its logic. The construction of American roads partially erased the very diversity of the 'authentic' American landscape they purported to make accessible. Ader's choice of *Searchin,'* rather than a romantic poem of either European or American origin, or a more contemporary song choice is vital to this reading. Whitman's *Song of the Open Road*, or Simon & Garfunkel's "*America*" would arguably have been more fitting, although on-the-nose. In using a dated whimsical love song, stripped of its light-heartedness, Ader hyperbolized its romantic sentiments, giving his take on the American road journey a certain wryness. As Roberts and Schorr imply, but do not quite state, the work's comic undertone is provided via the ironic contrast of the straight-faced appropriation of *Searchin'* lyrics—with its references to picturesque American scenery—and Ader's images of urban blandness. This tongue-in-cheek tone was apparently lost on some. Seemingly missing the point entirely, in a review of Ader's Claire Copley show critic William Wilson observed: "the miracle [Ader] seems to find is the tacky charm of ordinary events."[91]

[90] Roberts and Schorr, "On Bas Jan Ader," 34.
[91] Seldis and Wilson, "Art Walk." 8.

On the Road Again

This is my favorite dirt road. It goes up to Buttermilk and is mostly washboard and straight. It's a modern dirt road, wider than most dirt roads. You can do fifty miles an hour on it. It's sandy on the sides.

Robert Kinmont, *My Favorite Dirt Roads*, 1969 [92]

If Ader's *One Night in Los Angeles* and Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* relate to quests for American authenticity, they both invoke the phenomenological experience of being 'on the road,' albeit in subtly distinct ways. My analysis takes Jaleh Mansoor's "Ed Ruscha's 'One-Way Street,'" as a starting point. Mansoor examines Ruscha's work in relation to what she terms a "renegotiated subjective and experiential dimension of vision," as fostered by the artist's use of the car as a mediating perceptual frame.[93] As she acknowledges, via the analysis of Eleanor Antin, many of Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* were, in fact, taken outside of the car, from across the road. [94] However, Mansoor proposes the photographs offer a mode of visuality fundamentally internalised by the car's occupation, that is, the individual's occupation of their vehicle, and the vehicle's occupation of the road. It is this sense of physical occupation she asserts, that not only conditions but structures Ruscha's images of Route 66. The road itself is largely absent from the field of vision which the artist presents to us. Mansoor claims that this is because in Ruscha's photographs, the road—or rather the individual in their car, as situated *on* the road—functions *as* the field of vision, rather than its focus.

Mansoor locates Ruscha's use of the car as a mediating structure in relation to a specific socio-historic moment in twentieth century American history: The Fifties. Mansoor identifies the car as the ultimate symbol of Taylorized production and Fifties consumerism, and by extension, the growth of the

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[92] Reproduced in: Joseph del Pesco, "California Lacuna: Robert Kinmont," *Open Space*, Oct, 2009, accessed 12 Nov, 2017, https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2009/10/robert-kinmont/
[93] Jaleh Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's 'One-Way Street'" *October* 111 (2005): 128
[94] Eleanor Antin, "Reading Ruscha," *Art in America*, 61, no. 6 (1973): 64-71.

American middle class and suburbia. The car, she suggests, became a (mythically) universal, household object. Supposedly available to all, it was a virtual necessity for daily movement across the ever-expanding urban landscape—for with the growth of suburbia, came the growth of commuter travel. She goes on to argue that the centrality of the car, "Postwar modernity's quintessential commodity object," in contemporary American life, in turn, produced a new model of subjectivity and vision, fostered by the everyday experiential norm of mobilized-travel: "On the register of individual experience, the car naturalizes a sense of perception in movement: a new understanding of motion became integrated into the driver's everyday perception, thereby tailoring subjectivity to assimilate new modes of sensory interaction with everyday objects and everyday spaces."[95]

According to Mansoor, this new model of subjective vision, "constituted around car-generated experience," was as a "totalizing imprint [reaching] into every recess of daily sensory perception."[96] She asserts that this contributed to the growing contemporary irrelevance of existing photographic mediums. This included both traditional art and documentary photography, in particular the WPA practices of 1930s. Thus, she frames Ruscha's use of the car as a mediating structure, as "a communicative solution" pertinent to a particular historic juncture: the bankruptcy of both established modes of painting and photography, in light of the specific socio-economic conditions of Postwar America.[97]

As Mansoor acknowledges, Ruscha's use of the car as a mediator of perceptual experience has an obvious precedent in literature: Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). Kerouac's narrative of America's Postwar landscape is mediated by the experiential frame of a forward-moving, mobilised state of being—travel by car, along the nation's roadways. Literary critic Regina Weinrich, on whom Mansoor draws for her reading of Kerouac, describes *On*

[95] Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's," 137.
[96] Ibid, 137-138.
[97] Ibid, 128.

the Road as an expression of, "the soul that journeys along the open highway of America, in search of permanence, of values that will endure and not collapse."[98] American authenticity, as it is framed in this particular statement, is equated with something constant, stable, and perhaps even eternal. The declared motive of Kerouac's protagonists was thus to re-cover an American experience opposite to that celebrated via the Fifties' ecstatic embrace of disposable consumerism. Mansoor notes the irony of the car's use as the vehicle for this attempt to escape "the flux of commodity culture."[99] As I previously re-iterated, Ruscha's gas stations arguably document the restless advance of a consumer-driven, 'highway America,' via a series of its uniform, visual 'standards.' That is to say, one could argue Ruscha found the constant Kerouac and his fellow Beats supposedly sought—albeit, ironically in the homogenising, diversity-erasing effects of American Capitalism, as seen from the road.

The search for permanence and enduring values—as mapped onto a journey out West—is one that crucially took Kerouac's protagonists *elsewhere*. Their journey moves forward in linear a fashion, leaving pervious locations, and the recent past, behind in their rear-view mirror. As Mansoor describes it, "the road itself extends like a vertical line between the nose of the protagonists' car and a future understood spatially."[100] Mansoor draws attention to Kerouac's much-fetishized original manuscript [Fig.4.44]. Describing the sixteen-foot roll of paper, she states, "Here the mind transposes itself without mediation; nothing complicates the transmittal of thought to hand." Thus, she links its unfurlable stream of writing-cum-consciousness to the experiential frame of the road itself: "The narrative proceeds prospectively from a present to a future. Like the virtual stretch of road up ahead on the highway, it implies the possibility of an internally bound relationship to the

[98] Regina Weinreich, *The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac: A Study of the Fiction* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 34.
[99] Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's," 128.
[100] Ibid, 129.

external flow of objects, a controlled distance between inside and outside."[101]

Crucially, for Mansoor, Kerouac's road functions as an experiential frame that is decidedly forward-facing. The perceptual view offered is that seen from the position of the driver, or front passenger, through the car's front window. That is, down the road, at the spatial and temporal horizon ahead. Even ostensibly backward-looking moments in the novel appear to support this. For example, Kerouac, in Paradise's narrative voice, describes the sensation of driving away from people who "recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing," relating this to a sense of forward-moving, linear travel, framed in grand, transcendent terms: "it's the too huge world vaulting us as we lean forward to the next crazy venture between the stars."[102] In light of the nostalgic impulses of the countercultural Sixties, this notion of looking-backwards as a means to move forward is of particular significance. Much like their Beat predecessors, members of the counterculture used a nostalgic embrace of the past (or rather the *imagined* past) as an expression of opposition against the conditions of present, contemporary American society and culture.

In contrast to this vertical perspective and the perceptual depth it establishes, Ruscha's views of, or rather *from*, road have a certain flatness. They do not offer views of the horizon/road ahead, but items immediately adjacent to it, in the pictorial foreground. As Mansoor asserts, Ruscha's photographs are characterized by a horizontalness. Thus, they present a perspective more akin to that seen through a side, passenger window. Ruscha's later work *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966) [Fig.4.45—47], demonstrates this more clearly. Also consisting of a car journey documented via a series of road-side man-made structures, the work conflates camera with car *literally*; the series of photographs were captured by an attached motorized camera. Ruscha assembled the images in two continuous and, at

[101] Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's," 130.
[102] Kerouac, *On the Road,* 148.

first glance, seemingly contiguous lines. These lines offer views of both sides of the road, and are separated by a white band of space. Like *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* they appear in the form of an artist's book. However, contra to its vertical page orientation, this later work folds out horizontally, and is thus analogous to the spatial unfolding of the pictured strip.

Whilst *Every Building* not only records, but to an extent experientially replicates, a motorised journey down Los Angeles' Sunset Strip, it presents this means of experiencing the road-side landscape as emphatically two dimensional. The eponymous buildings, for example, are frequently represented by their front façades alone, leaving the mind's eye to make up their dimensional depth just as one does with stage sets. In this respect the work resembles the illusion created by fellow L.A. Conceptualist William Leavitt's *California Patio* (1972) [Fig.4.48]—only without the revelatory moment enabled by one's ability to walk around the constructed façade, and realise its falseness. Mansoor evocatively describes this effect as, "the suffocating flatness of the exterior world pushes it squarely up against the car window."[103] In Ruscha's photographs, the car-as-camera reduces the spatial distance of side streets to diagonal lines, and the road itself to a void, reflecting the reality of its visual inaccessibility as one passes along it. This notion of the visual unavailability, or "voiding," of a stretch of road whilst one occupies it in a car underscores what Mansoor sees as an irony of Kerouac's novel. This is its privileging, via the use of the road as perceptual frame, of the future (as well as the receding past), over the moment of the present. It is worth stating, as an aside that Mansoor's suggestion contradicts the emphasis on "being" and immediacy implied by Kerouac's title. However, Kerouac arguably offers an account of being 'on the road' as conditioned, chiefly, by what lies ahead, a future on the horizon yet to be conquered and explored. This ever forward-moving horizon represents the apex of not only

[103] Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's," 132.

spatial and temporal planes, but also the ceaseless quest for existential self-knowledge, pursued by Paradise, the novel's narrator.

This relation of time, space and interior growth, to road-travel was notably captured by another, less well-known, Californian Conceptualist. Much like Kerouac's novel, Robert Kinmont's seventeen photo-series *My Favourite Dirt Roads* (1969) [Fig.4.49], captures the notion of being *on* the road, via the vertical perspective of looking *down* it as it expands into the American landscape—in this case, stretches of seemingly uninhabited wilderness. Kinmont's accompanying notes convey a seeming genuine sincerity to his title's unlikely declaration. They offer a detailed description of the ostensibly featureless roads, as well as their personal and experiential significance to the artist's own biography. The work, he would later state, was informed by his belief that looking down an open road, "opens your mind in a way that nothing else does."[104]

Kinmont offered a view of the road as future-horizon, one free of any apparent obstacles and seamlessly integrated with the interior subject. Ruscha's photographs, in contrast, demonstrate the highly mediated and *dis-integrated* nature of the road as experiential frame.[105] This a consequence of his designation of car-as-camera. As Mansoor highlights, *Every Building* contains a number of ruptures and elisions which disrupt the ostensive seamlessness of its photographic ribbons of sidewalk. Numerous objects caught in the camera's frame end abruptly, or are cut in half, particularly other moving vehicles. These ruptures are the product of the camera's inability to capture both space and time continuously; representing the passage of time that occurred between each snapshot. There are also occasional stuttering repetitions in the sequence, as though produced in an effort to fill-in potential gaps.

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[104] Robert Kinmont, quoted in Julie Ault, *In Step with the Desert: The Morphology of Robert Kinmont*, (New York: Alexander & Bonin, 2009), unpaginated.

[105] Note: Marioni's *The Trip* offers multiple 'on the road' perspectives. I would suggest, however, that the principle focus was on the participants, with road and car functioning as a backdrop for communal activity.

If Kerouac and Kinmont's focus is on the road up ahead, with the land representing existential possibilities yet to be explored, Ruscha's endeavour arguably represents a different form of conquering, in its attempt to photographically map an area of spatial and temporal terrain. Ruscha's photographs of the Strip render it flat, much like a cartographic representation. Thus, the contemporary viewer might note its resemblance to Google Street View. The elisions in the resulting work therefore signify small moments of the process' incompleteness. They underscore the inability of still photography to continuous moments of real-time, and with that the slipperiness of the present itself. As a medium, photography purports to freeze the present in time, yet in so-doing, affirms its status as moments that have since passed. These glitches in the work's photographic landscape indicate the camera's failure to perfectly sync with the spatial and temporal progress of the car's real-time movement. However, this is counterbalanced by the work's overwhelmingly horizontal register. The orientation of photographic perspective, as well as the book's continuous unfolding layout, arguably insists on a seeming condition of stretched presentness—or what Mansoor refers to as: "a continually present-past tense."[106]

Every Building's elisions are thus symptoms of the fragmenting effect of Ruscha's mobilised car-as-camera. However, they also potentially allude to the fragmented and paradoxically distanced experience of the world as seen "pushed up against" the side-window of a motorised vehicle.[107] The flattened visual index of the Strip replicates the fleeting surface glimpses of roadside landscapes experienced by the passenger in a fast-moving car. The road itself, and any adjacent vehicles close enough to obscure the view of the Strip entirely are absent from the work, but, I would suggest conspicuously so. The road features only as a spatial void, and the visual access inhibited by other motorised objects sharing this void are represented via, occasional, but crucially abrupt, breaks in photographic continuity.

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[106] Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's," 136.
[107] Ibid, 132.

In using the car as a mediating perceptual frame, Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* call attention to the ironic barrier separating Kerouac-as-Sal-Paradise, and the Beat and countercultural road trippers who followed in his wake, from the landscape they sought to encounter more directly, via being 'on the road.' With its stutters, ruptures and elisions, *Every Building* documents the fragmented and distanced relationship of the individual inside the car, and its external environment—thus, disrupting the integrated flow of internal consciousness with the world seen in-motion, as posited by Kerouac.

Ruscha's framing device in these works, the car, is crucially an invisible one. This marked a departure from the treatment of the car, and its high gloss surfaces, as a fetishized art object.[108] However, in rendering the-car-as-frame invisible, the all-pervading effect of this mode of perception is arguably further underscored. The car, like the road itself, is conspicuously present via its visual absence. In contrast, John Baldessari's contemporaneous, *The Back of All the Trucks Passed While Driving from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, Sunday 20, January 1963,* (1963) [Fig.4.50], uses the dashboard window as a visually discernible photographic frame. The hood of the artist's car continually penetrates our field of vision, along with the road ahead. However, access to this spatial-temporal horizon is obscured by other vehicles occupying it. In photographically documenting these visual obstructions, in a mode conforming to Iversen's notion of title as temporal/geographic instruction, Baldessari provided an account of the banal realities of the road journey, as experienced in slow-moving traffic.[109] His seemingly arbitrary selection of one type of vehicle, the eponymous trucks, renders the activity akin to the childhood time-passing game of car spotting. However, much like Ruscha's *Gasoline Stations*, the repetitiveness of Baldessari's trucks evoke a visual monotony and sense of halted progress, counter to the idealised notion of automobile-enabled speed and seamless

[108] For the prevalence of this in L.A. Pop, see: Allan, Bradnock and Turvey, "FOR PEOPLE WHO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE," 161-164.
[109] Iversen, "Auto-maticity," 16.

travel. In terms of their position on the horizon, the trucks might also be read as symbols of a less mythic form of land and nation conquering, that of commerce and industry. They highlight a more practical function of America's roadways, that is, a logistical system for transporting goods. Thus, the mythic construction of the road as a site of existential discovery, as conjured by Kerouac, is undercut via the bathos of Baldessari's documentation of its banal reality.

The question remains then: where does Ader's *One Night* stand in relation to these other, conceptually-documented road journeys, as well the later circumstances of its production in the early 1970s? Moreover, what might be said of Ader's position not *on* the road, but rather as a pedestrian, adjacent to it? In contrast to Ruscha and Baldessari's works, Ader inserted himself into the photographic field of vision, as well as the road-side landscape. Thus, the car is neither a mediating frame for the subsequent viewer, nor Ader, in the moment. It does not provide a photographic frame, but equally it is not the photographic focus. The work is largely absent of cars, save for the still relatively empty, freeway images. This in itself seems miraculous, given their ever-presence in Los Angeles. I would suggest that Ader thus functions as (both) a figure of subjective perceptual identification, in addition to being an object on or in the photographic landscape. The artist's visual anonymity enables this identification, rendering him, as Heiser also asserts, as a symbolic stand-in for the universal human subject.[110]

In removing the subject, or rather the subjective point of identification, from the car, and re-inserting it back into the landscape of the road, *One Night* documents a series of more direct encounters with this landscape. This immediacy is emphasized by the artist's flashlight, a tool enabling Ader to inspect objects found within it at close-proximity, or at a relatively immediate distance. The external world is no longer seen as pushed up against a car window. Instead, the subject is part of it, and wanders freely within it. Ader's

[110] Heiser, "A Romantic Measure," 145.

disregard for the distinction between traversable and non-traversable terrain seemingly underscores this. We see him on the freeway's hard shoulder, on the roof of a bungalow, and potentially trespassing in Hollywood. The mediating or constricting frame of the car/camera is thus 'out of the picture,' at least in an illusionary sense. The work does, however, make reference to the sensory enclosure cars enable, via Ader's addition of song lyrics.

Mansoor observed that in *On the Road* the car prevents Kerouac's protagonists from being situated or implicated anywhere along their travels.[111] Continuous speed and movement propels the passengers down an ever-expanding 'open' road. Vehicles also provide a separation from the exterior world, in terms of a physical barrier, enclosing those within. This sense of structural enclosure is absent in Ruscha's works, although it was hinted at by Baldessari. The car's front wing mirror provides occasional glimpses of the artist behind the wheel, but crucially these views are from the *outside* looking *in*. However, it is a prominent feature of Marioni's *The Trip,* as well as many of the well-known images of the Pranksters' bus, Furthur. Both document the vehicles' interiors, as well as the passengers' communal activity. Ron Bevirt's photographs of the Pranksters preparing to leave Kesey's home in La Honda, also capture scenes of domesticity [Fig.4.51]. His images of group members cooking highlights Furthur's function as 'mobile' home. In a less literal sense, all enclosed vehicles have the capacity to be seen as miniature homes on the road. They offer shelter from elements and conditions outside, an intimate spatial and experiential bubble, with—as Marioni's trippers were likely well-aware—its own, potentially intoxicating, atmosphere.

The addition of song lyrics to *One Night* alludes to this sense of enclosure—specifically the auditory enclosure one can create via a car's internal stereo. This idea is frequently represented in cinematic road journeys, which bind the narrative progression of both vehicle and subjects to a non-diegetic

[111] Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's," 128.

soundtrack. That is, non-diegetic in the sense that the car's internal audio extends to shots of the car and its surrounding as filmed from outside. As experienced in real life, this sensory enclosure further reinforces the separateness of inside from outside. As Gemie and Ireland discovered, this was not lost on many hippy trailers. Those sceptical of the authenticity of charted tours frequently citied their habit of playing loud Western music as evidence that they did not offer an immersive experience of the local landscape or culture. [112] Conversely, the Pranksters saw this form of enclosure in positive terms. Moreover, they wished to extend the experience of "being on the bus" to the outside world. This was something they did literally, on an auditory level, by rigging-up a complex system of mics and speakers in order to broadcast the sounds of the bus to outsiders.[113]

In using a non-contemporary pop song, Ader potentially furthered the distance between *One Night's* imagined internal soundtrack and the exploratory environment it documented. Whilst Ader's addition of song lyrics can be read as an allusion to the enclosed sensory space of the car, its silent rendering simultaneously resists this notion of mediating frame. That is to say, I would argue the viewer is able to relate the soundless words of *Searchin'* more directly with the artist's own consciousness. It functions as a literal internal soundtrack—that is, one internal to the artist-as-subject. The trace of the artist's hand, in the form of cursive script, furthers the lyrics' function as a point of subjective identification. Thus, Ader's *lack* of enclosure is arguably emphasized—as is his momentary homelessness, or home-sickness. The song's nostalgia and his restless wanderings ostensibly convey both. Yet, at the same time, I would suggest this absence of a home-on-the-road underscores the immediacy of his encounters with the land surrounding it.

As an anonymous stand-in for the universal subject, Ader enables the viewer to identify with his experiential perspective in the images, and by extension

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[112] Gemie and Ireland, *The Hippie Trail,* 105-108.
[113] Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.* 65-66.

the immediacy of his 'on the road' encounters. However, we unavoidably look *at* Ader, as he is also an object in our field of vision. In this respect, our view of the road is arguably more distanced. The conflation of camera with car effectively puts us in the driver or passenger seat. This is an illusionary trick, which Baldessari illustrated, and consequentially collapsed, as we fail to see our ourselves, alongside him, in the reflection of his car's wing mirror. Although we might arrive at questions about who took Ader's photographs, as well as the camera's position in relation to the artist, nevertheless, the viewer is ultimately well-aware of their role as second-hand witness to his journey.

This notion of the viewer functioning as witness to Ader's journey is of particular significance in light of the contemporary circumstances. Many of the quest narratives that regained popularity during the countercultural Sixties are related via the perspective of a witness, who relates an account of a hero or guru-figure's journey, or their own existential awakening, as prompted by an encounter with this figure. For example, Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922), first published in English in 1951, details Buddha's pursuit of spiritual self-knowledge, as told through the eyes of such a narrator.[114] The source of inspiration for Ader's project title, P. D. Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949) relates a journey to the East, as recounted to the author, by his mentor George Gurdjieff.[115] Through Gurdjieff's re-telling of this trip, Ouspensky comes to an existential realisation, which in turn formed the basis of this work of esoteric philosophy. The audience relationship Ader established thus potentially models that of a guru and witnessing, follower. The artist positioned himself as an 'authentic' intermediary-figure, via which we conduct our own search for the miraculous aspects of his journey.

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[114] Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha,* trans. Joachim Neugroschel (London: Penguin, 1999). Siddhartha was widely referenced in Sixties pop culture, note the release of Conrad Rook's 1972 film adaption for Columbia Pictures.

[115] P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (London: Routledge, 1950).

Conceptual road journeys can be linked to those of the counterculture traveller, via the very photographic method employed to document them. As I have suggested, the countercultural traveller oscillated somewhere between an explorer of the unknown and a tourist, re-tracing well-worn paths. Simon & Garfunkel's *America*, captured this by concluding with the narrator's realisation he is sharing the road with numerous other travellers, who have "all come to look for America."[116] Conceptual photography has been likened to the amateur snapshot, in terms of its de-skilled approach to the medium. For Wall, this amateurism offered a reductivist method of "impersonalisation," befitting of conceptualism's negation of subjectivity and aesthetics.[117] What had been overlooked however, is the potential significance of the snapshot's association with tourist photography.

Ruscha used the term "snapshot" to outline his dispassionate approach to photography, and the resulting throw-away quality of the images captured. Referring to his *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations*, in 1965, he stated, "they are nothing more than snapshots."[118] Despite the amateurishness the term evokes, he compared his work to industrial photography, designating it a professional photographic activity, albeit one apart from the aesthetic and compositional concerns of traditional art-photography. However, the tourist snapshot shares the same documentary, yet throwaway quality. As indicated by its very name, the "snapshot" is captured quickly. In line with the basic, mechanical process of the medium, it is, as Wall highlights an "instantaneous operation," conducted without extended consideration to 'picture-making.'[119] In relation to the tourist, the snapshot is potentially one of many, captured in a passing moment or location, with a certain indiscriminateness.

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[116] Simon & Garfunkel, "America."
[117] Wall, "Marks of Indifference,"44. As Rawlinson highlights, Wall's analysis is informed by a seeming investment in conceptualism's failure, akin to Buchloh in its championing of visuality's return. Thus, as he asserts, Wall positions photo-conceptualism as a "terrible necessity, the teleological end point of modernist self-reflexivity," albeit "stopped short" of total oblivion. Mark Rawlinson, "'Like Trading Dust for Oranges': Ed Ruscha and Things of Interest" in *Various Small Books: Referencing Various Small Books by Ed Ruscha,* eds. Jeff Brouws, Wendy Burton and Hermann Zschienger (London: MIT Press), 14.
[118] Coplans, "Concerning Various," 25.
[119] Wall, "Marks of Indifference," 40.

The result of this process, particularly in the pre-digital age, was duplications, errors or often, simply, a series of visually uninteresting images.

The principle function of the tourist snapshot is to document travel, but the underlying intent of this practice is not necessarily to construct a visual narrative—at least not one re-visited regularly. Even if retained, the majority of snapshots are stored away, and viewed only occasionally. I would argue that the documentary impulse of the tourist snapshot instead relates to a desire to record a momentary sense of present- and located-ness, before moving on. In other words, it is a document in-and-of the moment which declares "I was here," and perhaps, to borrow Ruscha's words, "nothing more."[120] The emphatic temporary-presentness of the conceptual road journeys I have discussed arguably also make this declaration, particularly those of Ruscha and Baldessari.

The snapshot is the assumed photographic mode of the tourist, and vice-versa, because, by definition, the tourist is an individual not permanently rooted to their current location. The traveller is similarly defined by the expectation that will eventually move on. As highlighted by the accounts of Hippie Trailers, travellers earn their distinction from mere tourists via attempts to embed themselves, albeit temporarily, in their present locale. The tourist in contrast, remains an outsider at all times, and consequentially experiences everything at a remove. Thus, one could liken their relation to their immediate, but ultimately temporary surroundings to the distance established to the world as seen through mediating lens of the camera.

The countercultural 'tripper' can be understood as a socio-historically specific iteration of the 'traveller' and the 'tourist,' combining elements characteristic of both. This was principally the temporary nature of their activities. However, for those following the overland trail, in its "authentic" form, countercultural travel differentiated itself from commercial tourism via an openness to chance experiences and encounters. Akin to the frameworks of

[120] Coplans, "Concerning Various," 25.

conceptual art, their journeys were structured in order to incorporate this openness, allowing their final destinations to change. As Iversen highlights in her discussion of conceptual photography as a form of rule-governed performance, whilst "instruction dictates the initial conditions of the experiment, [it] does not determine the [exact] outcome."[121] Moreover, as she posits, the automaticity of this process, that is, both the use of instruction and its documentation via snapshot photography, lends itself to the creation of unanticipated 'happy accidents,' which short-circuit authorial agency.[122] One might cite the glitches of Ruscha's *Every Building* as an example. 'Happy accidents' were similarly sought by the countercultural traveller. The restlessness, and continually changing, or deferred, destination of the countercultural tripper elicits a parallel between countercultural travel and the intrinsic utopianism of the phenomenon at large. As stated, this manifested itself as a continual yearning for elsewhere, or otherness, to be apart from contemporary mainstream America.

If the snapshot both captures and resists the present via the immediacy and intermediary effect of the camera, what then of the mode of the picture postcard evoked by Ader? His use of hand-written cursive evokes a certain direct, subjective-presentness. However, this post-production enhancement to *One Night's* documentation also calls attention to the photographs' mediated nature. Despite being a tradition that pre-dates the ubiquity of the portable camera, the picture postcard encapsulates many of the same ideas related to the snapshot, even down to the tourist-photographer's habit of capturing the same familiar scenes, taken from popular viewpoints [see: Fig.4.42—43]. The postcard functions as a means of documenting a present locatedness, as evoked by the clichéd greeting, "wish you were *here*." However, as with the snapshot, the receiver inevitably experiences this moment as one now past; the sender is likely to have moved on by the time the card arrives.

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[121] Iversen, "Auto-maticity," 16.
[122] Ibid, 16-17.

Thus, both modes evoke the present, whilst holding it at distance. The main distinction is that the postcard's view is an artificial or constructed one, not actually experienced by the traveller. However, in drawing on the language of stock landscape imagery it can be viewed as an alternative, dispassionate form of picture-making. This is how Ader deploys it, thus complicating the temporal entanglements of Ruscha's snapshot-driven journeys even further. He conjures the immediacy of the present via this outdated and nostalgic pictorial mode. Yet, in so doing, he offers an explicitly artificial narrative, which paradoxically distances this, along with our subjective identification with him, and his direct encounters with the landscape of the road. As this relates to the context of the early 1970s, *One Night* can be interpreted as an expression of the countercultural travellers' restless pursuit of *otherness.* This was reflective of a broader desire to be apart from contemporary mainstream America, even whilst within it. As countercultural historian Rorabaugh succinctly put it, the American 'hippies,' "believed themselves to be inside the United States, but not truly *of* the United States."[123] Ader's engagement with these contemporary yearnings, lies somewhere between earnest and parodic, a lost figure on highway American's edges, he conducted his search for the unobtainable miraculous, in literalised terms, with Maglite in hand.

Conclusion: Back to the Land, Over the Sea

This chapter's analysis of conceptual road journeys concludes as *One Night in Los Angeles* does—by looking out to sea. The landscapes of tourist picture postcards hint at the ongoing tension of man's desire to encounter nature and to conquer it. The popular cultural narrative of exploring the American landscape via its roadways contains a central irony. Roads represent land already mapped and conquered. The ending of this component of Ader's *In Search of the Miraculous* can be interpreted not only as a 'romantic' surrender to nature. It crucially marks the beginning of a journey gone *off*

[123] W. J. Rorabaugh, *American Hippies* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 83.

road. We might draw a parallel here to the contemporaneous back-to-the-land movement [Fig.4.52—53]. Conversely to the restlessness associated with the counterculture's earlier activities, this evolutionary off-shoot was seemingly motivated by a yearning for rootedness. Participants sought to escape 'highway America' altogether, by going off-road and off-grid, in an attempt to recover an idealised version of the nation's rural past. The short-lived nature of the majority of these communities reveals the true utopianism of this goal.[124]

Europe, the land beyond the sea Ader never reached, connects to this desire to return to an impossible, past version of 'home:' that of the artist's birth-land and childhood and America's first white settlers—figures somewhat problematically romanticised by the 'new pioneers' of the 1970s.[125] This reading of the work does not depend on Ader's disappearance; it can also be applied to his planned final sequence. On arrival at this destination, the artist intended to continue his search—much like the counterculture—continually deferring its focus to somewhere elsewhere and *other*. In this notion of a journey, open and without end, one can arguably find a metaphor for conceptual art itself: where the process of 'getting there' is of greater importance than the final destination—one which, according to LeWitt, can only be reached via impossible *miraculous* leaps.[126]

[124] See Miller's chapter on 'moving on:' Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 225-242.
[125] Note the attire of participants of John Olson's photo-story, for: "The Youth Communes," *Life*, July, 1969 [Fig.4.7].
[126] LeWitt, "Sentences," 3.

What A Long Strange Trip It's Been: Conceptual Art and Counterculture, a Conclusion.

Lately it occurs to me

What a long strange trip it's been.

Truckin' The Grateful Dead, 1970.[1]

During my research for this thesis I met two of my conceptual art idols: Robert Barry and Tom Marioni. I met with Barry at Greta Meert Gallery in Brussels in 2015, before the launch of his exhibition there; it was the first interview I had ever conducted. I tentatively explained that my research concerned the relationship between conceptual art and the American counterculture, to which Barry replied: "I'm not sure I can help you with that." In June 2016, I made the same pitch in a booth in Marioni's studio-cum-bar-saloon in San Francisco. Marioni's affirmative response could not have been more different. To him, the connection seemed immediate and obvious. Indeed, he would go on, in that same conversation, to describe conceptual art as a form of anti-materialist protest against the American Vietnam War. When I recounted my earlier exchange with Barry (curious about their opposite take on the matter), Marioni smiled wryly and offered the following explanation: "That's because he's from New York."

My mind returned to these two meetings throughout my thesis. Both took place at formative points in my research process, coming as they did before and close to the end of my first period of archive research in California, and thus signify moments at which certain key ideas (or 'hunches') began to crystallise and feel more fully formed. When I initially wrote the proposal for this project I framed it as an attempt to dismantle what I then saw as the artificial separation of East and West Coast conceptual practices (with the historically overlooked West either omitted from the narrative altogether, or

[1] The Grateful Dead, "Truckin,'" *American Beauty*, Warner Brothers, 1970, 12-inch vinyl.

set up as an alternative, but ultimately secondary offshoot).[2] However, the contrast in my encounters with Barry and Marioni reinforced not only the existence of regional difference (and perhaps, however jokingly expressed, a lingering sense of East and West rivalry), but also the diffuse and nebulous nature of the conceptual project as a whole, as indicated by the different approaches and self-conceptualisations articulated by its practitioners on both coasts. As I continued on the long, strange trip that has been this project, I endeavoured to hold in tension conceptualism's communalities—its unifying, shared utopian impulses—and its regionally specific differences—and attempted to provide an account which acknowledges the existence of *both*. One of the reasons I believe this to be of importance is because there are still lacunae in the histories of West Coast conceptualism, particularly in relation to the Bay Area; for example, in spite of the richness of related archive material held at Berkeley Art Museum, a sustained history of MOCA and the artists in its immediate orbit, has yet to be written.

My encounters with Barry and Marioni caused me to reconsider a question that I asked myself at the very start of this project: if conceptual art meant something so different to so many different artists, who each approached and deployed the term in distinct and sometimes contradictory ways, is it possible to provide a unified account of its all divergent strands? That is to say, is it valid to continue to use this one term to describe the plethora of avant-garde experimental art practices that emerged during the long sixties, practices that have now come to be labelled often, very causally, and without much interrogation as "conceptual." It is notable that several artists now categorised in this way have previously attempted to distance themselves from this label. This includes Barry, who, when we spoke, seemed as resistant to the term conceptual as he was the notion of its potential connection with

[2] As I assert in my introduction, PST publications, to an extent, do the latter, see: Constance M. Lewallen and Karen Moss eds., *State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

the counterculture (a position notably at odds with the framing of his exhibition at Greta Meert).

In my conversations with them, Barry and Marioni, in their own ways, both rejected an association with conceptualism, as understood in orthodox terms. Barry's reluctance to self-identify as a conceptual artist (at least during our conversation) appeared to stem from a concern that it was too restrictive, and referred to a too narrow set of artistic practices, distinct from his approach. Arguably this move, which I interpreted as an attempt to disassociate his work from that of certain East Coast peers, might ironically be seen as indicative of a somewhat East Coast-centric perspective. Marioni conversely embraced the term without such concerns, but re-asserted the particular definition of conceptualism he carved out in 1970, for the purposes of MOCA: as a new form of sculpture, concerned with the creation of "idea-oriented situations."[3]

In spite of initial concerns about the continued validity of the term conceptual, my argument in this thesis has been that there *is* a shared set of impulses that unite the various experimental artistic practices that emerged during this period of the 1960s-70s, and that these impulses derived from the particular historical circumstances of the era. These reflect the attempt to develop alternative modes of thinking and living—that is, the challenges to conservative America presented by the counterculture and its eventual wider diffusion into the mainstream (or, perhaps more accurately, its subsequent appropriation and subsumption). Rather than interpreting Barry's dismissal of these links as further evidence of an East Coast/West Coast divide, I would venture that it originated at least partially in a desire to distinguish between art and personal politics (he would later describe how many of his friends and colleagues were opposed to America's involvement in Vietnam, but that he did not see attending protests as an activity related to art-making). However, it is precisely via this declaration of apoliticism—its utopian pursuit of

[3] Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy: A Memoir by Tom Marioni* (San Francisco, CA: Crowne Point Press, 2007), 104.

autonomy—that, paradoxically, conceptual art can be understood as an expression of, or response to the contemporaneous spirit of countercultural rebellion.

As I have outlined, whilst the activities of the counterculture were political charged, they were not overtly *about* politics, at least not in the established, traditional sense. Rather they can be understood as apolitical expressions of resistance. Countercultural actions were concerned with the creation of liberated utopian spaces (literally, as well as conceptually, in thoughts, behaviours, and newly accessed levels of consciousness) where, to borrow from the quote used by Barry for his 1970 *Marcuse Piece,* the individual-as-part-of-the-collective could finally "be free to think about what they were going to do." The multifarious contemporary art experiments covered by the term conceptual (referring in its broadest sense to art not concerned with the production of static objects) can be linked to the counterculture via a similar interest in utopian space creation.

As I have proposed, in its engagement with the impossible, the ineffable, the ephemeral as well as phenomena outside of/or beyond ordinary human logic and sensory perception, conceptual art can be understood as paradoxically striving toward both open-endedness and self-containment. This manifested in its impossible claims for a separate and sacred realm for art, whilst frequently simultaneously gesturing toward a continually deferred destination out in the conceptual beyond—often to be filled in or completed in the mind of the participant (or as close as possible, given its impossible parameters). Furthermore, many of these traits can be identified not only in the works of West Coast artists such as Marioni, who made direct reference to countercultural influences in his writings, or even Barry with his particular interest in using the unknown as "the occasion for possibilities," but also in

earlier examples of 'orthodox' conceptualism, such as those discussed in Buchloh's influential essay, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969."[4]

In proposing that nascent conceptualism can be considered an appropriate aesthetic mode for the techno-administrative age, Buchloh came close to framing it as an artistic response to the contextually specific backdrop against which it emerged. Ultimately, however, he did not make this position overt, and thus did not account for its implications. As I have argued, it is possible to take up Buchloh's notion of (proto)conceptual art as the aesthetic of administration and use it to counter the vexed claim that its experiments were hermetically sealed from the world at large. Furthermore, rather than casting its appropriation of administrative-like methods as a conservative force, one that inadvertently validated and affirmed the era's dominant ideologies, I have instead read this move as an attempt to test the limits of those ideologies, pushing them to the brink of potential collapse. Understood in this way, early conceptual art, with its systematic and procedurally-led emphasis, can be seen to pose a challenge to the increasingly administered world, subjecting the technocracy to its own logically-informed methods—albeit taken to illogical and irrational extremes. As I have asserted, this attempt to reach for 'conclusions logic cannot reach,' as well new forms of artistic expression not tied to the object-centred conventions of the past, can be understood as intrinsically countercultural in nature. In closing, I will once again borrow from Kosuth, who argued in 1975 that it was "impossible to understand [conceptual art] without understanding the Sixties," but instead suggest that rather than calling it the art of the Vietnam War era, it would be more accurate and appropriate to describe it as the art of the 'Age of Aquarius': the countercultural Sixties.[5]

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[4] Robert Barry, 1969, quoted in John T. Paoletti, "Spaces for Liberated Thought," in *Some Places to Which We Can Come: Robert Barry 1963-1975,* ed. Ellen Seifermann and Beat Wismer (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2003), 21; Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (1990): 105-143.

[5] Joseph Kosuth, "1975" in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), 345.

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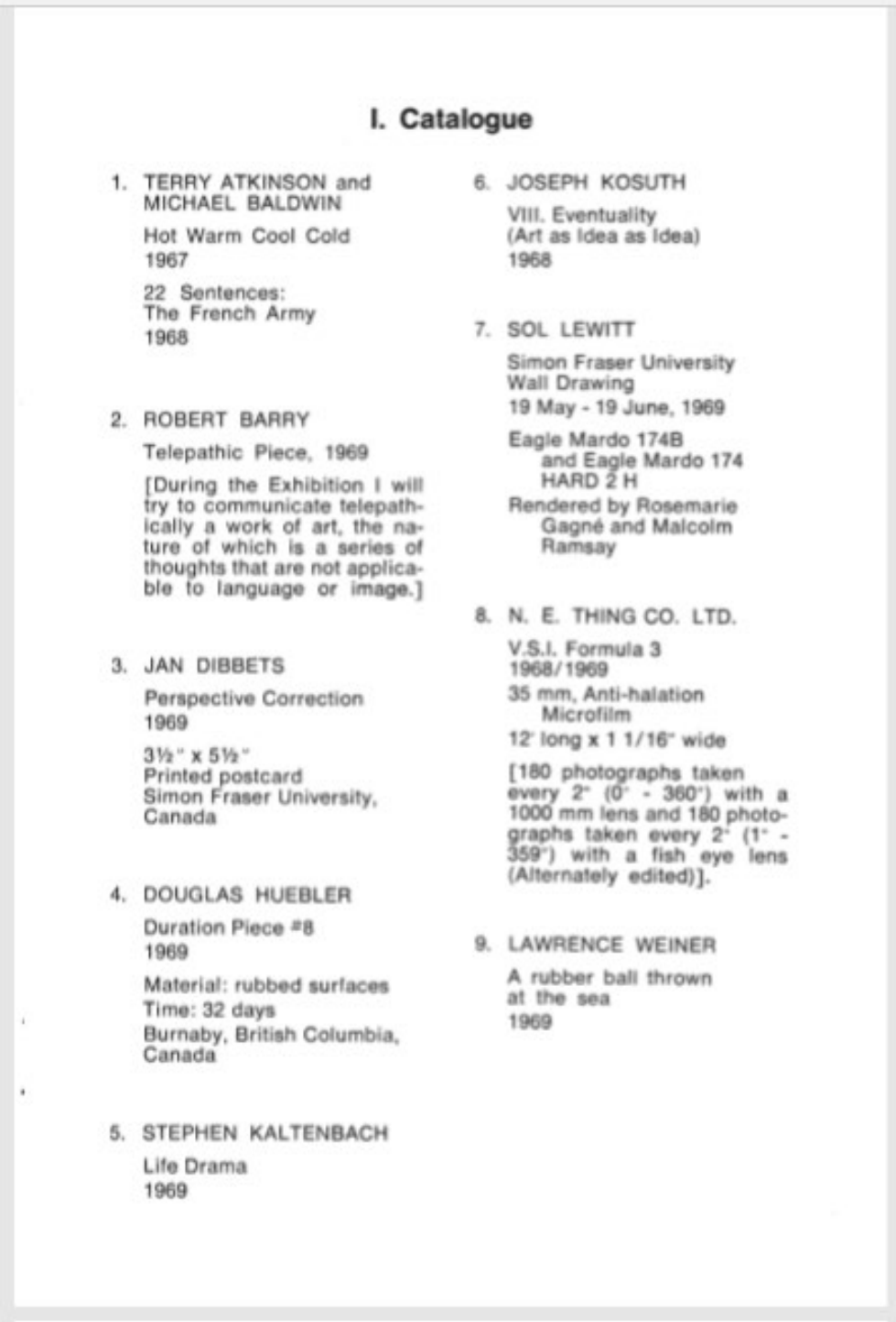
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I. Catalogue

1. TERRY ATKINSON and MICHAEL BALDWIN

   Hot Warm Cool Cold
   1967

   22 Sentences:
   The French Army
   1968

2. ROBERT BARRY

   Telepathic Piece, 1969

   [During the Exhibition I will try to communicate telepathically a work of art, the nature of which is a series of thoughts that are not applicable to language or image.]

3. JAN DIBBETS

   Perspective Correction
   1969

   3½" x 5½"
   Printed postcard
   Simon Fraser University, Canada

4. DOUGLAS HUEBLER

   Duration Piece #8
   1969

   Material: rubbed surfaces
   Time: 32 days
   Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

5. STEPHEN KALTENBACH

   Life Drama
   1969

6. JOSEPH KOSUTH

   VIII. Eventuality
   (Art as Idea as Idea)
   1968

7. SOL LEWITT

   Simon Fraser University
   Wall Drawing
   19 May - 19 June, 1969

   Eagle Mardo 174B
   and Eagle Mardo 174
   HARD 2 H
   Rendered by Rosemarie Gagné and Malcolm Ramsay

8. N. E. THING CO. LTD.

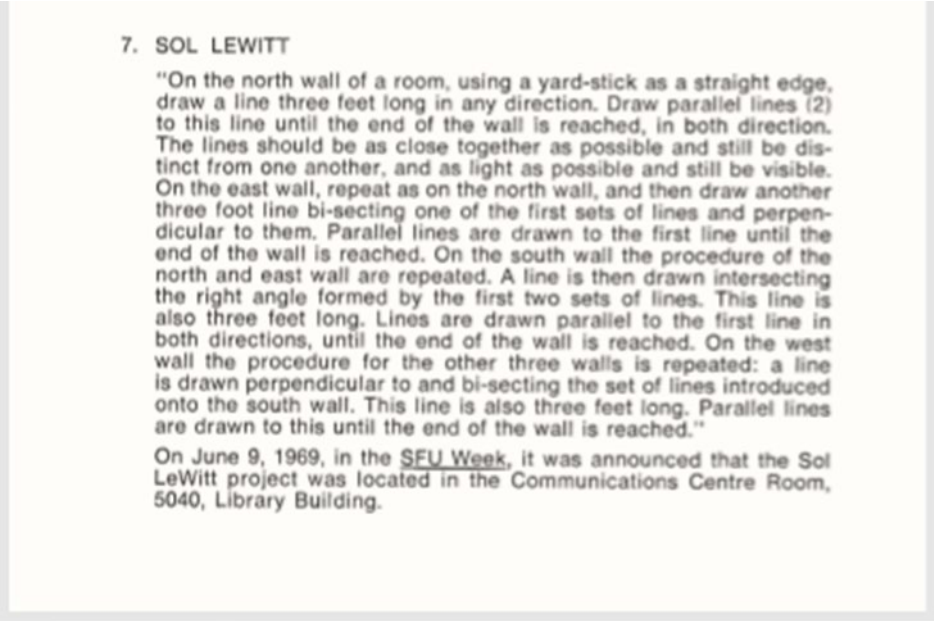
   V.S.I. Formula 3
   1968/1969
   35 mm, Anti-halation Microfilm
   12' long x 1 1/16" wide

   [180 photographs taken every 2° (0° - 360°) with a 1000 mm lens and 180 photographs taken every 2° (1° - 359°) with a fish eye lens (Alternately edited)].

9. LAWRENCE WEINER

   A rubber ball thrown
   at the sea
   1969

1.1. Robert Barry, *Telepathic Piece,* 1969, 'I. Catalogue,' *May 19-June 19, 1969,* Simon Fraser University, 1969.



7. SOL LEWITT

"On the north wall of a room, using a yard-stick as a straight edge, draw a line three feet long in any direction. Draw parallel lines (2) to this line until the end of the wall is reached, in both direction. The lines should be as close together as possible and still be distinct from one another, and as light as possible and still be visible. On the east wall, repeat as on the north wall, and then draw another three foot line bi-secting one of the first sets of lines and perpendicular to them. Parallel lines are drawn to the first line until the end of the wall is reached. On the south wall the procedure of the north and east wall are repeated. A line is then drawn intersecting the right angle formed by the first two sets of lines. This line is also three feet long. Lines are drawn parallel to the first line in both directions, until the end of the wall is reached. On the west wall the procedure for the other three walls is repeated: a line is drawn perpendicular to and bi-secting the set of lines introduced onto the south wall. This line is also three feet long. Parallel lines are drawn to this until the end of the wall is reached."

On June 9, 1969, in the SFU Week, it was announced that the Sol LeWitt project was located in the Communications Centre Room, 5040, Library Building.

1.2. Sol LeWitt, *Wall Drawing,* 1969, 'II. Presentation,' *May 19-June 19, 1969*, Simon Fraser University, 1969.



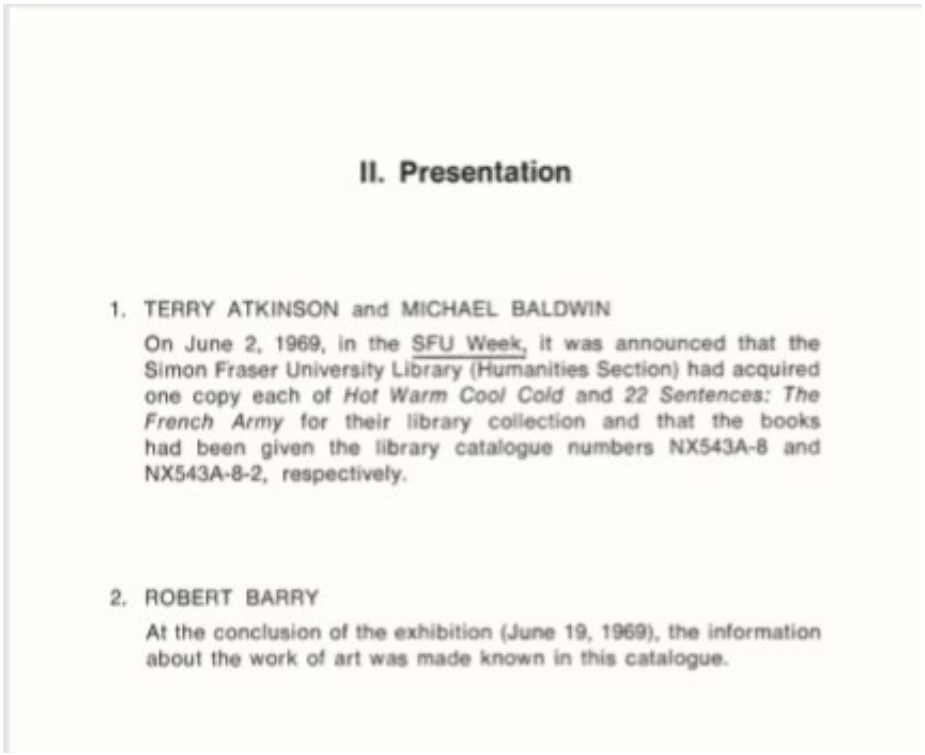
4. DOUGLAS HUEBLER

Documentation (typewritten page, 8½" x 11").

Documentation (8½" x 11") for Duration Piece #8", 1969.

One copy of each of the two pages of documentation was distributed to the students on 19 May, 1969.

1.3. Douglas Huebler, *Duration Piece #8*, 1969 'II. Presentation,' *May 19-June 19, 1969*, Simon Fraser University, 1969.



II. Presentation

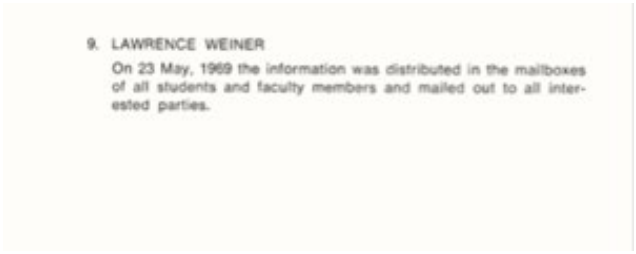
1. TERRY ATKINSON and MICHAEL BALDWIN

   On June 2, 1969, in the SFU Week, it was announced that the Simon Fraser University Library (Humanities Section) had acquired one copy each of *Hot Warm Cool Cold* and *22 Sentences: The French Army* for their library collection and that the books had been given the library catalogue numbers NX543A-8 and NX543A-8-2, respectively.

2. ROBERT BARRY

   At the conclusion of the exhibition (June 19, 1969), the information about the work of art was made known in this catalogue.

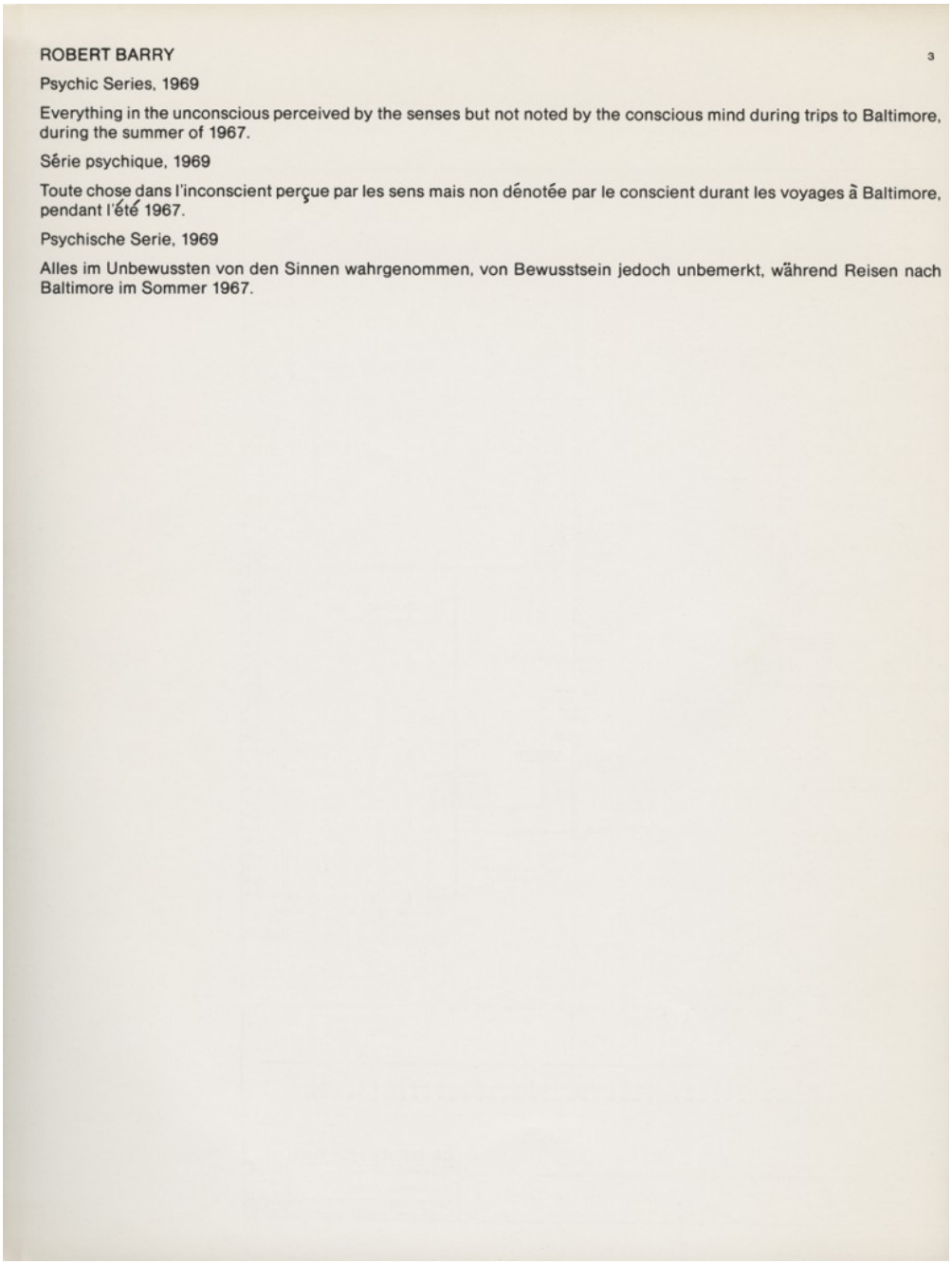
1.4. Robert Barry, *Telepathic Piece,* 1969, 'II. Presentation,' *May 19-June 19, 1969,* Simon Fraser University, 1969.



9. LAWRENCE WEINER

   On 23 May, 1969 the information was distributed in the mailboxes of all students and faculty members and mailed out to all interested parties.

1.5. Lawrence Weiner, *A Rubber Ball Thrown at the Sea*, 1969, 'II. Presentation,' *May 19-June 19, 1969,* Simon Fraser University, 1969.



ROBERT BARRY 3

Psychic Series, 1969

Everything in the unconscious perceived by the senses but not noted by the conscious mind during trips to Baltimore, during the summer of 1967.

Série psychique, 1969

Toute chose dans l'inconscient perçue par les sens mais non dénotée par le conscient durant les voyages à Baltimore, pendant l'été 1967.

Psychische Serie, 1969

Alles im Unbewussten von den Sinnen wahrgenommen, von Bewusstsein jedoch unbemerkt, während Reisen nach Baltimore im Sommer 1967.

1.6. Robert Barry, *Psychic Series*, 1969 (detail: *Everything in the unconscious perceived by the senses but not noted by the conscious mind during trips to Baltimore, during the summer of 1967*), *July, August, September, 1967,* Seth Seigelaub, 1967.



1.7. Robert Barry, *All the things I know but of which I am at the moment thinking - 1:36 PM; June 15, 1969,* artist's book, Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1974.





1.8-11. Robert Barry, *Inert Gas Series: Helium,* 1969, Mojave Desert, colour negative, courtesy of the artist.









1.12-13. Robert Barry, *Inert Gas Series: Krypton,* 1969, Beverly Hills, colour negative, courtesy of the artist.



1.14. Marc Riboud, *The Ultimate Confrontation: The Flower and the Bayonet*, 1967, colour photograph, courtesy of the photographer.

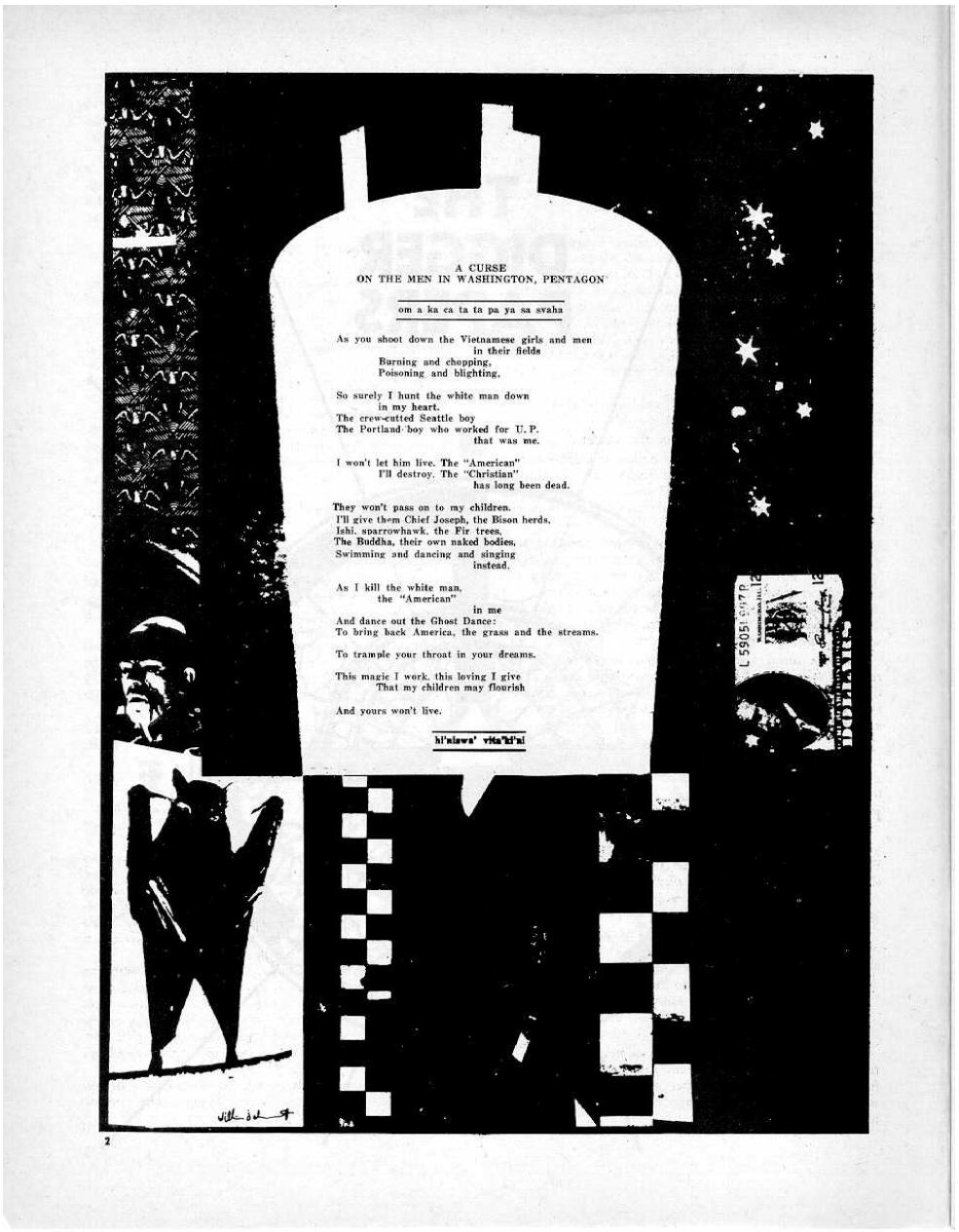


1.15. Bernie Boston, *Flower Power*, 1967, colour photograph.





1.16-17. Photograph of The Fugs at the Pentagon Protest, Washington D.C., October 21, 1967.



A CURSE
ON THE MEN IN WASHINGTON, PENTAGON

om a ka ca ta ta pa ya sa svaha

As you shoot down the Vietnamese girls and men
in their fields
Burning and chopping,
Poisoning and blighting,

So surely I hunt the white man down
in my heart.
The crew-cutted Seattle boy
The Portland boy who worked for U. P.
that was me.

I won't let him live. The "American"
I'll destroy. The "Christian"
has long been dead.

They won't pass on to my children.
I'll give them Chief Joseph, the Bison herds,
Ishi, sparrowhawk, the Fir trees,
The Buddha, their own naked bodies,
Swimming and dancing and singing
instead.

As I kill the white man,
the "American"
in me
And dance out the Ghost Dance:
To bring back America, the grass and the streams.

To trample your throat in your dreams.

This magic I work, this loving I give
That my children may flourish

And yours won't live.

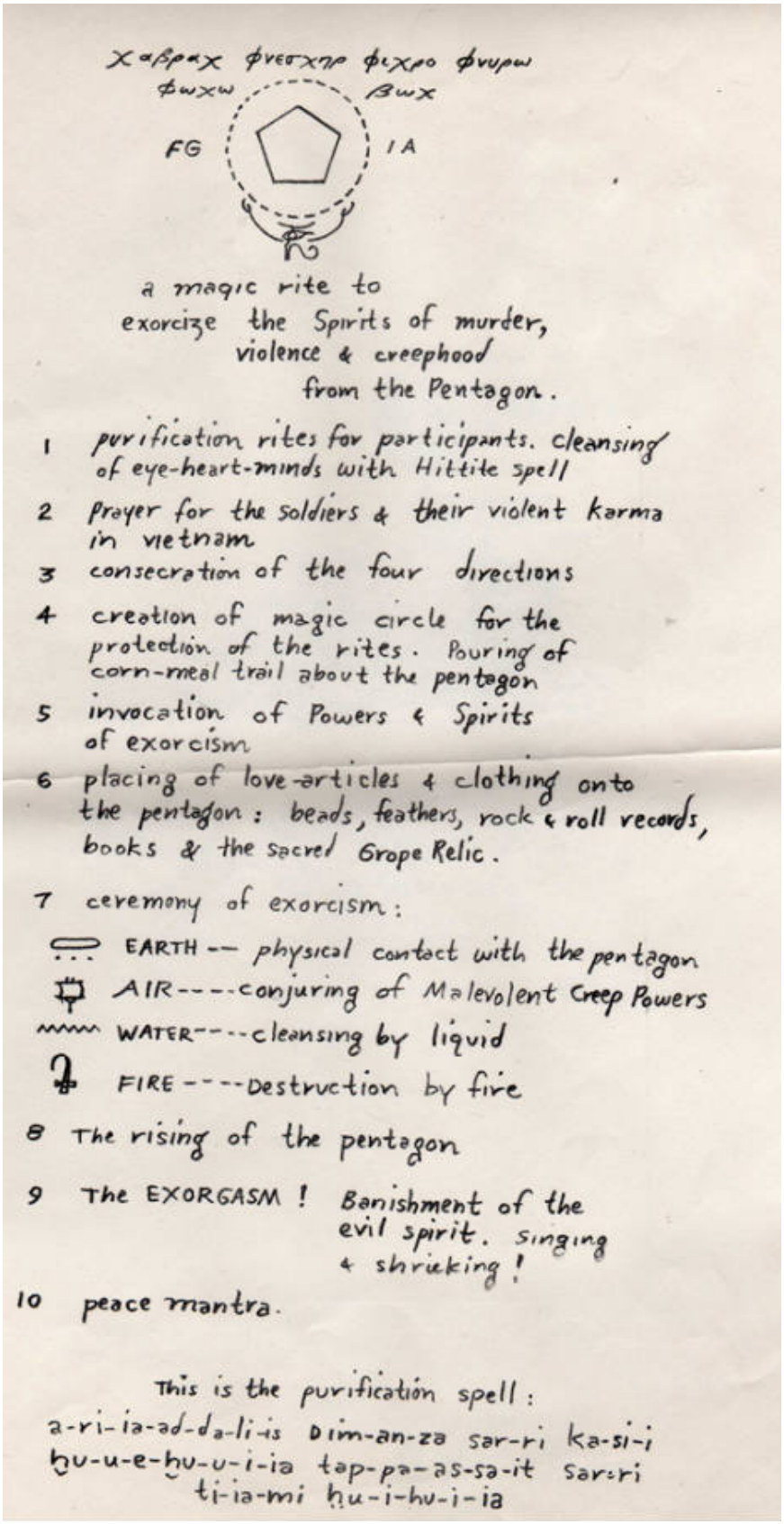
hi'niswa' vita'hi'ni

2

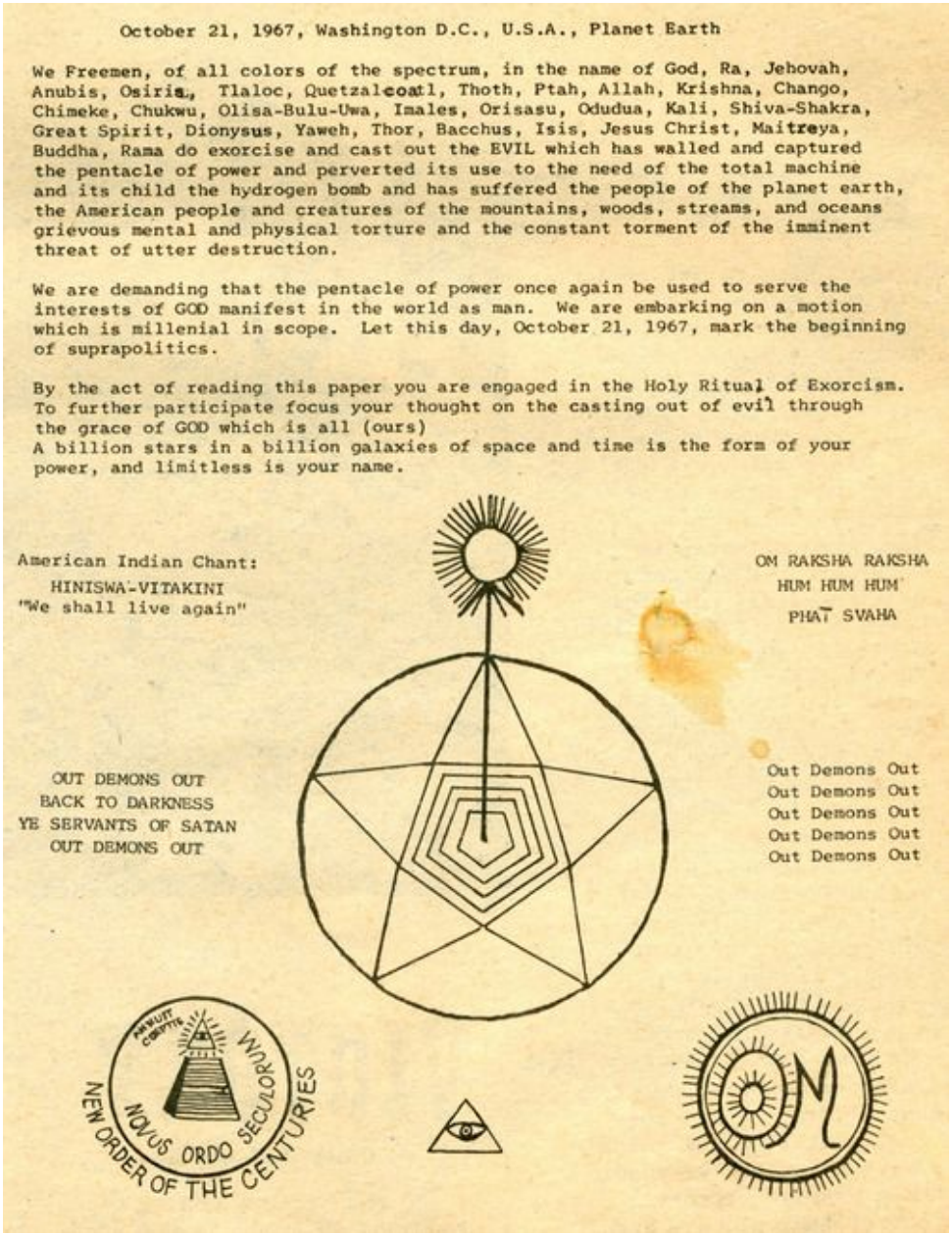
1.18. Gary Snyder, "A Curse on the Men in Washington, Pentagon," *Digger Papers*, August, 1968, The Diggers Archives, diggers.org.



1.19. Richard J. Honigman, “The Pentagon is Rising” *San Francisco Oracle*, 1967.



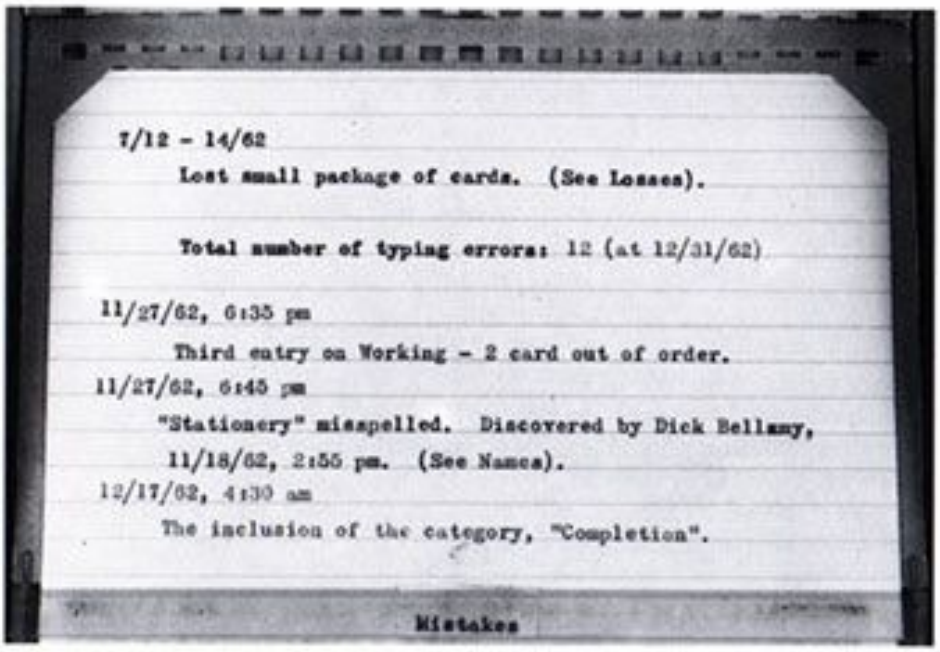
1.20. Ed Sanders, Exorcism handbill, October 21, 1967.



1.21. Exorcism Mimeograph, October 21, 1967.



1.22-23. Robert Morris, *Card File*, 1962, metal and file cards mounted on wood, 68.5 x 27 x 4 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges, Pompidou, Paris.

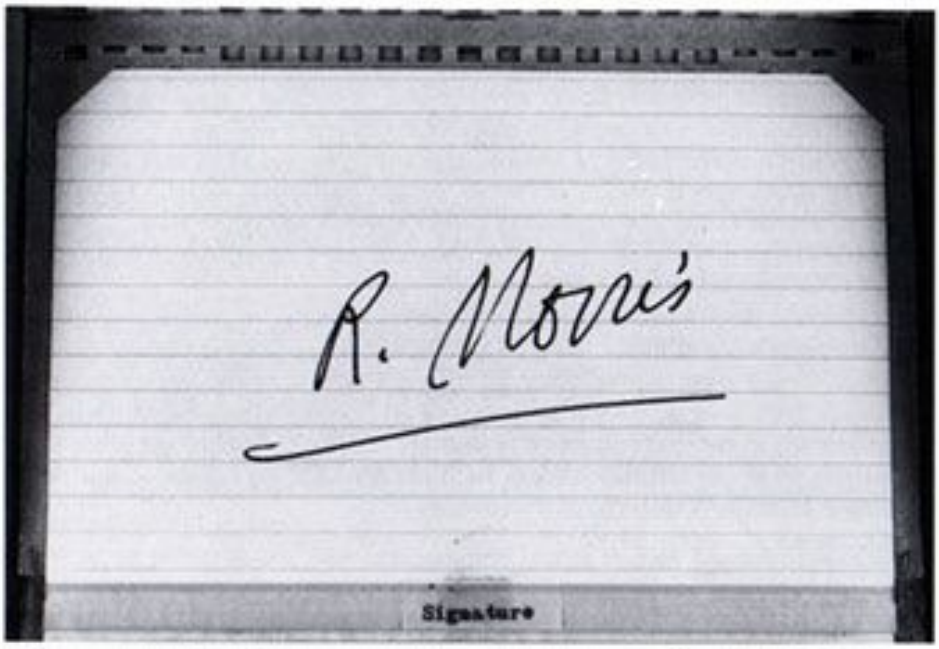


7/12 - 14/62
Lost small package of cards. (See Losses).

Total number of typing errors: 12 (at 12/31/62)

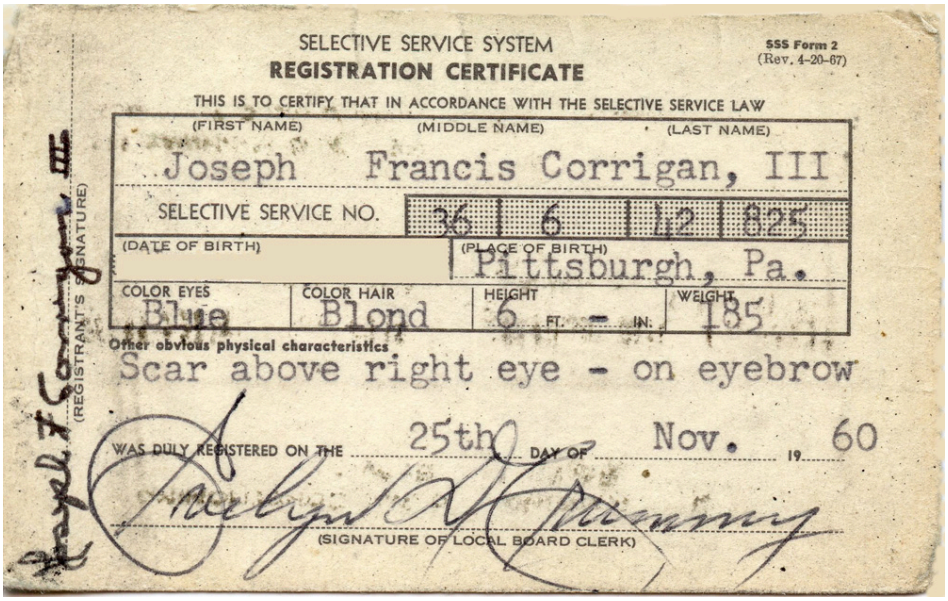
11/27/62, 6:35 pm
Third entry on Working - 2 card out of order.
11/27/62, 6:45 pm
"Stationery" misspelled. Discovered by Dick Bellamy, 11/18/62, 2:55 pm. (See Names).
12/17/62, 4:30 am
The inclusion of the category, "Completion".

Mistakes



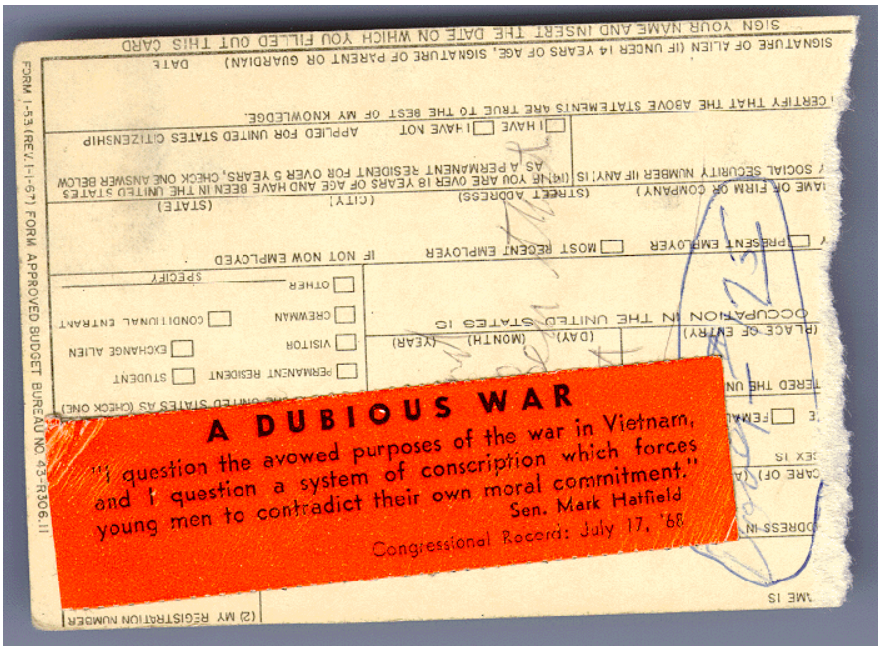
R. Morris

Signature



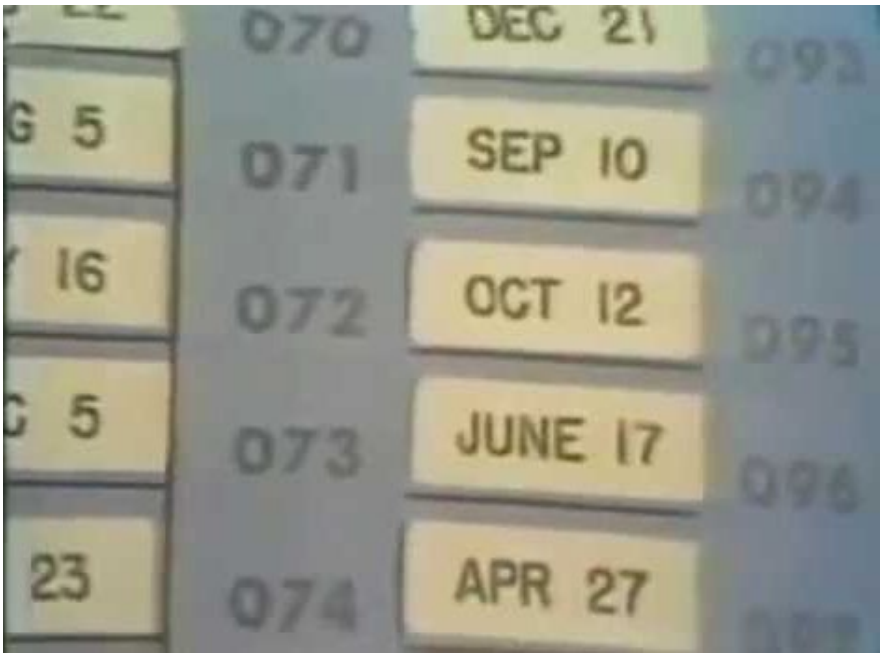
SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM
SSS Form 2 (Rev. 4-20-67)
REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SELECTIVE SERVICE LAW
(FIRST NAME) (MIDDLE NAME) (LAST NAME)
Joseph Francis Corrigan, III
SELECTIVE SERVICE NO. 36 6 12 825
(DATE OF BIRTH)
(PLACE OF BIRTH) Pittsburgh, Pa.
COLOR EYES Blue
COLOR HAIR Blond
HEIGHT 6 FT. — IN.
WEIGHT 185
Other obvious physical characteristics
Scar above right eye - on eyebrow
(REGISTRANT'S SIGNATURE) Joseph F. Corrigan, III
WAS DULY REGISTERED ON THE 25th DAY OF Nov. 19 60
(SIGNATURE OF LOCAL BOARD CLERK)

1.24. Draft Card, November 25, 1960 (Joseph Corrigan, C Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, Dak To, Vietnam 1967–68), New York Historical Society.

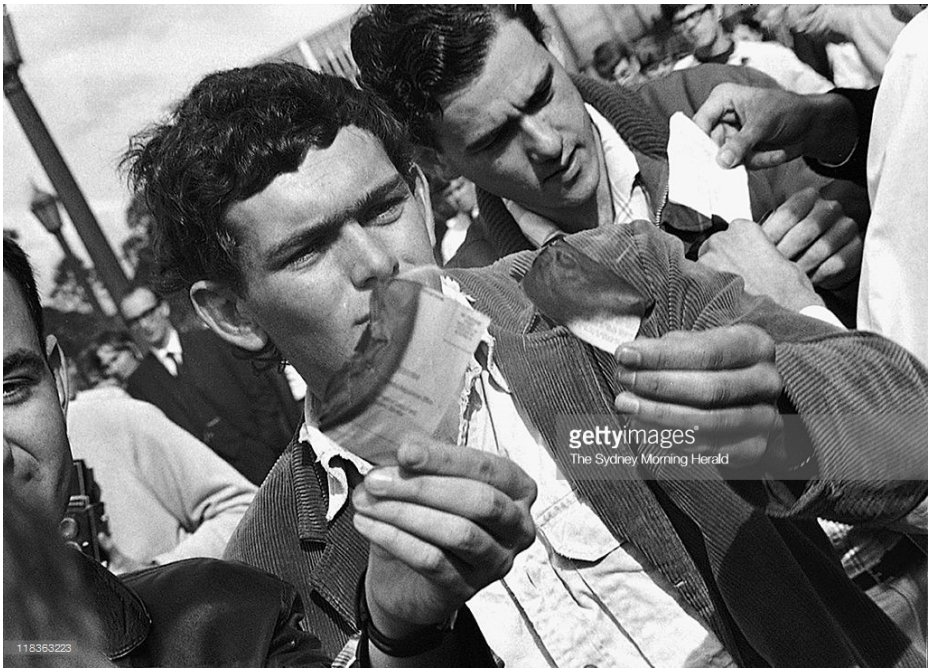


1.25. Torn draft card, 1960s, NYU Archives Collection.

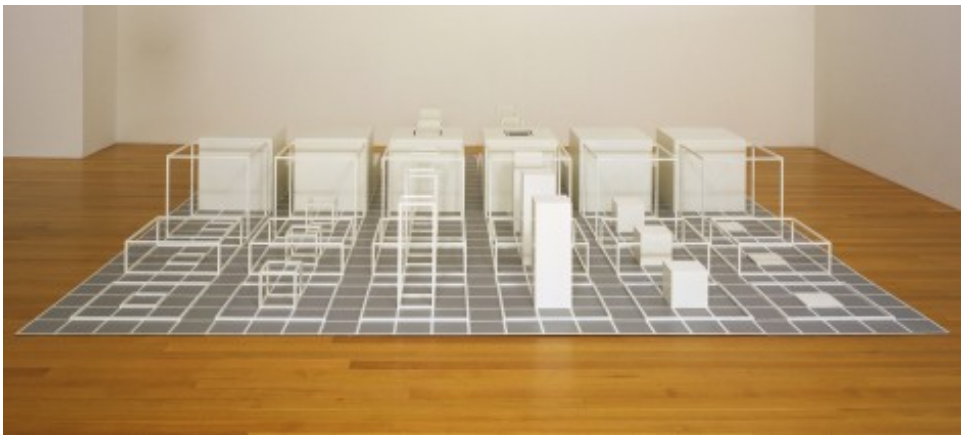




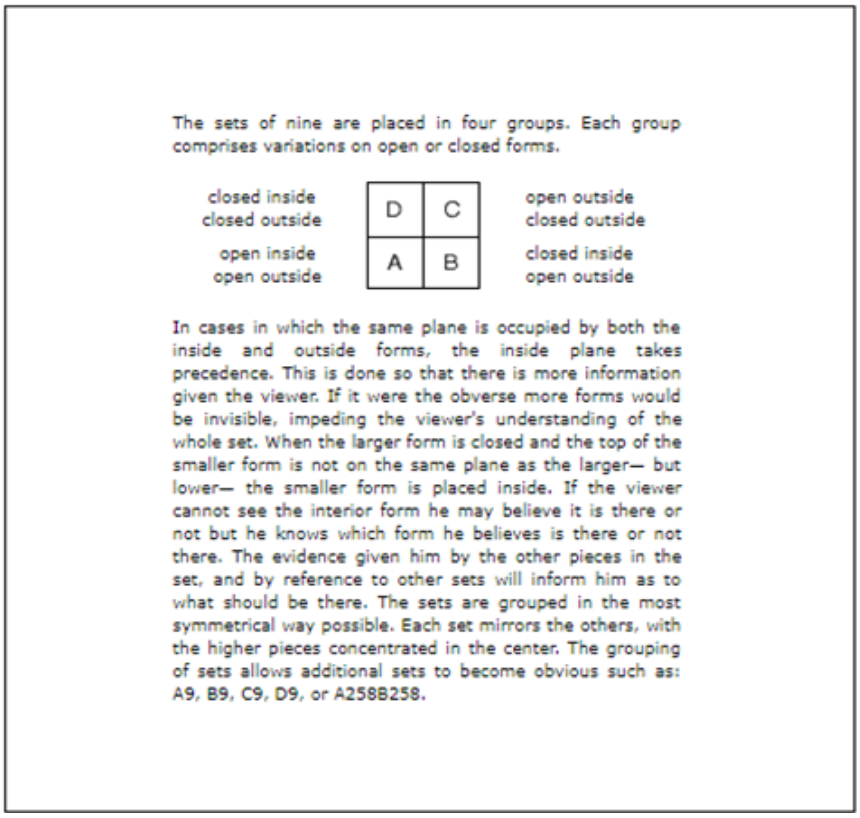
1.26-27. Film still of The Draft Lottery, CBS News Special Report, CBS, Dec. 1, 1969.



1.28. Robert Pearce, *University Students Burn their Draft,* 7th May 1968, black-and-white photograph, The Sydney Morning Herald/Fairfax Media, Getty Images.



1.29. Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project, I (ABCD)*, 1966, Baked enamel on steel units over baked enamel on aluminium, 50.8 x 398.9 x 398.9 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

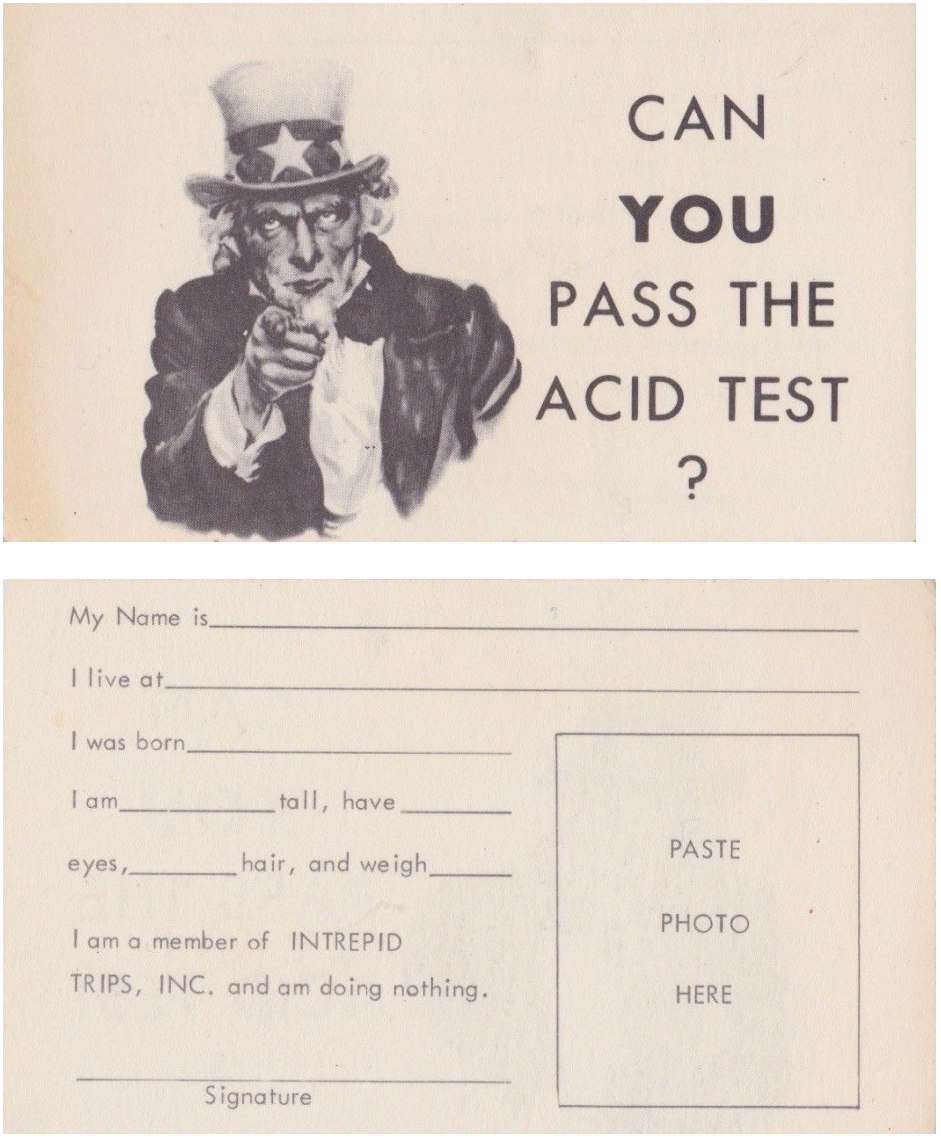


The sets of nine are placed in four groups. Each group comprises variations on open or closed forms.

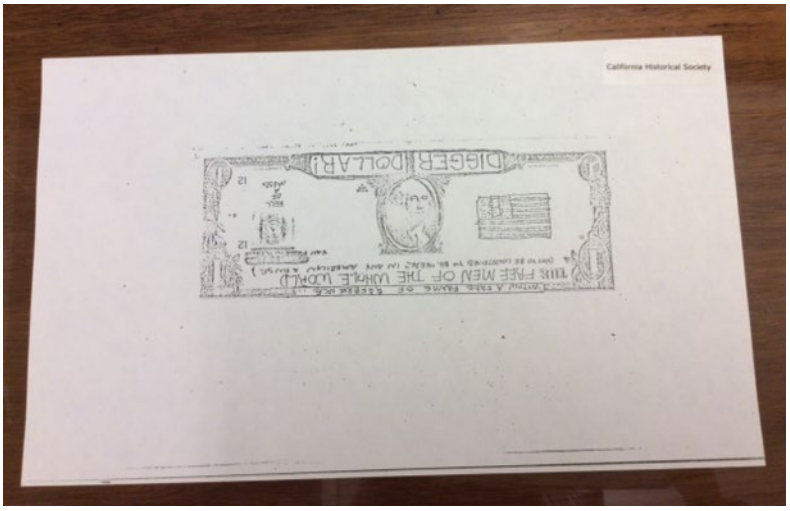
closed inside closed outside	D	C	open outside closed outside
open inside open outside	A	B	closed inside open outside

In cases in which the same plane is occupied by both the inside and outside forms, the inside plane takes precedence. This is done so that there is more information given the viewer. If it were the obverse more forms would be invisible, impeding the viewer's understanding of the whole set. When the larger form is closed and the top of the smaller form is not on the same plane as the larger— but lower— the smaller form is placed inside. If the viewer cannot see the interior form he may believe it is there or not but he knows which form he believes is there or not there. The evidence given him by the other pieces in the set, and by reference to other sets will inform him as to what should be there. The sets are grouped in the most symmetrical way possible. Each set mirrors the others, with the higher pieces concentrated in the center. The grouping of sets allows additional sets to become obvious such as: A9, B9, C9, D9, or A258B258.

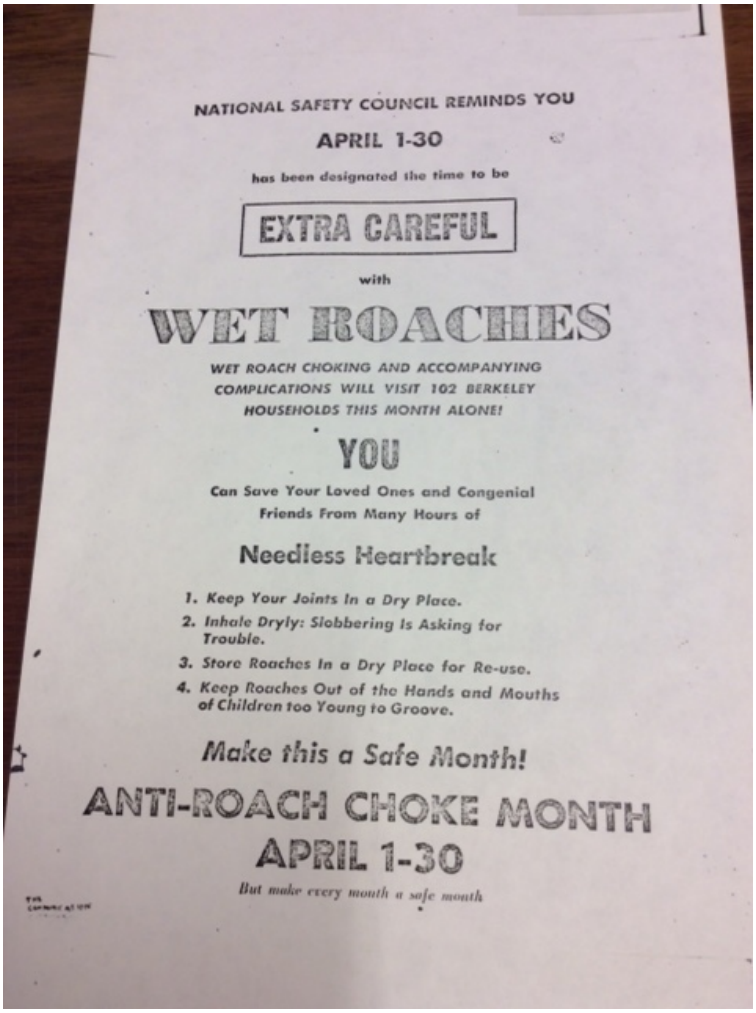
1.30. Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project, I (ABCD)*, Aspen 5+6 (Fall-Winter 1966).



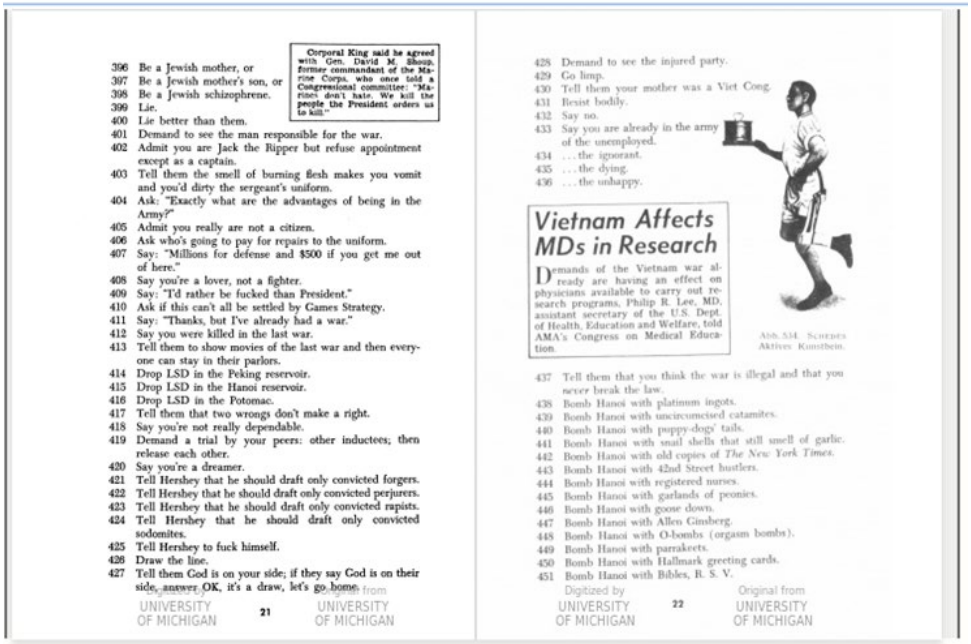
1.31-32. Merry Pranksters, Intrepid Trips ID Card, 1965/1966.



1.33. Digger Dollar, photocopy, box 1, folder 1, MS 3159, Haight Street Diggers Records, 1966-1969, California Historical Society, San Francisco.



1.34. Wet Roach Warning, photocopy, box 1, folder 1, MS 3159, Haight Street Diggers Records, 1966-1969, California Historical Society, San Francisco.



396 Be a Jewish mother, or
397 Be a Jewish mother's son, or
398 Be a Jewish schizophrene.
399 Lie.
400 Lie better than them.
401 Demand to see the man responsible for the war.
402 Admit you are Jack the Ripper but refuse appointment except as a captain.
403 Tell them the smell of burning flesh makes you vomit and you'd dirty the sergeant's uniform.
404 Ask: "Exactly what are the advantages of being in the Army?"
405 Admit you really are not a citizen.
406 Ask who's going to pay for repairs to the uniform.
407 Say: "Millions for defense and $500 if you get me out of here."
408 Say you're a lover, not a fighter.
409 Say: "I'd rather be fucked than President."
410 Ask if this can't all be settled by Games Strategy.
411 Say: "Thanks, but I've already had a war."
412 Say you were killed in the last war.
413 Tell them to show movies of the last war and then everyone can stay in their parlors.
414 Drop LSD in the Peking reservoir.
415 Drop LSD in the Hanoi reservoir.
416 Drop LSD in the Potomac.
417 Tell them that two wrongs don't make a right.
418 Say you're not really dependable.
419 Demand a trial by your peers: other inductees; then release each other.
420 Say you're a dreamer.
421 Tell Hershey that he should draft only convicted forgers.
422 Tell Hershey that he should draft only convicted perjurers.
423 Tell Hershey that he should draft only convicted rapists.
424 Tell Hershey that he should draft only convicted sodomites.
425 Tell Hershey to fuck himself.
426 Draw the line.
427 Tell them God is on your side; if they say God is on their side, answer OK, it's a draw, let's go home.

Corporal King said he agreed with Gen. David M. Shoup, former commandant of the Marine Corps, who once told a Congressional committee: "Marines don't hate. We kill the people the President orders us to kill."

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428 Demand to see the injured party.
429 Go limp.
430 Tell them your mother was a Viet Cong.
431 Resist bodily.
432 Say no.
433 Say you are already in the army of the unemployed.
434 . . . the ignorant.
435 . . . the dying.
436 . . . the unhappy.

Vietnam Affects MDs in Research

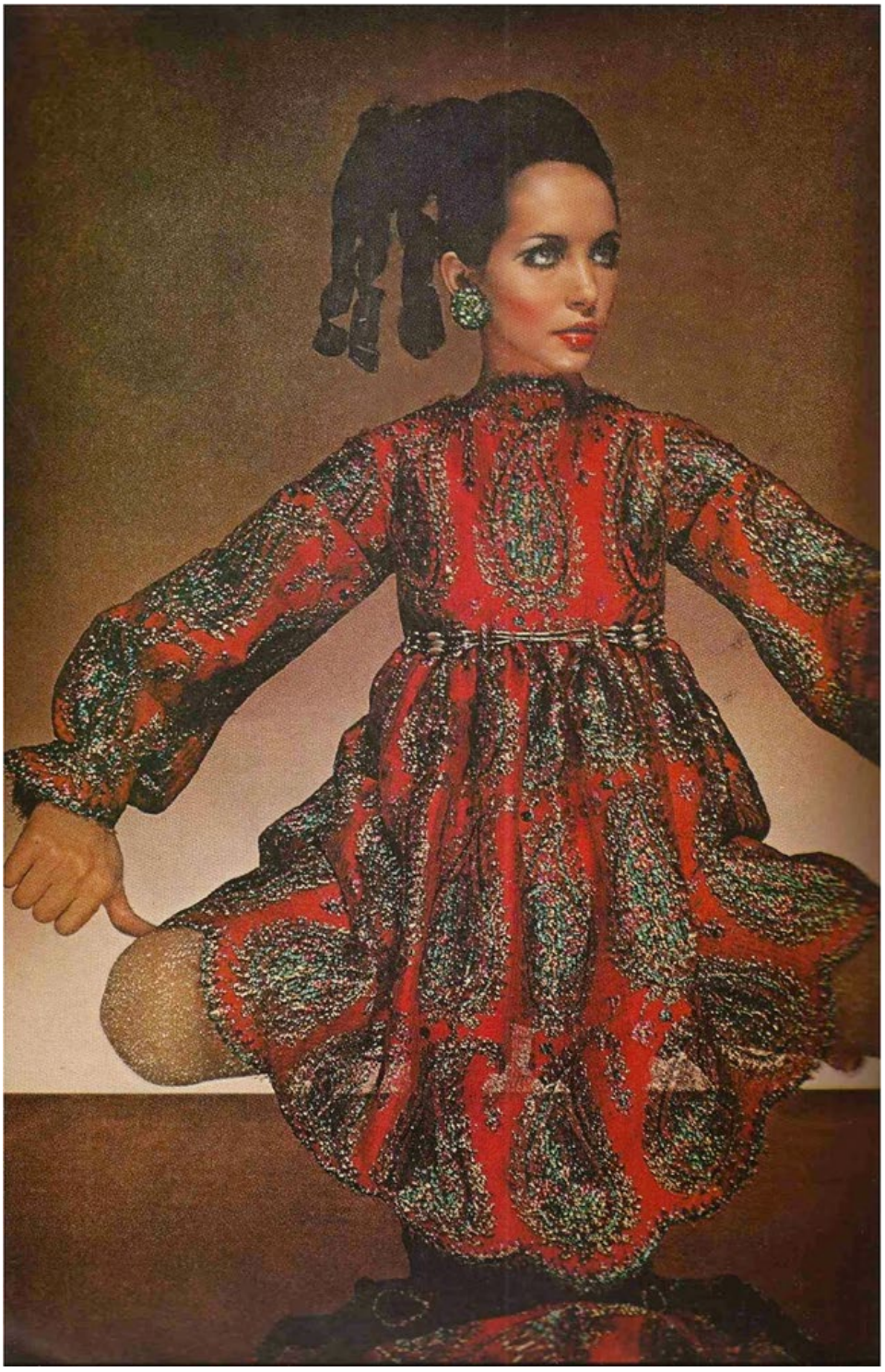
Demands of the Vietnam war already are having an effect on physicians available to carry out research programs, Philip R. Lee, MD, assistant secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, told AMA's Congress on Medical Education.

Abb. 534. Scherpes Archives Kunstheim.

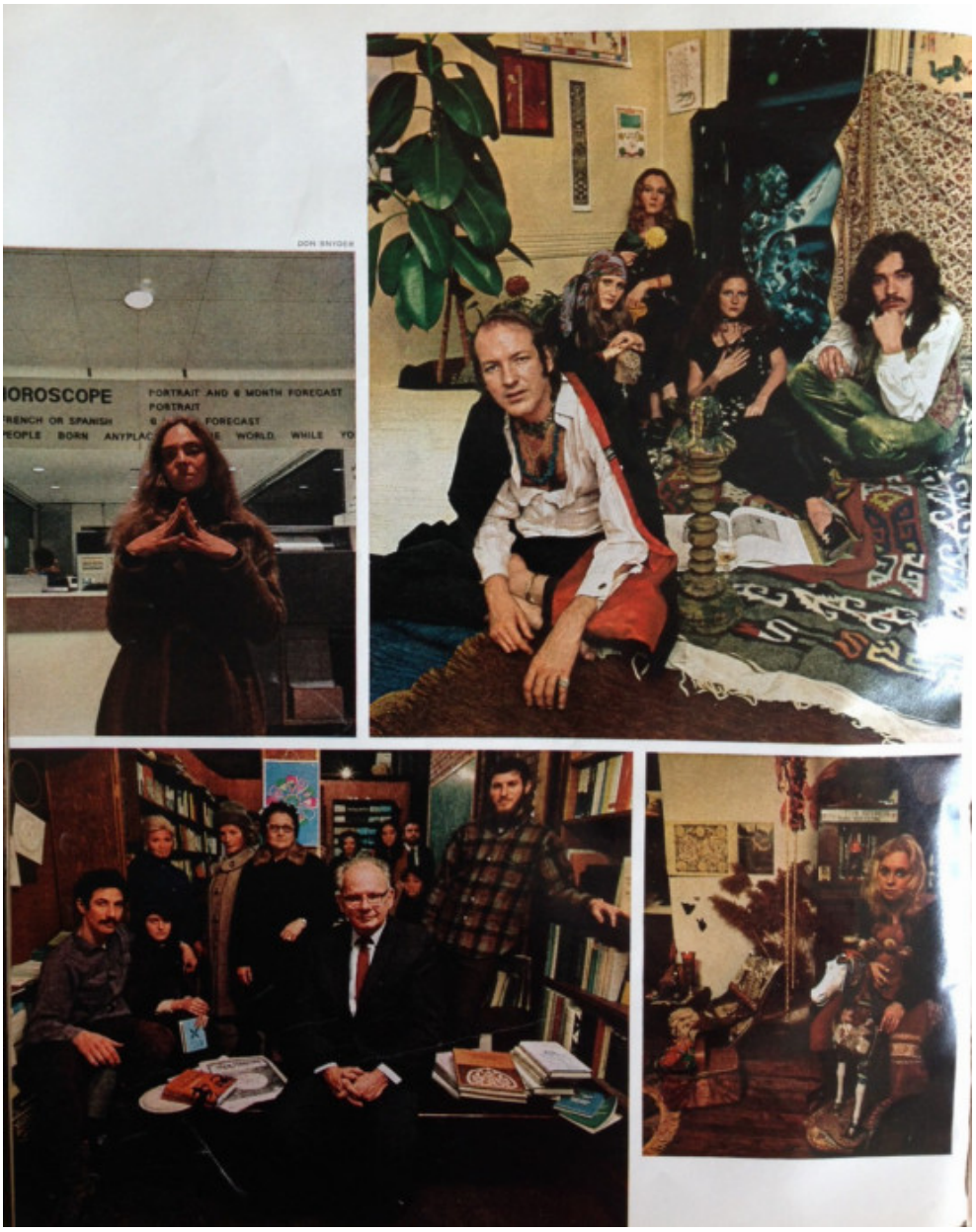
437 Tell them that you think the war is illegal and that you never break the law.
438 Bomb Hanoi with platinum ingots.
439 Bomb Hanoi with uncircumcised catamites.
440 Bomb Hanoi with puppy-dogs' tails.
441 Bomb Hanoi with snail shells that still smell of garlic.
442 Bomb Hanoi with old copies of *The New York Times*.
443 Bomb Hanoi with 42nd Street hustlers.
444 Bomb Hanoi with registered nurses.
445 Bomb Hanoi with garlands of peonies.
446 Bomb Hanoi with goose down.
447 Bomb Hanoi with Allen Ginsberg.
448 Bomb Hanoi with O-bombs (orgasm bombs).
449 Bomb Hanoi with parrakeets.
450 Bomb Hanoi with Hallmark greeting cards.
451 Bomb Hanoi with Bibles, R. S. V.

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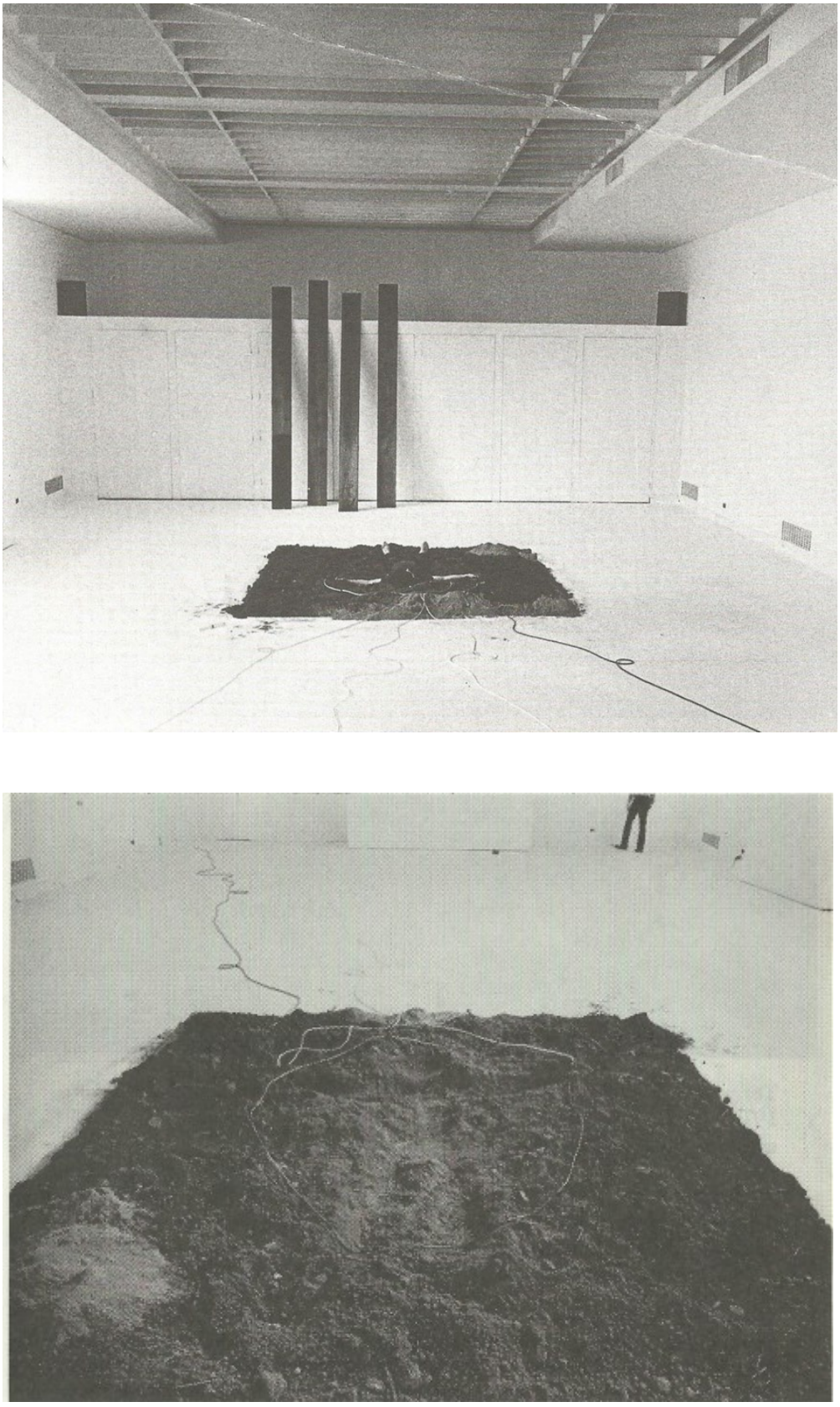
1.35. Robert Bashlow and Tuli Kupferberg, *1001 Ways to Protest the Draft* (New York: Oliver Layton Press, 1966), 21-22.



1.36. Hiro Wakabayashi, *Para-Paisley Pervading*, photograph, published in "The Cult of the Zodiac," *Harper's Bazaar,* Oct, 1968.



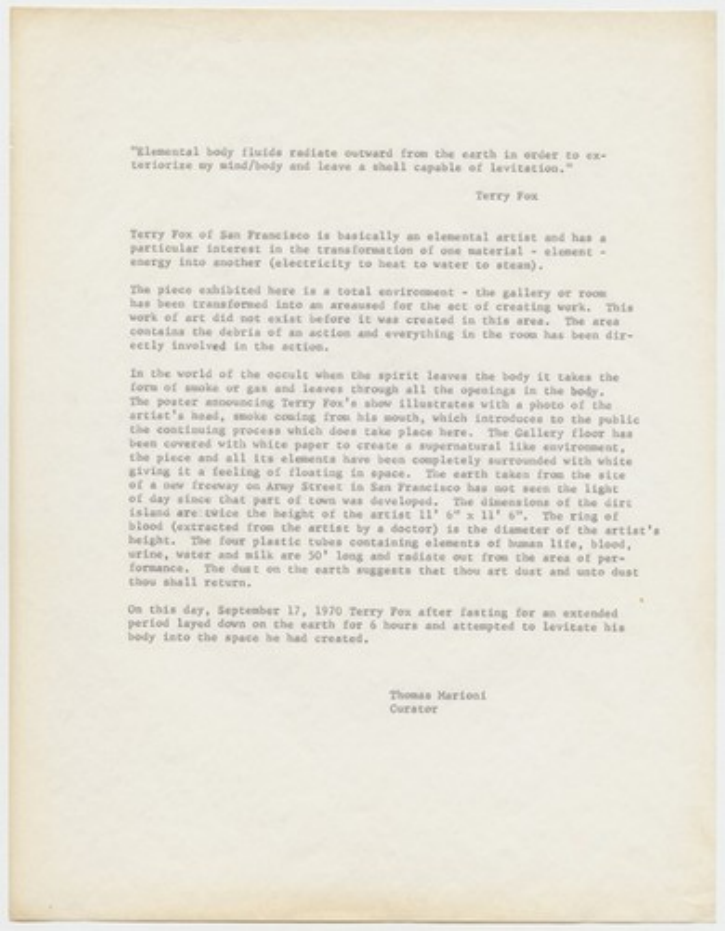
1.37. Photopage published in Nicholas Pileggi, “Occult,” *McCall’s,* March, 1970.



1.38-39. Terry Fox, *Levitation*, 1970, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, Ca., September, 17, 1970, photograph by Jerry Wainwright.



1.40. Terry Fox, Untitled photograph (*Levitation*), 1970, Black-and-white photograph, black and blue ink and stamp mark on verso, 7 x 9 1/2 in., box 46, folder 426, 1995.46.426.10, MOCA Archive, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.



"Elemental body fluids radiate outward from the earth in order to exteriorize my mind/body and leave a shell capable of levitation."

Terry Fox

Terry Fox of San Francisco is basically an elemental artist and has a particular interest in the transformation of one material - element - energy into another (electricity to heat to water to steam).

The piece exhibited here is a total environment - the gallery or room has been transformed into an areaused for the act of creating work. This work of art did not exist before it was created in this area. The area contains the debris of an action and everything in the room has been directly involved in the action.

In the world of the occult when the spirit leaves the body it takes the form of smoke or gas and leaves through all the openings in the body. The poster announcing Terry Fox's show illustrates with a photo of the artist's head, smoke coming from his mouth, which introduces to the public the continuing process which does take place here. The Gallery floor has been covered with white paper to create a supernatural like environment, the piece and all its elements have been completely surrounded with white giving it a feeling of floating in space. The earth taken from the site of a new freeway on Army Street in San Francisco has not seen the light of day since that part of town was developed. The dimensions of the dirt island are twice the height of the artist 11' 6" x 11' 6". The ring of blood (extracted from the artist by a doctor) is the diameter of the artist's height. The four plastic tubes containing elements of human life, blood, urine, water and milk are 50' long and radiate out from the area of performance. The dust on the earth suggests that thou art dust and unto dust thou shall return.

On this day, September 17, 1970 Terry Fox after fasting for an extended period layed down on the earth for 6 hours and attempted to levitate his body into the space he had created.

Thomas Marioni
Curator

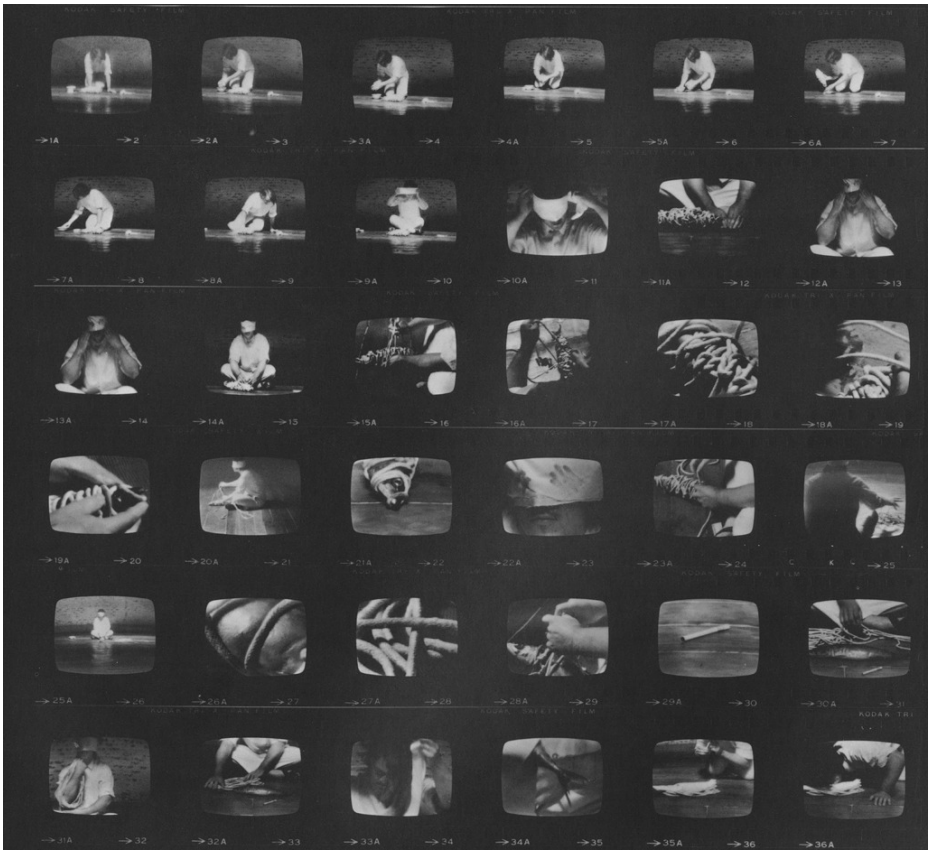
1.41. Terry Fox and Tom Marioni, *Elemental body fluids radiate outward... (Levitation),* 1970, typewritten text on paper, 11 x 8 1/2 in., box 46, folder 426, 1995.46.426.12, MOCA Archive, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.



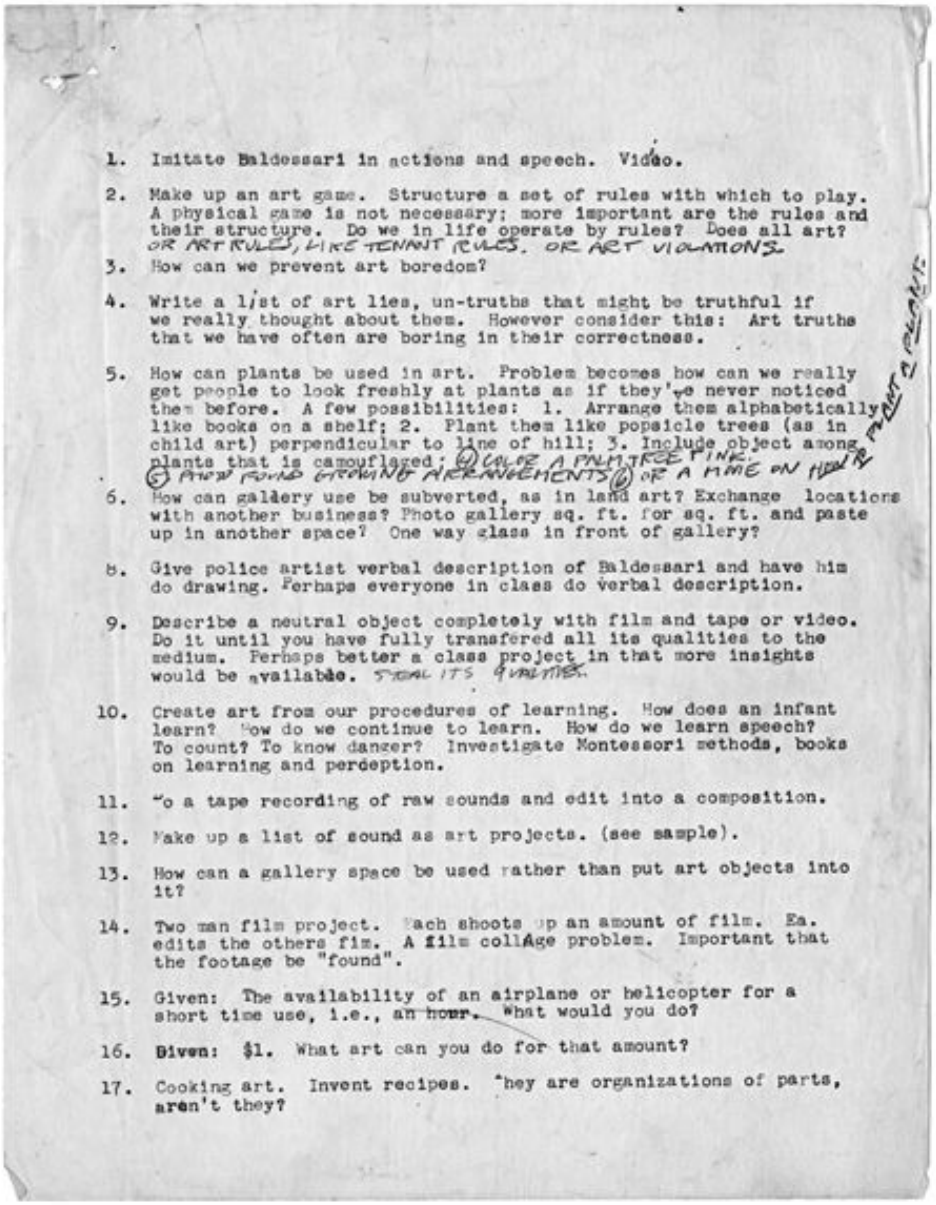
1.42. Terry Fox, *Poster (Terry Fox, Richmond Art Center),* 1970, offset printing on paper, copy 1 (c1), 11 3/4 x 15 1/2 in., box 46, folder 426, 1995.46.426.9.c1, MOCA Archive, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.



1.43. Terry Fox. *Defoliation*, 1970, Power Plant Gallery, University of California, Berkeley, March 16, 1970. Photograph by Barry Klinger.



1.44. Terry Fox, *Turgescent Sex*, 1971, video stills, contact sheet.



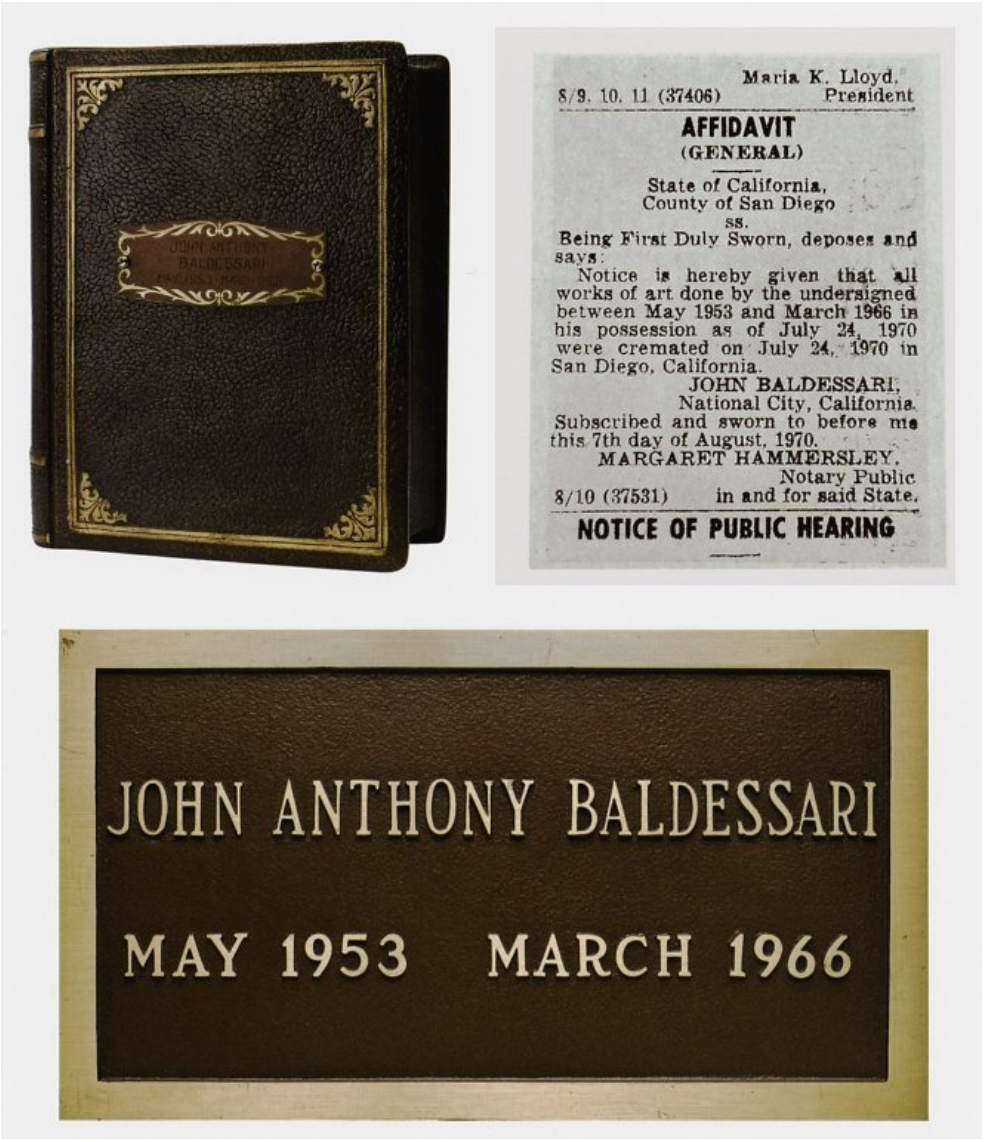
1. Imitate Baldessari in actions and speech. Video.
2. Make up an art game. Structure a set of rules with which to play. A physical game is not necessary; more important are the rules and their structure. Do we in life operate by rules? Does all art? OR ART RULES, LIKE TENANT RULES. OR ART VIOLATIONS.
3. How can we prevent art boredom?
4. Write a list of art lies, un-truths that might be truthful if we really thought about them. However consider this: Art truths that we have often are boring in their correctness.
5. How can plants be used in art. Problem becomes how can we really get people to look freshly at plants as if they've never noticed them before. A few possibilities: 1. Arrange them alphabetically like books on a shelf; 2. Plant them like popsicle trees (as in child art) perpendicular to line of hill; 3. Include object among plants that is camouflaged; ④ COLOR A PALM TREE PINK. ⑤ FIND FOUND GROWING ARRANGEMENTS ⑥ OF A MIME ON HIS BACK PLANTS
6. How can gallery use be subverted, as in land art? Exchange locations with another business? Photo gallery sq. ft. for sq. ft. and paste up in another space? One way glass in front of gallery?
8. Give police artist verbal description of Baldessari and have him do drawing. Perhaps everyone in class do verbal description.
9. Describe a neutral object completely with film and tape or video. Do it until you have fully transfered all its qualities to the medium. Perhaps better a class project in that more insights would be available. STEAL ITS QUALITIES.
10. Create art from our procedures of learning. How does an infant learn? How do we continue to learn. How do we learn speech? To count? To know danger? Investigate Montessori methods, books on learning and perception.
11. To a tape recording of raw sounds and edit into a composition.
12. Make up a list of sound as art projects. (see sample).
13. How can a gallery space be used rather than put art objects into it?
14. Two man film project. Each shoots up an amount of film. Ea. edits the others film. A film collage problem. Important that the footage be "found".
15. Given: The availability of an airplane or helicopter for a short time use, i.e., an hour. What would you do?
16. Given: $1. What art can you do for that amount?
17. Cooking art. Invent recipes. They are organizations of parts, aren't they?

2.1. John Baldessari, *CalArts Post Studio Art Class Assignments (optional),* (detail), 1970.





2.2-3. John Baldessari, *Cremation Project*, 1970, colour photograph 20 x 21 ¼ in, photograph by David Wing/John Baldessari Studio.



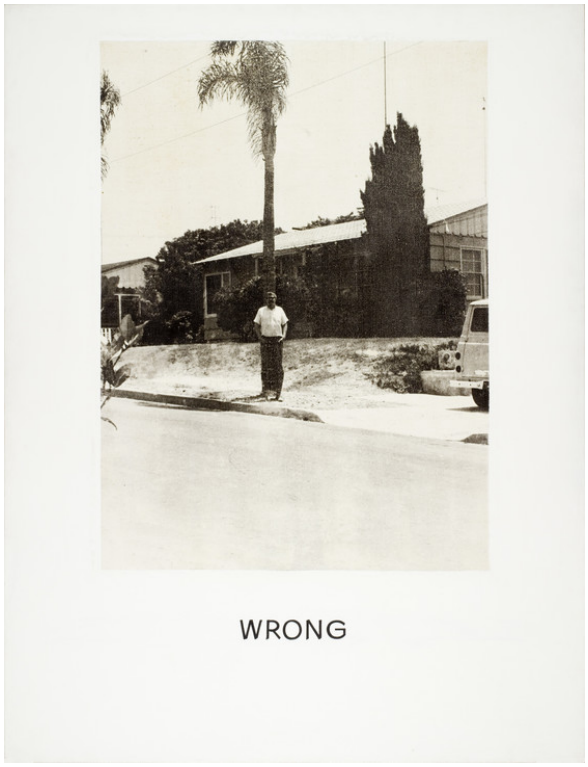
2.4. John Baldessari, *Cremation Project,* 1970, urn 9 ½ x 6 1/8 x 3 1/8 in., plaque, 9 ½ x16 1/8 in., affidavit 10 1/8 x 8 in.



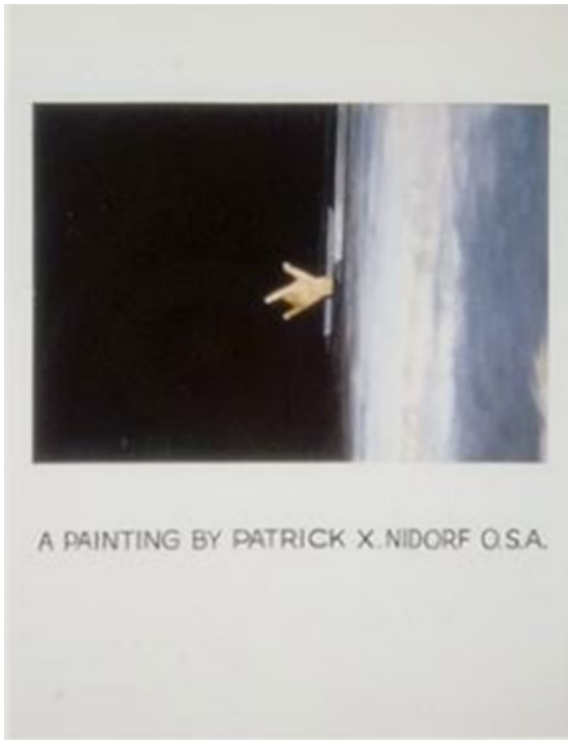
2.5. John Baldessari, *Cremation Project*, 1970, “cookies” in storage container.



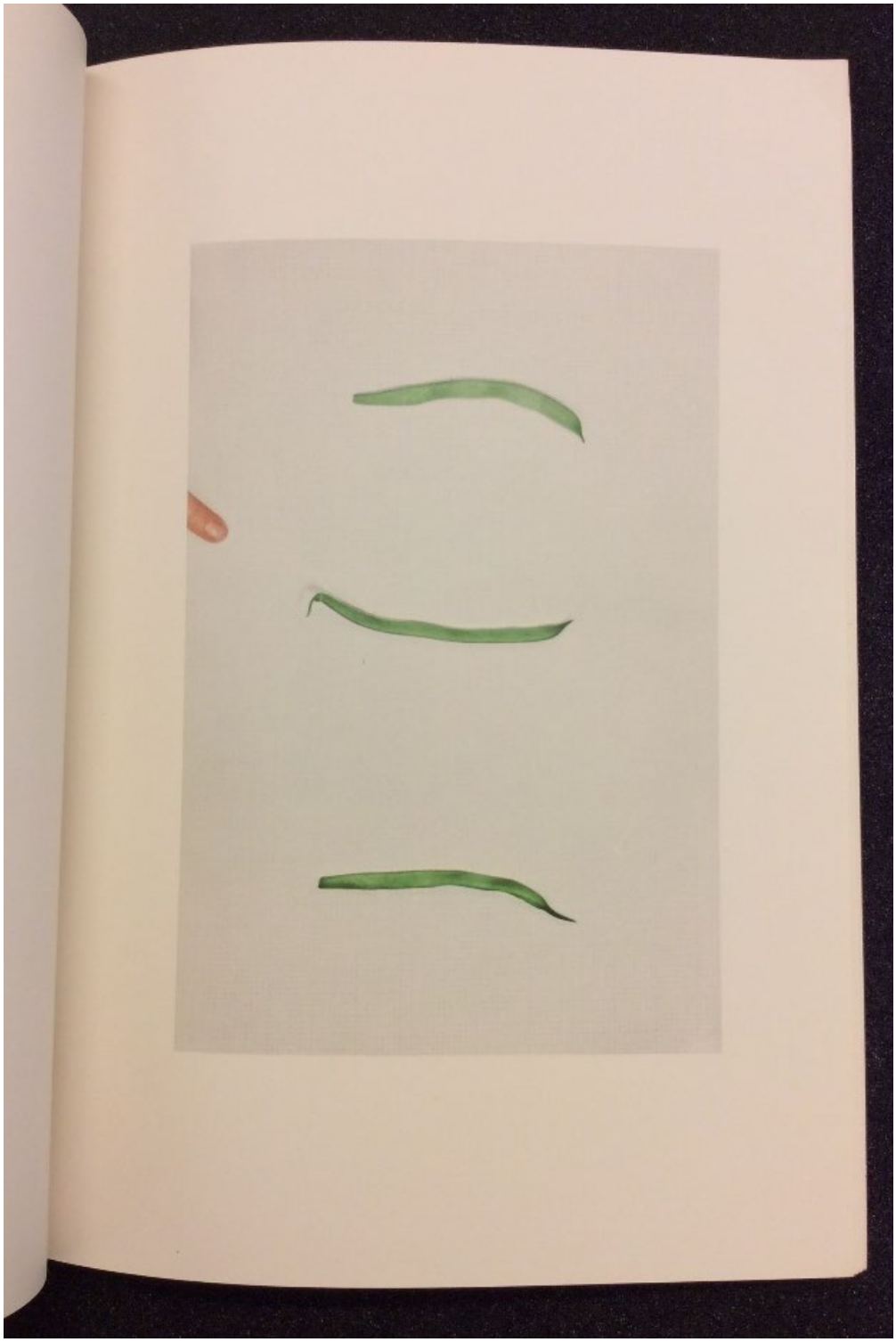
2.6. Ad for Nestle Toll House Cookie Mix, 1969.



2.7. John Baldessari, *Wrong*, 1966-1968, Photoemulsion with acrylic on canvas, 59 x 45 in, Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles.



2.8. John Baldessari, *Commissioned Painting: A Painting by Patrick X. Nidorf O.S.A*, 1969, acrylic and oil on canvas, 59 ½ x 45 ½ in.



2.9. John Baldessari, *Choosing: Green Beans* (detail), 1971, artist's book, Edizioni Toselli: Milan, 1971, 11 ¾ x 8 ½ in., N7433.4.B1762 C54 1972, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



2.10. John Baldessari, *Choosing (A Game for Two Players): Carrots*, 1972, fourteen colour photographs 10.8 in. each.



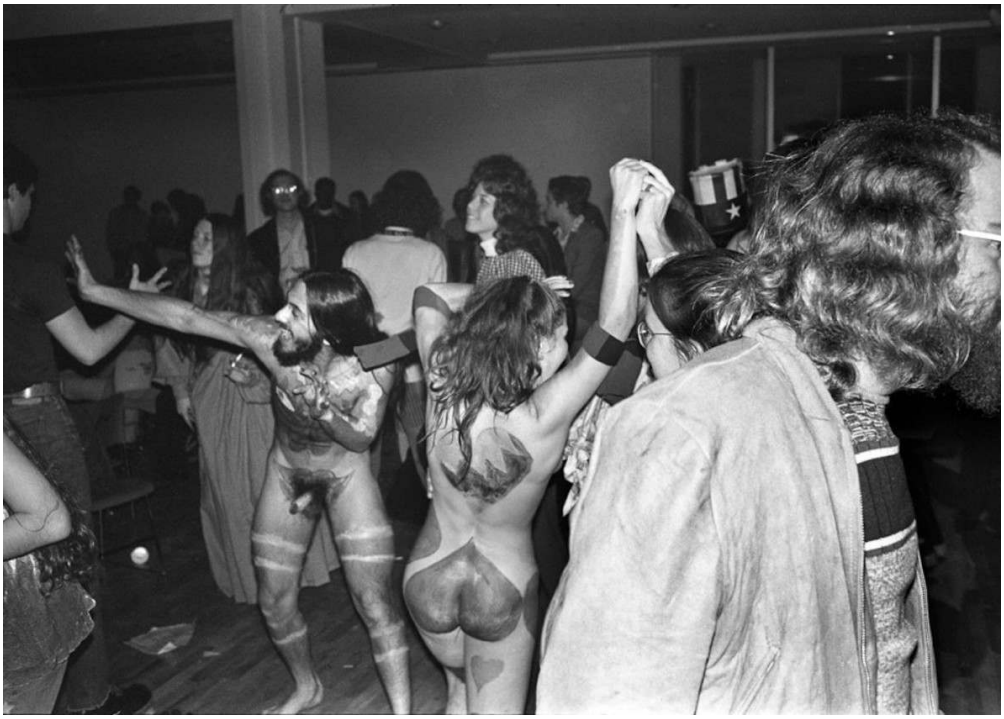
2.11. Photograph of CalArts exterior, 1970.



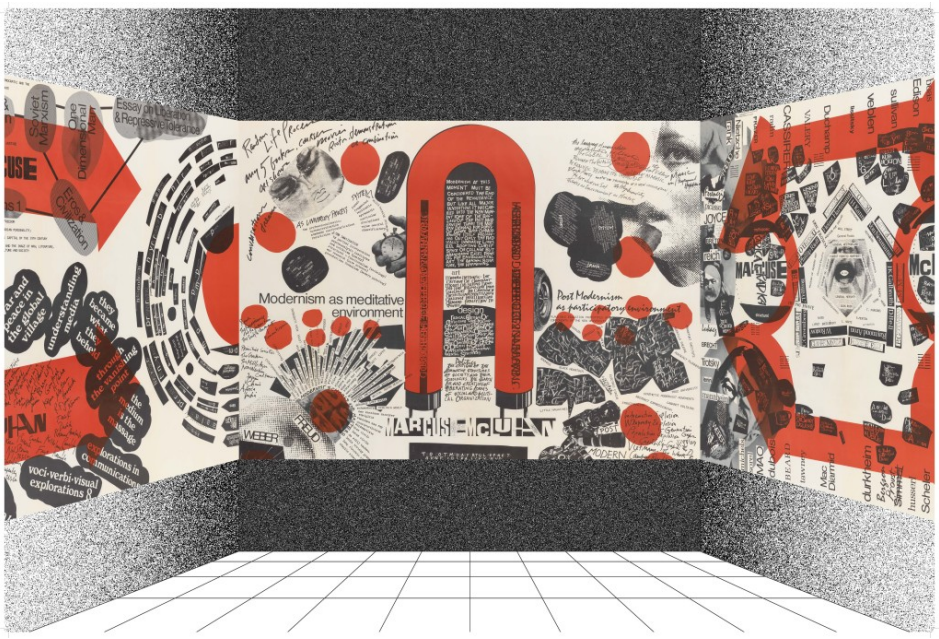
2.12. Barry Hyams, Corrigan at student convocation, 1971, black-and-white photograph.



2.13. Barry Hyams, CalArts, 1971, black-and-white photograph.



2.14. Michael Jang, Students get naked on Valentine's Day, 1971, black-and-white photograph.



2.15. Illustration of *Blueprint for Counter Education* posters-as-portable classroom.



2.16-18. Maurice R. Stein and Larry Miller, *Blueprint for Counter Education*, 3 posters, 45 × 37 1/4 in. each, 1970.


Modernism as meditative environment
Post Modernism as participatory environment
design
art


Nietzche
rank
FREUD
FRAZER
radin
CASSIRER
VALERY
Duchamp
lissitsky
veblen
sullivan
Edison
boas
Einstein
weiner
whitehead
mead
dewey
Wright
james
emerson
Thoreau
Ortega
buber
JASPERS
jung
GHANDI
Kropotkin
Scheler
Heidegger
husserl
Bergson
Proust
durkheim
Mac Diarmid
tawney
BEARD
dubois
MAO
sorel
michels
WEBER
mannheim
lenin
Trotsky
BRECHT
Lukacz
reich
BRETON
JOYCE
picasso
Ferenczi
MARCUSE
McLUHAN
RADICAL
communitarian
technoanarchist
mythopoeic
structural
Phillip Rieff
Heinz Hartmann
H Kahn
Von Neumann
J K Galbraith
Dell
Kenneth Arron
W Roslow
GUNNAR MYRDAL
T. PARSONS
R.MERTON
LIPSET
DEAN RUSK
GENERAL HERSHEY
HUBERT HORATIO HUMPHREY
ERIC FROMM
Paul Goodman
Robert Theobald
C Gregg Singer

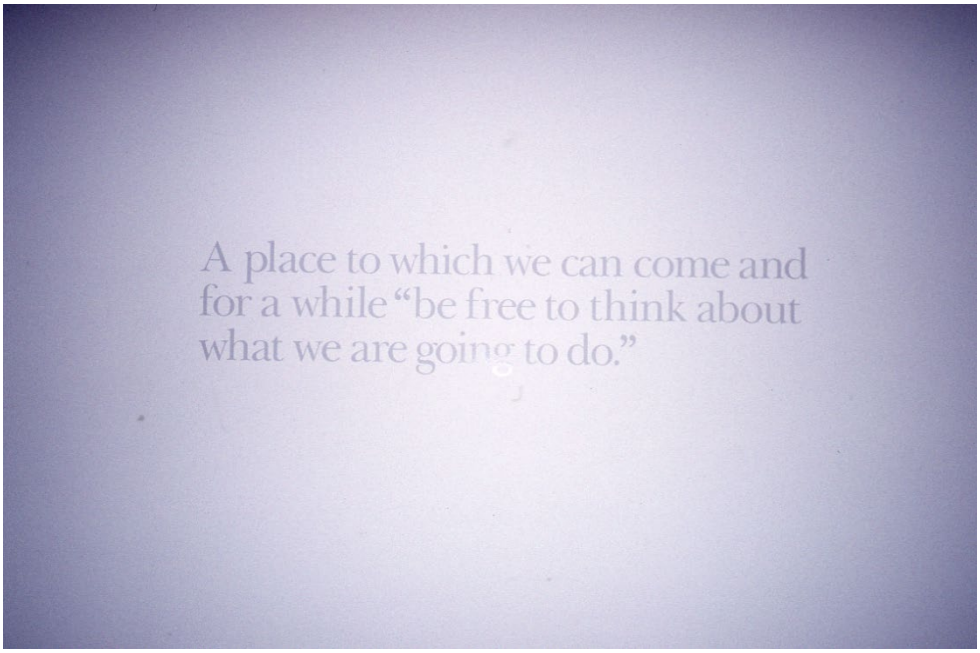


One day I went to the meat department of RALPHS supermarket and looked at frozen chickens in plastic bags.

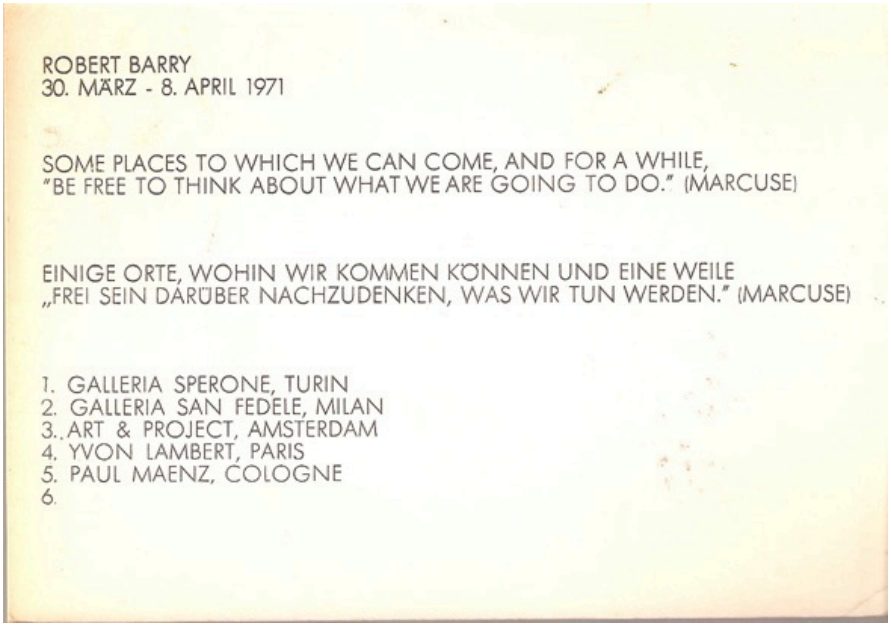


Here is Blinky's grave marker. You are welcome to visit Blinky and the peaceful cemetery grounds seven days a week during daylight hours.

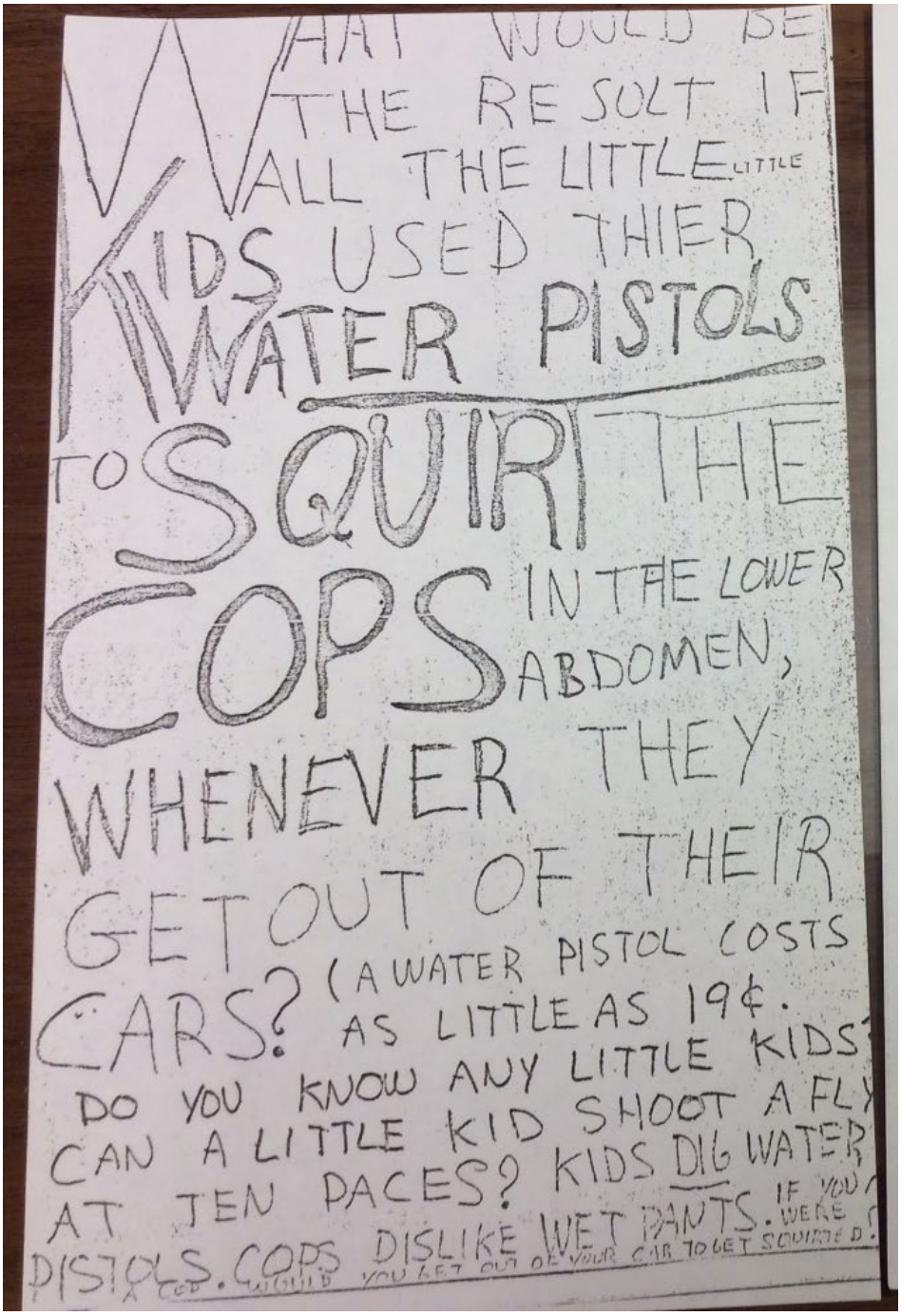
2.19-20. Jeffrey Vallance, *Blinky: The Friendly Hen,* 1978, artist's book, Culver City, CA: Smart Press, 1996.



2.21. Robert Barry, *Marcuse Piece*, 1970, courtesy of the artist.



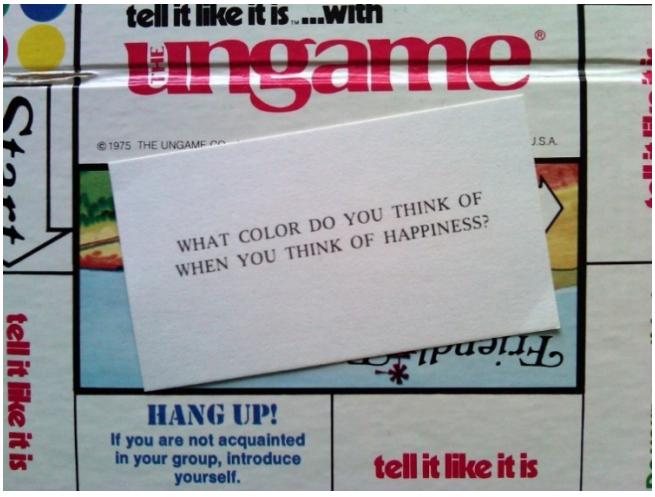
2.22. Robert Barry, *Marcuse Piece*, 1970, exhibition mailer, 30 March- 8 April, 1971.



2.23. Communications Company (San Francisco Diggers), 'What would the result be,' handbill, photocopy, box 1, folder 3, MS 3159, Haight Street Diggers Records, 1966-1969, California Historical Society, San Francisco.



2.24. World Game Seminar at New York Studio School, colour photographic prints from transparencies, 1969, New York, Stanford University Libraries Special Collections.



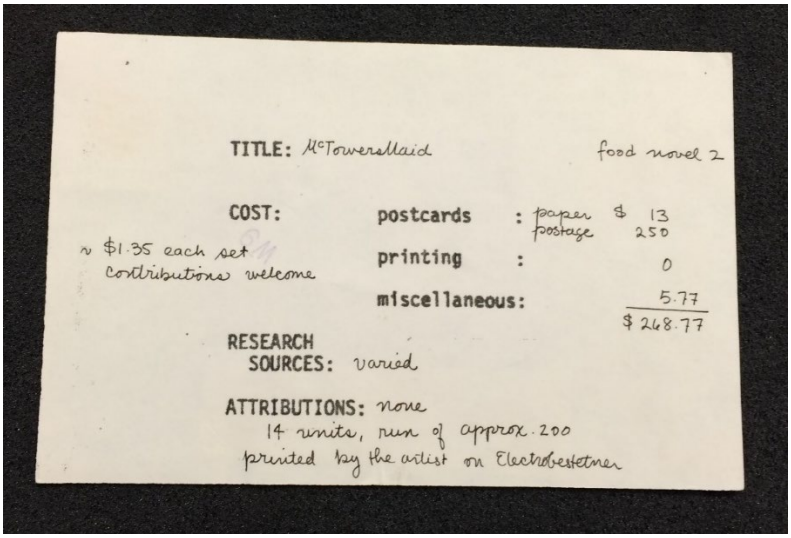
2.25. Ungame, board game (detail), 1972.



2.26. John Baldessari, *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line* (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts) (detail), 1973, offset lithograph, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago.



2.27. John Baldessari, *Cigar Smoke to Match Clouds That are the Same (by Sight-Side View*), 1972-73, 10 colour photographs, 10 x 6 ½ in. each.



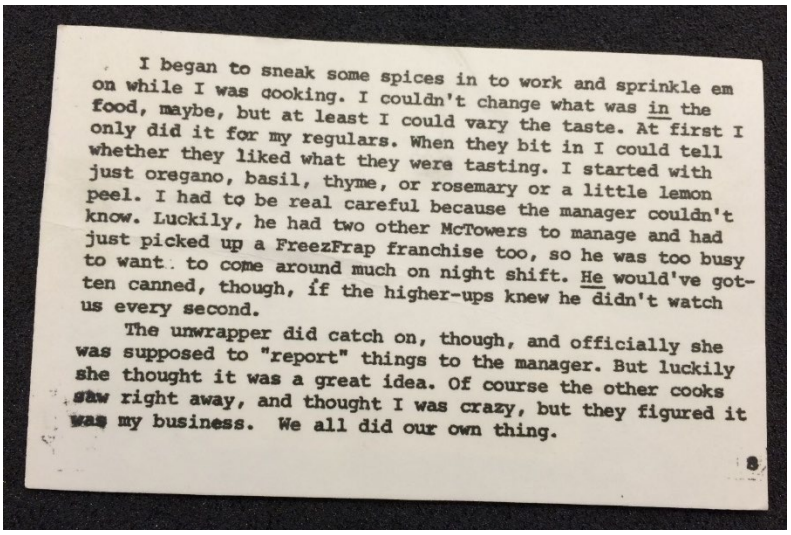
TITLE: McTowersMaid food novel 2

COST: postcards : paper $ 13
postage 2.50
printing : 0
miscellaneous: 5.77
$ 268.77

≈ $1.35 each set
Contributions welcome

RESEARCH SOURCES: varied

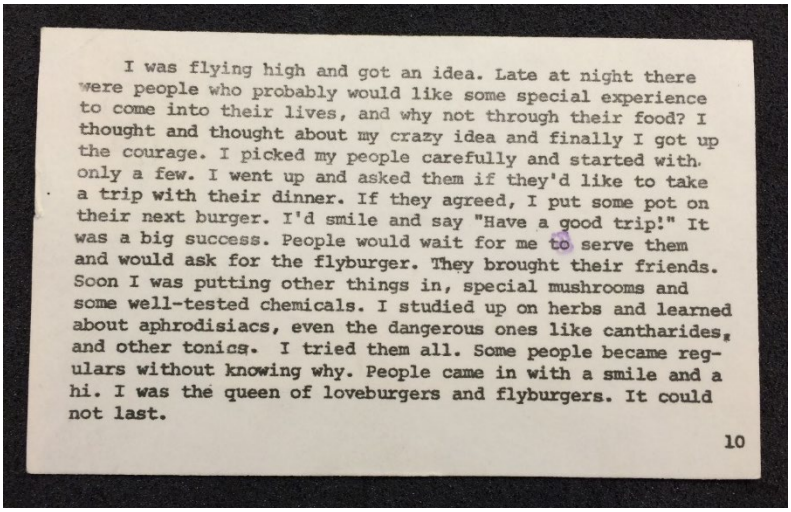
ATTRIBUTIONS: none
14 units, run of approx. 200
printed by the artist on Electrobestetner



I began to sneak some spices in to work and sprinkle em on while I was cooking. I couldn't change what was in the food, maybe, but at least I could vary the taste. At first I only did it for my regulars. When they bit in I could tell whether they liked what they were tasting. I started with just oregano, basil, thyme, or rosemary or a little lemon peel. I had to be real careful because the manager couldn't know. Luckily, he had two other McTowers to manage and had just picked up a FreezFrap franchise too, so he was too busy to want to come around much on night shift. He would've gotten canned, though, if the higher-ups knew he didn't watch us every second.

The unwrapper did catch on, though, and officially she was supposed to "report" things to the manager. But luckily she thought it was a great idea. Of course the other cooks saw right away, and thought I was crazy, but they figured it was my business. We all did our own thing.

8



I was flying high and got an idea. Late at night there were people who probably would like some special experience to come into their lives, and why not through their food? I thought and thought about my crazy idea and finally I got up the courage. I picked my people carefully and started with only a few. I went up and asked them if they'd like to take a trip with their dinner. If they agreed, I put some pot on their next burger. I'd smile and say "Have a good trip!" It was a big success. People would wait for me to serve them and would ask for the flyburger. They brought their friends. Soon I was putting other things in, special mushrooms and some well-tested chemicals. I studied up on herbs and learned about aphrodisiacs, even the dangerous ones like cantharides, and other tonics. I tried them all. Some people became regulars without knowing why. People came in with a smile and a hi. I was the queen of loveburgers and flyburgers. It could not last.

10

3.1-3. Martha Rosler, *McTowersMaid* (detail), 1974, 14 postcards and title card, box 8, folder 10, 2009.M5, Hal Glicksman papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



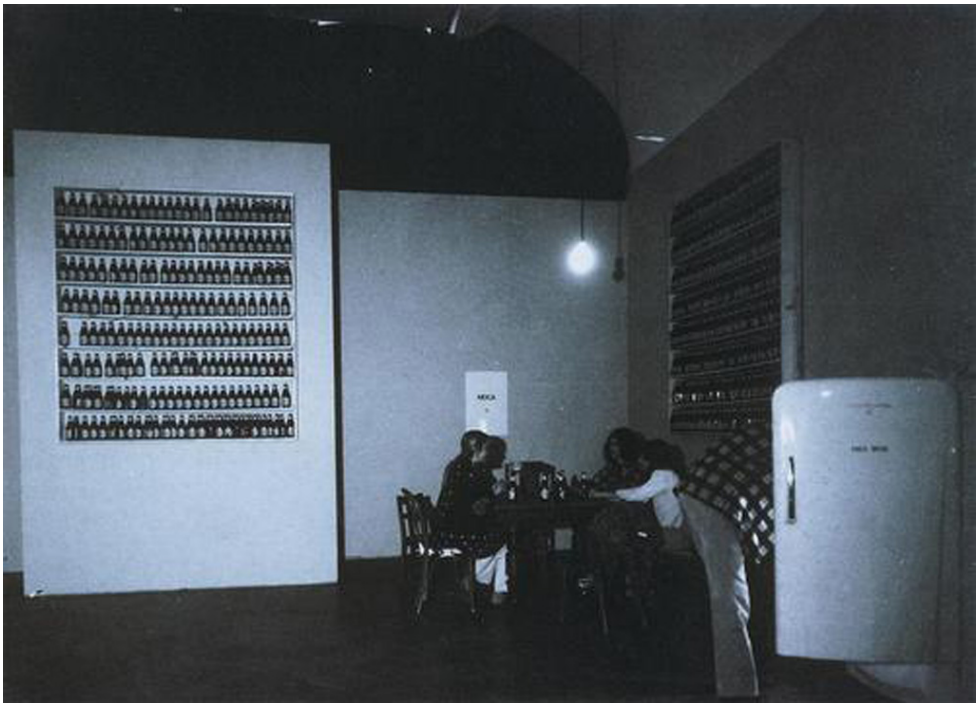
3.4. Bonnie Sherk. *The Waitress, Act V,* June 1973-May 1974.



3.5. Bonnie Sherk, *The Short Order Cook, Act V*, June 1973-May 1974.



3.6. Photograph of MOCA, above Breen's Bar, 75 Third Street, San Francisco, c.1972-1984.





3.7-8. Tom Marioni, *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art* (1970).





3.9.i-iii. Allen Ruppersberg, *Al's Café*, 1969 (interior).

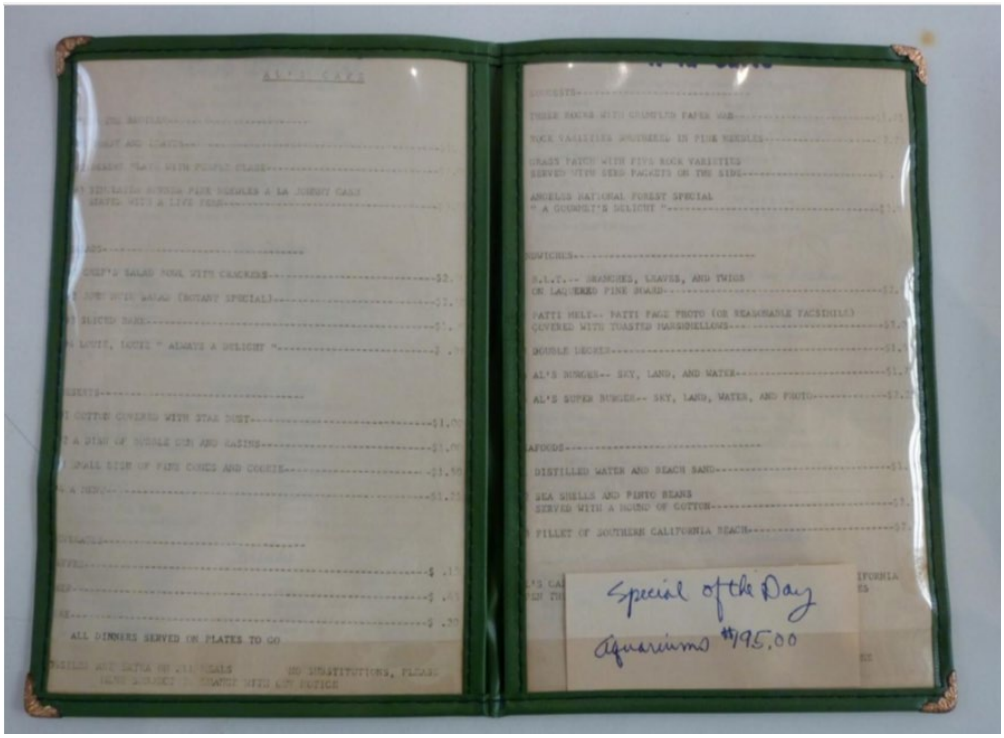




iv. 'Al's Mgr' shirt.



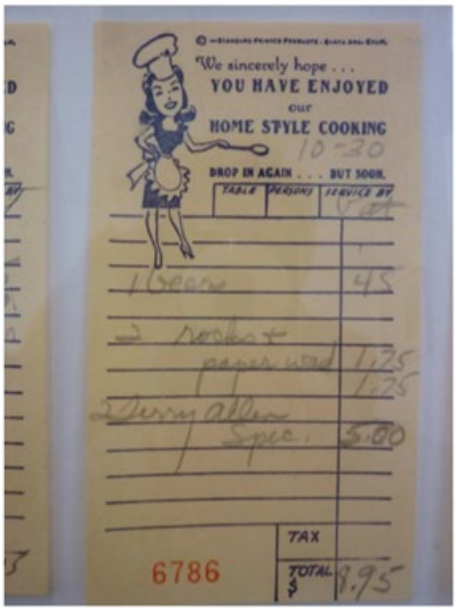


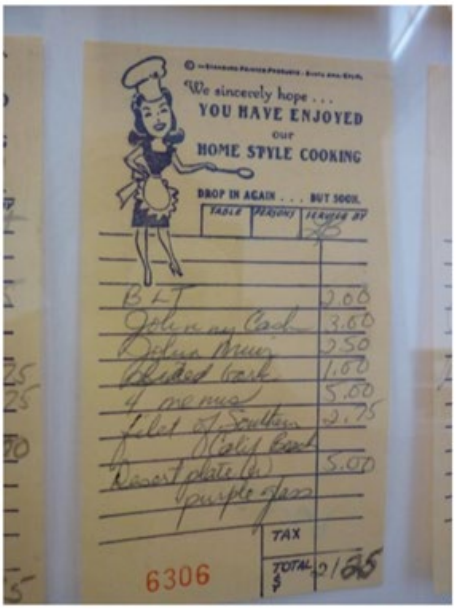


v-vii. Menu.



viii. ‘Patty Melt.’







ix-x. Order tickets



3.10. Edward Kienholz, *The Beanery,* 1965, assemblage, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.



3.11. Photograph of “Fagots Stay Out” sign, Barney’s Beanery, Los Angeles, date unknown.



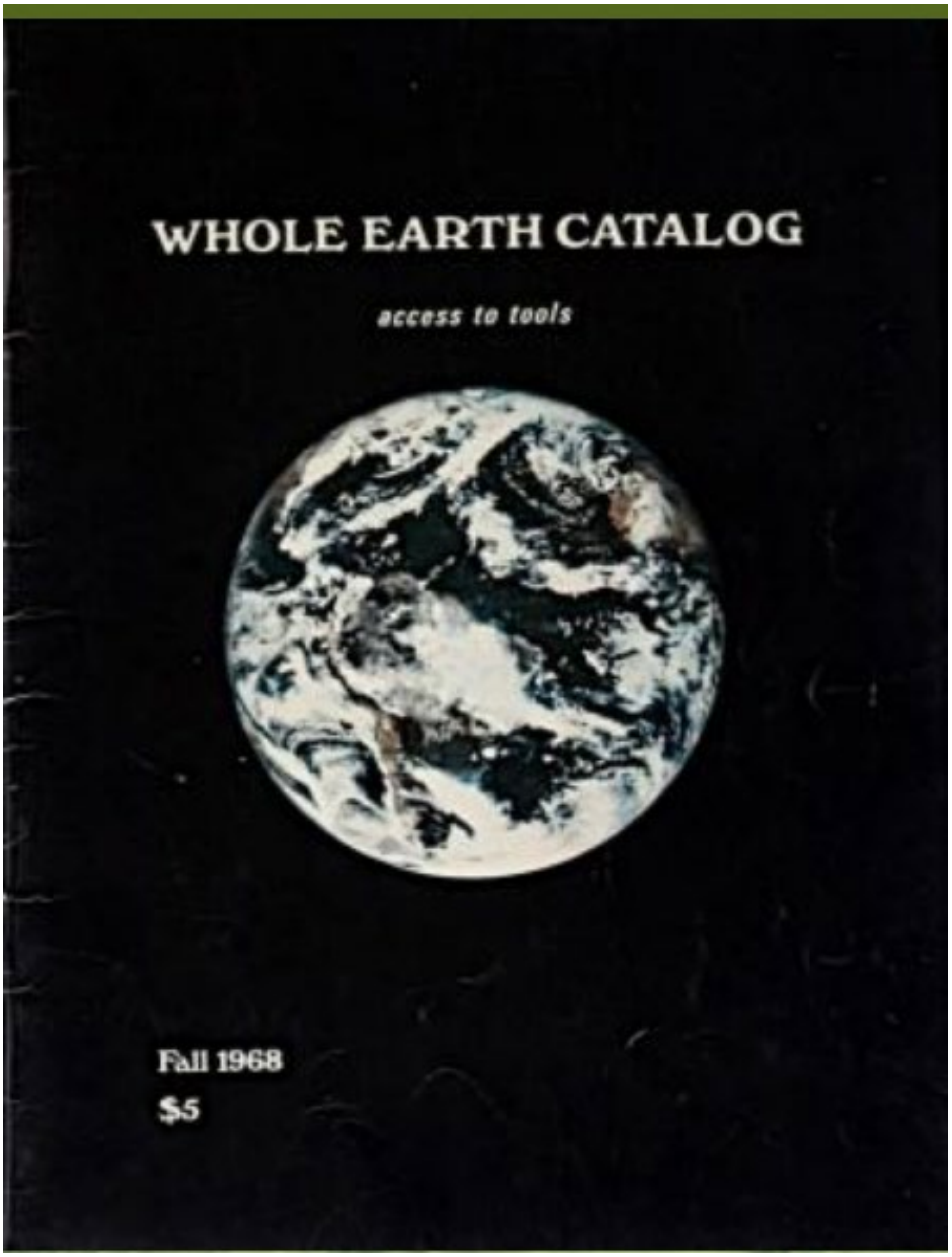
3.12. Film still of diner scene, *Easy Rider,* directed by Dennis Hopper, Colombia Pictures, 1969.



3.13. Film still of 'chicken salad sandwich' scene, *Five Easy Pieces*, directed by Bob Rafelson, Colombia Pictures, 1970.



3.14. Photograph of Jerry Rubin dressed as Santa Claus, House Un-American Activities Committee, 4 December, 1968.



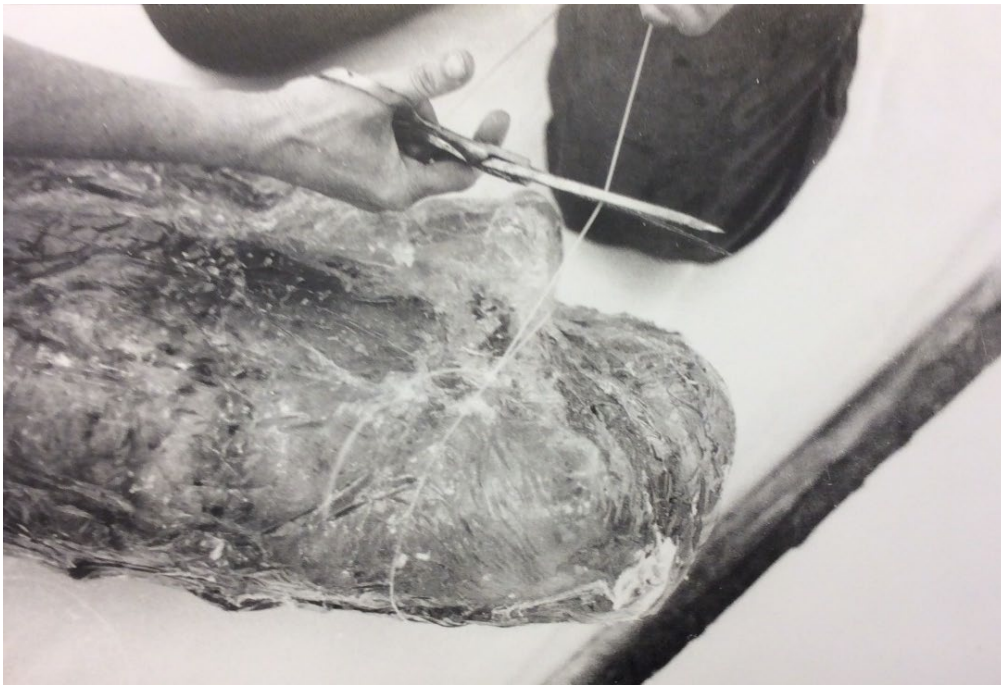
3.15. Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Catalog*, Fall, 1968.



3.16. Bonnie Sherk, *Crossroads Community (The Farm),* 1974-87.



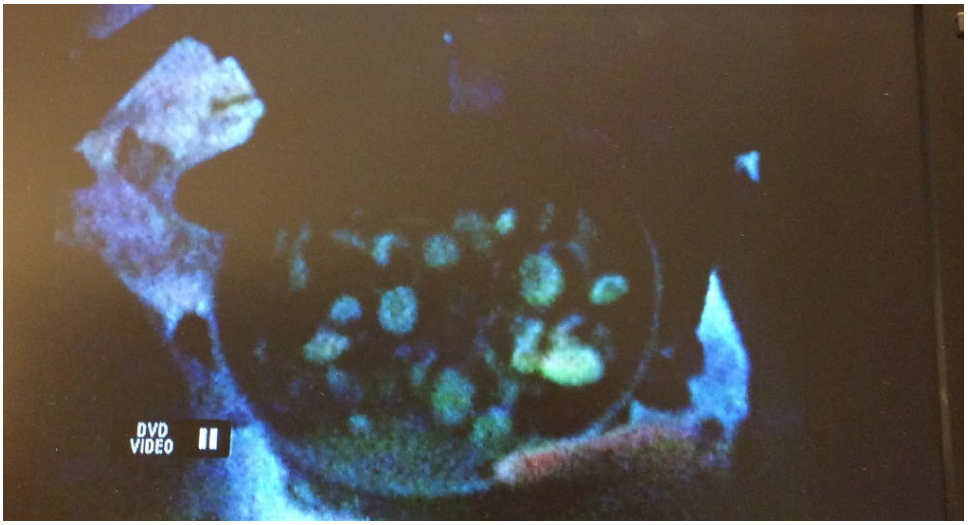
3.17. Gene Anthony, Digger Free Feed in the Panhandle, 1967, black-and-white photograph.



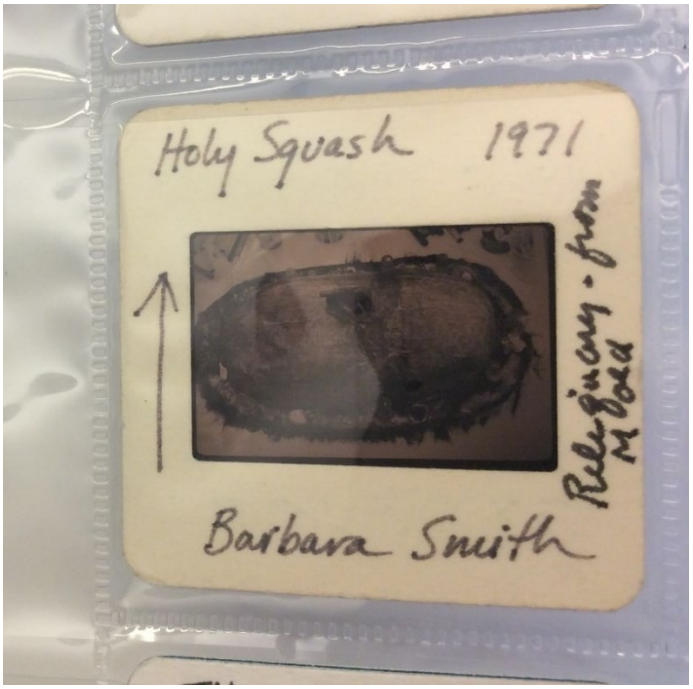


3.18-19. Barbara T. Smith, *The Celebration of the Holy Squash*, 1971, black-and-white photograph, box 103, folder 1, 2014M14, Barbara T Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.





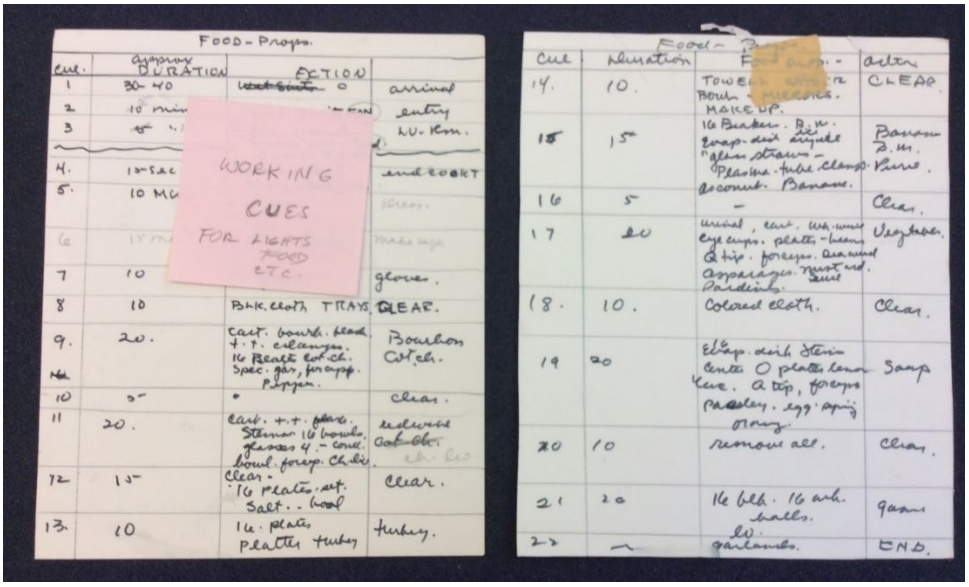
3.20-21. Barbara T. Smith, *The Celebration of the Holy Squash*, 1971, film still, DVD, box 289, DVD23 2Z1, Barbara T Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



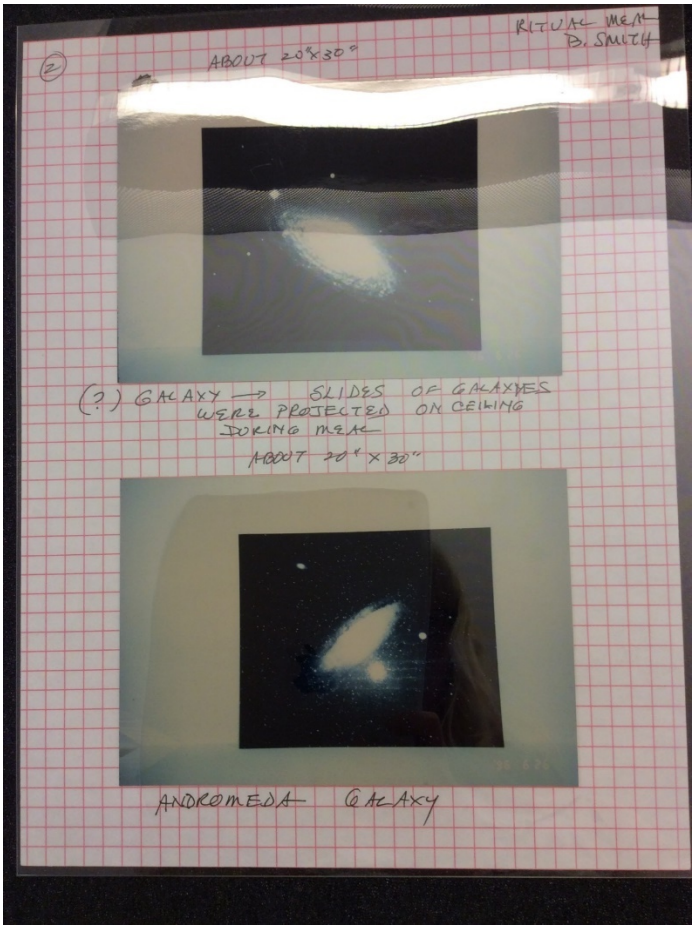
3.22. Barbara T. Smith, *The Celebration of the Holy Squash*, 1971, black-and-white slide, box 122, folder 13, 2014M14, Barbara T Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



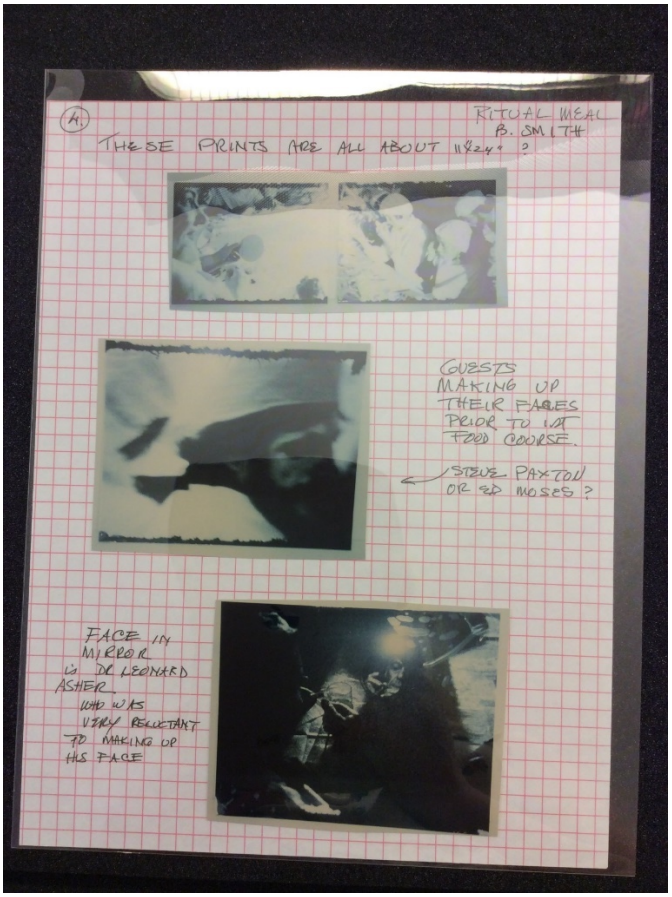
3.23. Recipe cards belonging to Barbara T Smith, box 78, folder 2, 2014M14, Barbara T Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



3.24. Barbara T. Smith, *Ritual Meal*, 1969, artist's preparatory notes, box 78, folder 2, 2014M14, Barbara T Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



3.25-28. Barbara T. Smith, *Ritual Meal*, 1969, colour photographs annotated by artist, 1969, box 110, folder 8, 2014M14, Barbara T Smith Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.


(4.)
RITUAL MEAL
B. SMITH
THESE PRINTS ARE ALL ABOUT 11x14 ?
GUESTS MAKING UP THEIR FACES PRIOR TO 1ST FOOD COURSE.
STEVE PAXTON OR ED MOSES ?
FACE IN MIRROR IS DR LEONARD ASHER.
WHO WAS VERY RELUCTANT TO MAKING UP HIS FACE


5.
RITUAL MEAL
B. SMITH
GUESTS BEING SERVED RAW CHICKEN LIVERS W/ FORCEPS
DIPPING RAW CHICKEN LIVERS INTO HOT (BOILING) WINE TO COOK.
STEVE PAXTON EATING
GUESTS A BIT ROWDY POINTING AT ANDROMEDA GALAXY - (He was an astrophysicist & recognized it)





3.29-30. Ted Streshinsky, Merry Prankster's Acid Test Graduation, 1966, colour photograph.



4.1. Photograph of couple sleeping on car at Woodstock, Bettmann Archive, Getty Images, 1969.



4.2. Jim Marshall, 'family driving down Haight Street, looking at Hippies' black-and-white photograph, June 1967.



4.3. Jim Marshall, 'The famous corner of Haight-Ashbury streets,' black-and-white photograph June 1967.



4.4. Jim Marshall, Krishna's Kirtan, a sacred chant music group, on the Diggers truck during the Ratha-Yatra Festival on Haight Street, black-and-white photograph, 9 July 1967.



4.5. Photograph of Total Loss Farm, Guilford, Vermont, 1971.





4.6-7. John Olson, “Youth Communes,” colour photographs, *Life*, July 18, 1969.





4.8-17. Tom Marioni, *The Trip* (detail), 1972, 132 black-and-white photographs, 4 1/8 x 6 7/8 in., photographs by Larry Fox, box 46, folder 443, 1995.46.443, MOCA Archive, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.







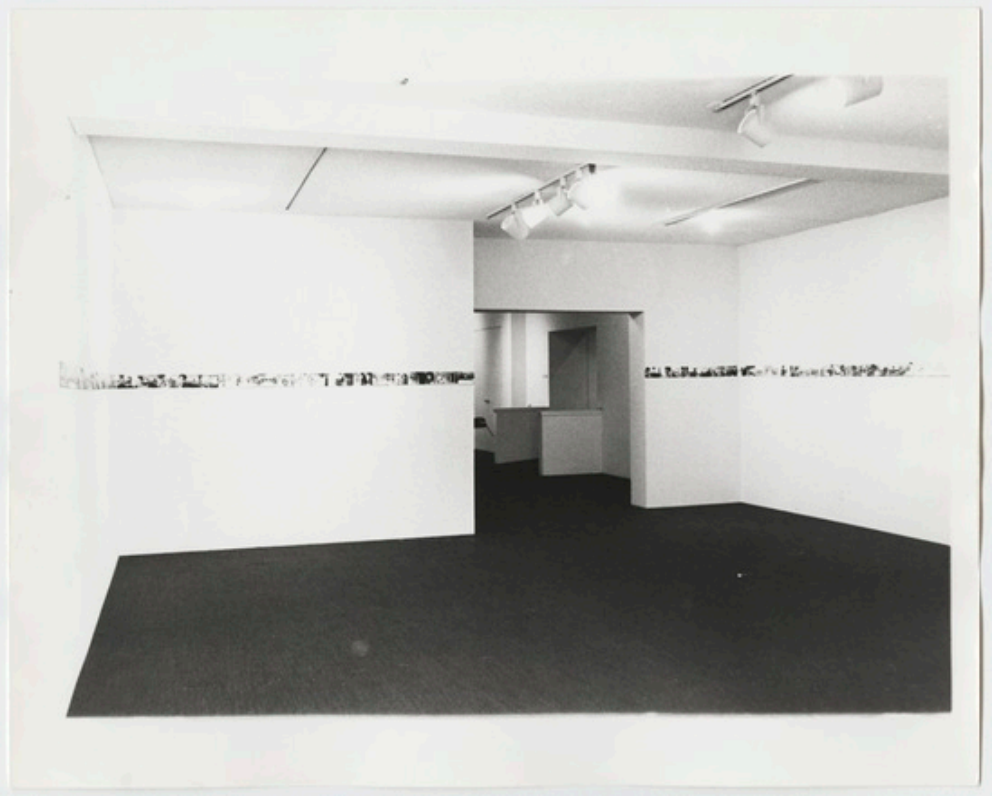












4.18. Tom Marioni, *The Trip,* 1972*,* installation view, *The San Francisco Performance,* New Port Harbour Museum, Newport Beach.



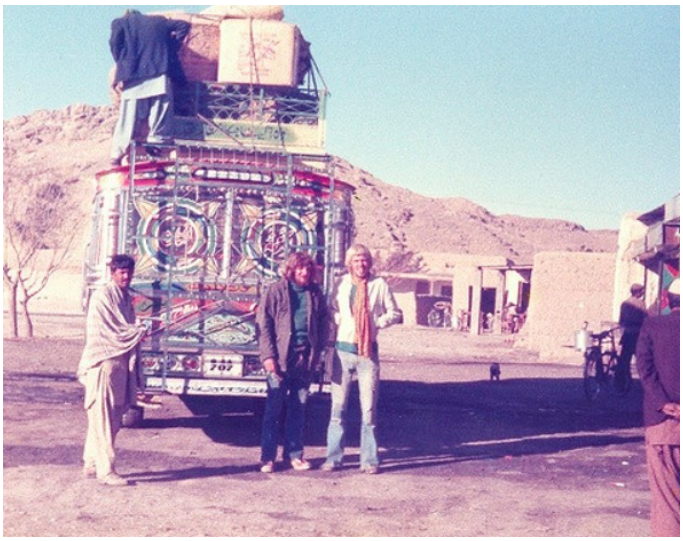
4.19. Allen Ginsberg, photograph of Neal Cassady and Timothy Leary on Furthur, 1964.



4.20. Lisa Law, photograph of Merry Pranskers Bus, El Rito, New Mexico 1968.



4.21. Dee Atlas, “Somewhere between Iran and Afghanistan,” colour photograph, November 1975.



4.22. Dimayon, “Hitch-hiking from Tehran to Turkey,” colour photograph, date unknown.



4.23. Photograph of Asiabus and Kami Kanetsuka on Iran/Iraq border, 1966.



4.24. Bas Jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous* (*One Night in Los Angeles*) 1973, 18 silver gelatin black-and-white prints with handwritten text in white ink, 8 x 10 in. each, photographs by Mary Sue Ader-Anderson.

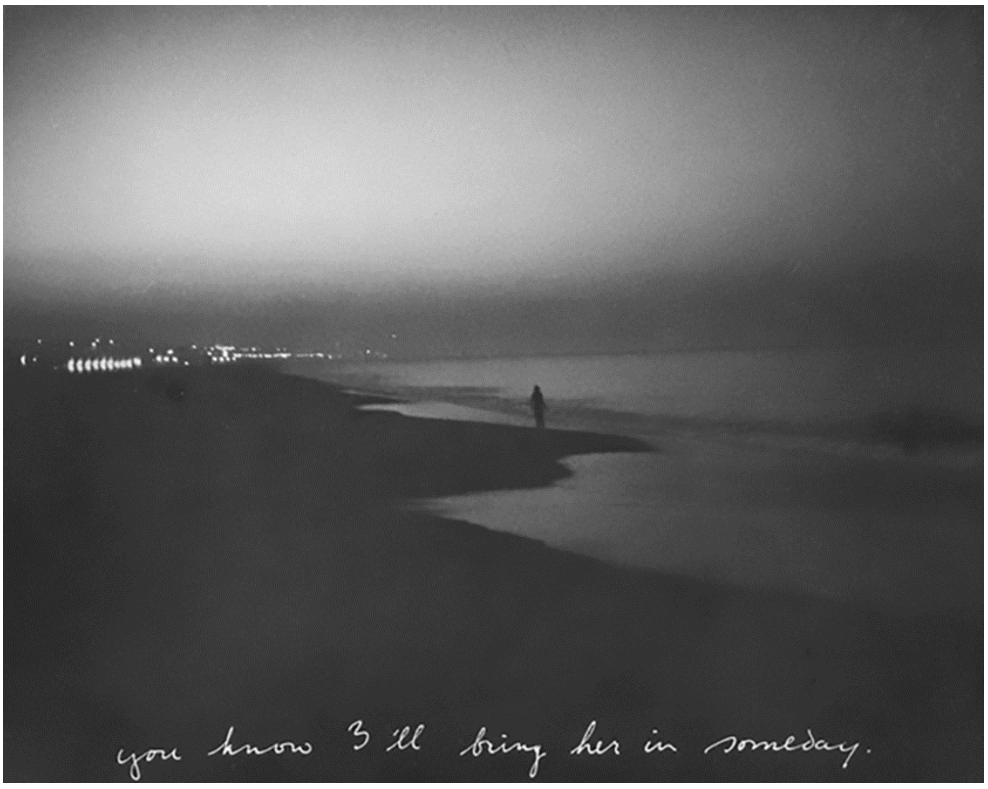


4.25-29. As above (detail).


yeh I've been searchin'

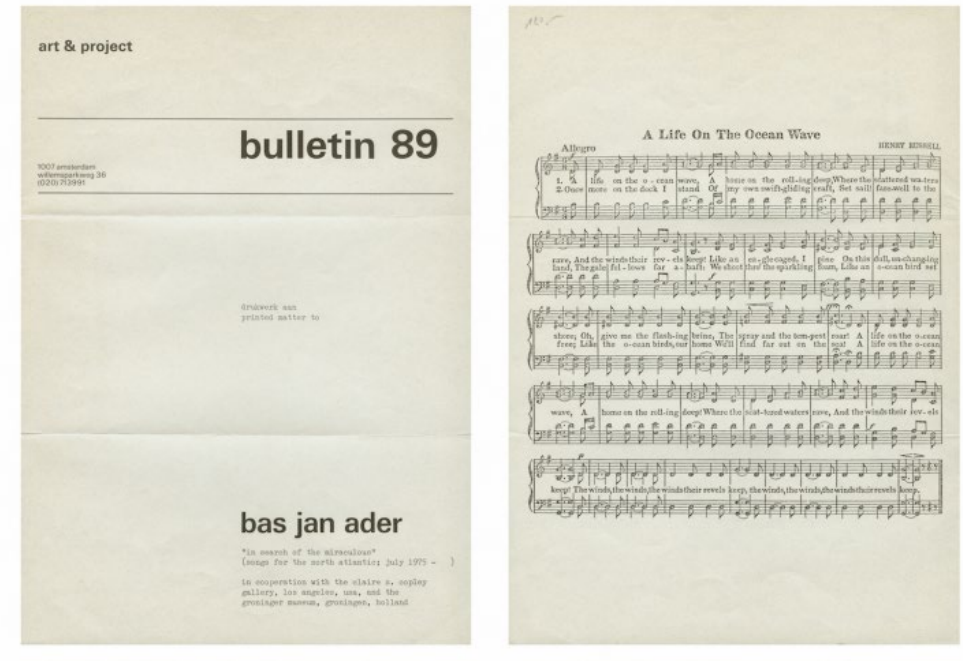

I'm searchin'


Searchin' everywhich way

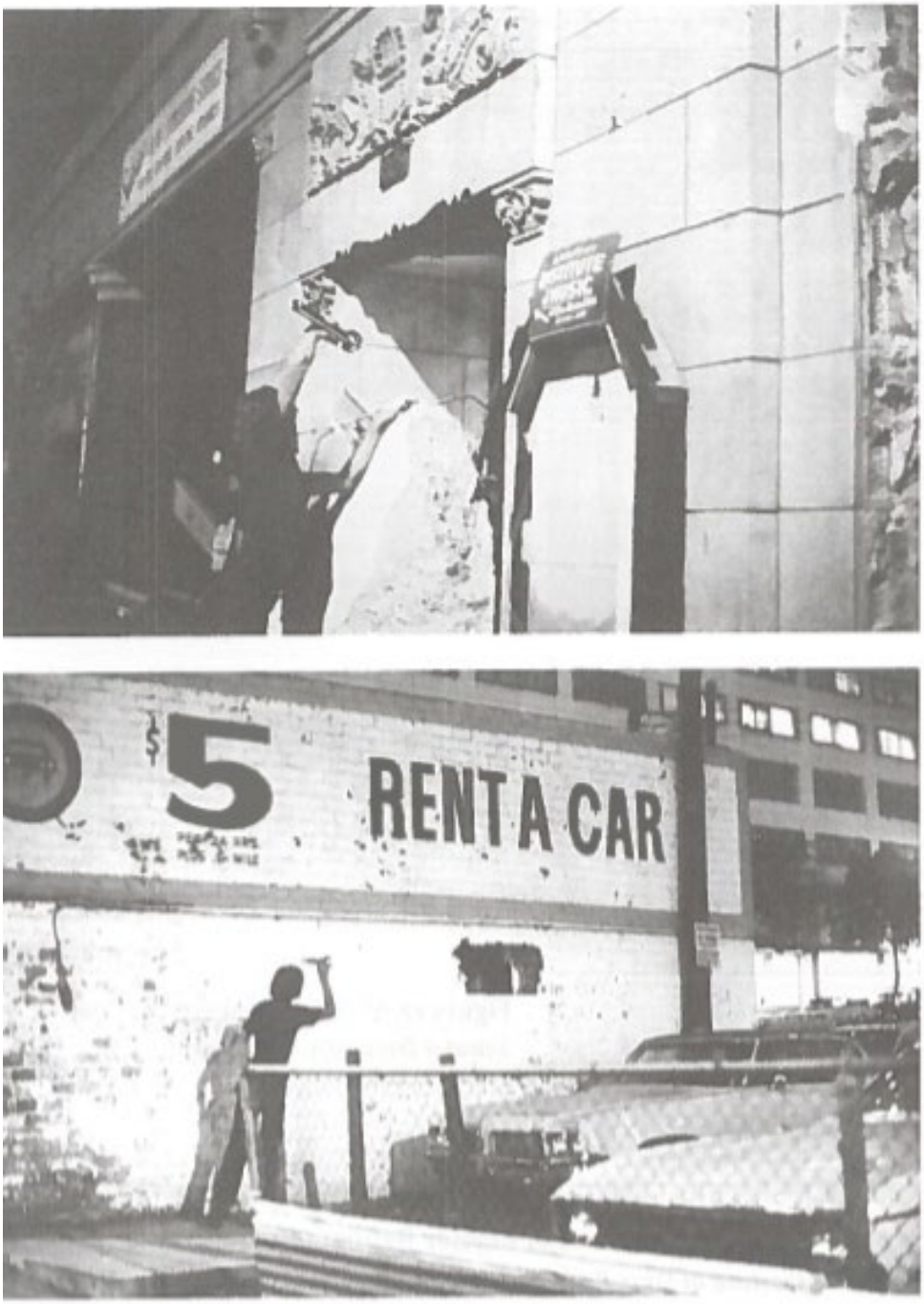

you know I'll bring her in someday.



4.30. Photograph of rehearsals for Bas Jan Ader, *Search of the Miraculous (One Night in Los Angeles)* opening of Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, 1975.



4.31. Bas Jan Ader, “Bulletin 89,” Art & Project: Amsterdam, August 1975.



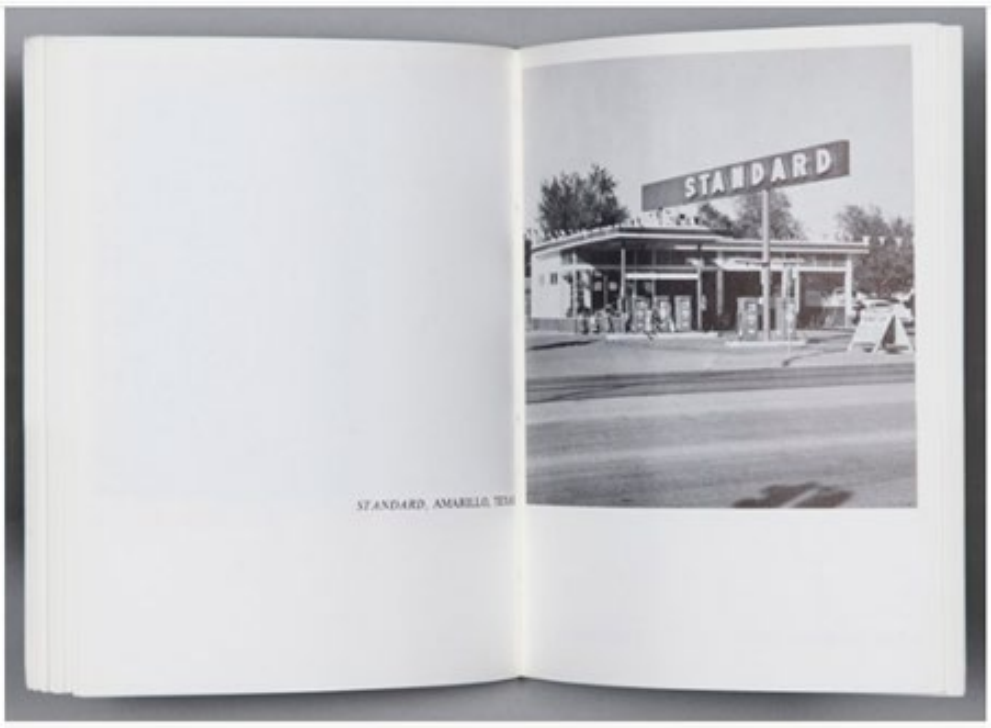
4.32-33. 'Outtakes,' Bas Jan Ader, *One Night in Los Angeles,* 1973.



4.34. Bas Jan Ader, *Farewell to Faraway Friends*, 1971, colour photograph.



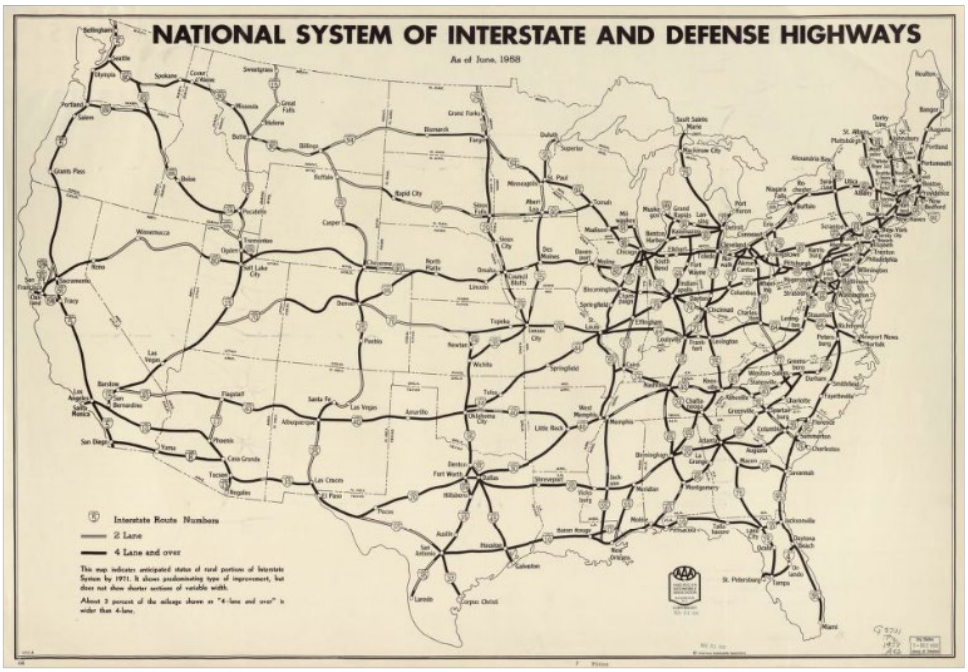
4.35. Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea*, 1809, oil on canvas, 110 x 171.5 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin.



4.36. Ed Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 1963, printed 1969, artist's book.



4.37. Ed Ruscha, *Standard Station*, 1966, screenprint, 25 5/8 x 39 15/16 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York.



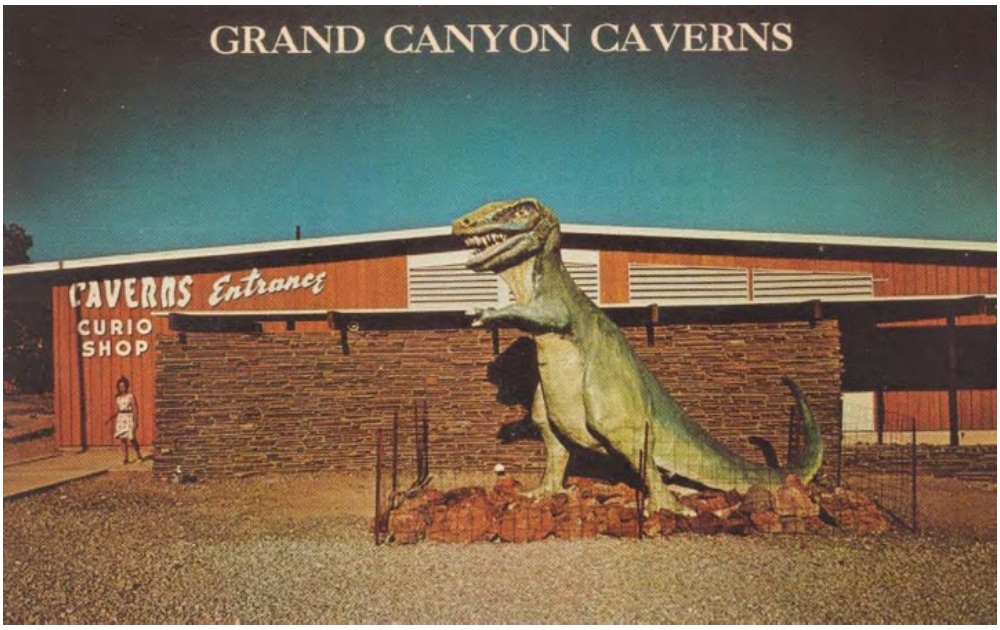
4.38. Map of National System of Interstate and Defense Highways: as of June, 1958.



4.39. Duke Downey, The Embarcadero Freeway (‘Road to Nowhere’), San Francisco, July 1958, black-and-white photograph.



4.40. Photograph of Rabbit Trading Post, Highway Route 66, Joseph City, Arizona, 1950s.



4.41. Postcard of 12-foot Fiberglass T-Rex, Grand Canyon Caverns, Peach Springs, Arizona, early 1960s.



4.42. 'Greetings from America's Main Street, US 66, Scenic Missouri', postcard, 1945.



4.43. 'Santa Monica, 66, End of the Trail' postcard, 1950s/60s.

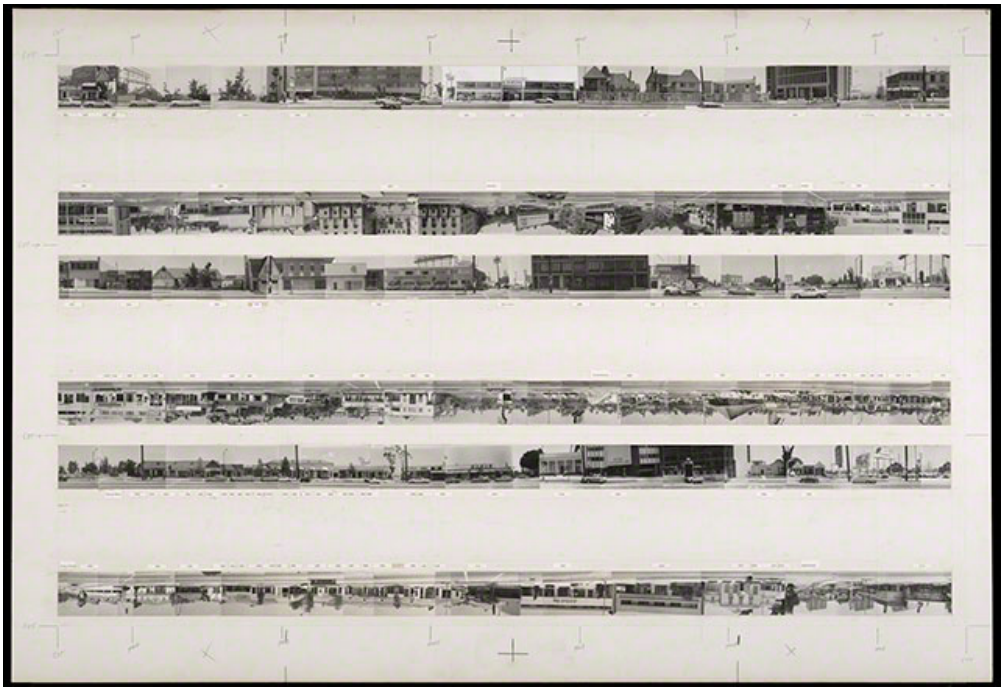


4.44. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, manuscript, 16ft paper roll.



4.45-46. Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (detail), 1966, artist's book.





4.47. Ed Ruscha, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966, maquette, gelatin silver prints and labels on board with annotations, 2012.M.1.1, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.



4.48. William Leavitt, *California Patio*, 1972, installation.



4.49. Robert Kinmont, *My Favourite Dirt Roads*, 1969, (detail), 17 silver gelatin prints.



4.50. John Baldessari, *The Back of All the Trucks Passed While Driving from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara, California, Sunday 20 January, 1963*, 1963. 32 35 mm slides.



4.51. Rob Beverit, photograph of the Merry Pranksters preparing to leave La Honda, 1966.



4.52. Photograph of "back to the landers," Ozark, 1973, 917.78705 Oz13, University of Arkansas Libraries Arkansas Collection.



4.53. Bas Jan Ader, *In Search of the Miraculous*, photo lithography on paper.