AWAY FROM THE MAINSTREAM: THREE ALTERNATIVE SPACES IN NEW YORK AND THE EXPANSION OF ART IN THE 1970s

By

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To mom
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<td>Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.</td>
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<td>AWC</td>
<td>Art Workers’ Coalition</td>
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<td>EAI</td>
<td>Electronic Arts Intermix, New York</td>
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<td>E.A.T.</td>
<td>Experiments in Art and Technology</td>
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<td>EGMC</td>
<td>Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal</td>
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<td>NEA</td>
<td>National Endowment for the Arts</td>
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<td>New York State Council on the Arts</td>
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Radical practices that emerged in the sixties complicated the political and aesthetic possibilities of art in the seventies. Medium specificity, so closely identified with the modernist criticism of Clement Greenberg, was challenged in the sixties and seventies by new media and site-specific, performance-related art as well as by institutional critique and socially-engaged practices. As artists worked in the expanded context, the notion of medium opened to other media and to politico-economic and socio-cultural logic. These circumstances expanded the boundaries of art, and led the contemporary art world to directly intervene in sociopolitical, economic, and cultural domains. My study addresses the relationship between the emergence of alternative spaces and the expanded notion of medium in the 1970s. I argue that the alternative spaces provided a new field of discourse to encourage artistic experiments and to produce new ideas of art.

My dissertation centers on three case studies of key alternative spaces founded in New York City in the early 1970s: 112 Greene Street, The Kitchen, and Artists Space. I also interpret significant changes in MoMA as the counterpart of alternative spaces in relation to the protests mounted by the Art Workers’ Coalition and its limits as an
incubator of new art. Through a methodical analysis of artistic practices at these spaces, I attempt to provide a detailed picture of the alternative art scene in downtown New York, from which the notion of medium expanded into context-related and community-related levels. First, to address how the early alternative spaces expanded the artistic context, I focus on artistic practices at 112 Greene Street. Next, I examine the role of the early alternative spaces in understanding electronic media as an art medium by addressing the practices at The Kitchen. Thirdly, I investigate Artists Space in terms of production of the postmodern aesthetic, and demonstrate its transformation to a postmodern art institution.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The issues of “intent and context” and “art and life”—phrases that were so much a part of the vocabulary of that time—exemplify the direct relationship between the emergence of the artist-generated alternative spaces and the form and content of the work that took place in those spaces.1—Jacki Apple

We frequently encounter artwork that blurs the borders between art and life or between aesthetic and discursive production in contemporary art exhibitions. This common experience raises a question: what enabled art to expand its boundaries from object-oriented production to context-oriented practice and to sociopolitical intervention? As many have argued, the range of media, contexts, and practices evident in contemporary art is indebted to an expanded notion of medium that grew out of the late sixties. In her prominent work in 1999, A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of Post-Medium Condition, Rosalind Krauss has proclaimed the end of medium specificity by the introduction of new media that have “constitutive heterogeneity,” differing from the modernist concept of purity of art. She terms this tendency the post-medium condition. The notion of medium unfolded into a compound idea of the apparatus and critical attitude to the artistic convention through intermedia, interdisciplinary practice, and reference to other media and old media.2 In other essays, Krauss uses this term to explain a strategy of photography to expand its technical support by referencing to other

media, such as film and commercial advertisement board. An artist’s medium, the technical support, is “not only a set of material conditions, but also a dense layering of economic and social history.” The artist’s desire to experiment with a medium makes the technical support characterized as a kind of palimpsest revealing traces of different media.

Many studies on critical postmodernism and hybrid art forms have relied on her concept of post-medium condition because of its emphasis on a certain condition or relationships a work of art involve, rather than a single object or a specific medium. This study is also indebted to the concept of the post-medium condition, insisting on the involvement of an artist as the subject to act, a medium as the technical conceptual ground of artwork, and a site as the place for art practice in that process. Therefore, the key question of this study is how these elements interrelate in opening up the new concept of art.

The emergence of alternative spaces in the late 1960s and early 1970s coincided with the collapse of medium specificity. There had been opposition to object-oriented art since Dada in the early twentieth century, followed by happenings and the Fluxus movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Minimal art exemplifies the irony of medium specificity that an extreme pursuit of medium specificity ended up in the collapsing modernist autonomy of art in the mid-1960s. The polemics on minimal art constituted

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5 The idea that each medium is given a distinct specificity is already contradicted when Clement Greenberg connects “flatness,” the physical state of painting, and “opticality,” a compound notion of pictorial quality including optical illusion. Because he could not
the discourse about an expanded notion of medium. Donald Judd and Michael Fried provided the conceptual ground for the shift from object-oriented art to context-oriented art by locating works of art in actual time and space, although they showed opposite positions to minimal art. Judd defines the new three-dimensional works emerging in the 1960s as specific objects, which are neither painting nor sculpture, but more powerful because of its material presence in actual space and time.\(^6\) Fried accuses minimal art as degrading art into an object because it enhances artwork’s literalness and presence, which nullify the autonomous position of artwork and suppose the existence of the viewer. These characteristics involve the work of art and the viewer in the theatrical condition, which is no longer a pure state of art.\(^7\) Hal Foster describes minimalism as a break from the late modernism’s aesthetic and the revival of transgressive avant-garde’s practice. This minimalist break connected the historic avant-garde and art after minimalism by emphasizing physical here-and-now and invoking the socio-economical order of the time.\(^8\) Thus, the collapse of medium specificity also brought realities as an artistic context. It became crucial how a work of art is associated with the actual space

abandon the painterly elements in order to prevent a mere canvas from becoming a painting, Greenberg did not help to allow illusion, which is contradictory to his concept of flatness of painting. This paradox leads to the emergence of the hybrid nature of medium by allowing artists to use the modernist self-criticism as a tool for deconstructing medium specificity. See Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4, Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85-93.


where it is displayed and experienced. Mainstream museums and galleries have come to confront new situations that require them to accommodate works devoted to the function of deconstruction. However, they have not yet been prepared for this departure from the modern concept of exhibition.

The first alternative spaces function as a technical support in which work was made, as well as a site and a new frame of art. Their physical environment catalyzed the production of massive and rough sculptural works and site-specific, performance-related installations. Importantly, the first alternative spaces opened up to the new types of art, which conveyed radical ideas of art and medium. Furthermore, artists experienced radical events, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and activist art collectives, during the 1960s. Many artists explored the issue of art and politics by dealing with class, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. Within this context, they must have believed in the possibility of a field of mutual communication and had a utopian vision of another territory outside the art institution.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, new art forms such as conceptual art, earthworks, installation art, performance art, video art, intermedia or mixed media work, and community-based activities emerged in connection with the key terms, theatrical, site-specific, dematerialized, conceptual, and performative, describing new types of art generated in the 1960s. Those terms were based on the collapse of the doxa

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9 In these terms, Robert Smithson worked with the dialectics between the gallery and the site. His site/non-site pieces articulate the possibility that the exhibition space can be expanded as part of artwork, functioning as the technical support

concerning “purity” of art medium, the principle of medium specificity. The vocabularies soon evolved into more implicational attributes to define the prevailing character of contemporary art such as relational, participatory, and interventional.11 Meanwhile, burgeoning alternative spaces featured the outside of the museum-gallery system. The first alternative spaces such as Gain Ground, Apple, 112 Greene Street, and The Kitchen were founded as artist-run galleries before the National Endowment of the Arts offered grants under the category of artist workshops in 1972. Professional curators and art administrators then began establishing more organized alternative spaces, for example Project Studio 1 (P.S.1) and Artists Space, around 1973. Those alternative spaces provided technical support and testing grounds for artists who experimented with new art forms that mainstream museums and galleries hesitated to accommodate.

The exhibition, *Alternatives in Respective*, was held at The New Museum in New York in 1981, offered one of the first overviews of the history of the first alternative spaces in New York from the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Jacki Apple, who organized the show, tried to illustrate the desired artistic condition in which artists were able to deal with “process-oriented and situationally specific” works by “involving a

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11 For discussion of the interaction between subjectivity and art, see Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance et al. (Paris: Les presses du reel, 2002). Regarding the development of public art, the concept of community and mutual interactions between subjects have arisen an important issue to address. For the transition of public art from site-specific art to community-based art, see Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002). For a discussion of dialogical practice and communicability as artistic condition, see Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
relationship between materials, concepts, actions, and locations."¹² This exhibition presented seven alternative spaces as representatives from the time: Gain Ground (1969, Robert Newman), Apple (1969, Billy Apple), 98 Greene Street (1969, Holly and Horace Solomon), 112 Greene Street (1970, Jeffrey Lew), 3 Mercer Street (1973, Stefan Eins), 10 Bleecker Street (1973, Alanna Heiss), and Idea Warehouse (1974, Alanna Heiss).¹³ The alternative spaces provided experimental venues for artists so that they could conjure an experimental artwork out of the new compound of medium, concepts, process, and sites. Furthermore, they mediated between art and life as well as the artistic intent and the given condition. Therefore, the works presented in alternative spaces explain the comprehensive range of contemporary art, which has extended into life spatially, conceptually, and politically.

Generally speaking, alternative spaces were established to meet complicated demands in the art world against the backdrop of the radical political movements of the late 1960. Artists had to cope with institutional limitations, which restricted access to mainstream art spaces. Some alternative spaces in the early 1970s were established to provide exhibition opportunities for female artists, minority artists, and emerging artists. For example, Cinque Gallery (1969) was opened by African American artists; El Museo Del Barrio (1969) was established for supporting the Puerto Rican community; and A.I.R (Artists in Residence, Inc.) Gallery (1972) was a co-op gallery for showing the work of

¹² Ibid.
¹³ Gain Ground, Apple, 112 Greene Street, and 3 Mercer Street were founded by artists, whereas 98 Greene Street was opened by collectors, and 10 Bleecker Street and Idea Warehouse were opened by an independent curator.
women artists. Although the first alternative spaces were related to the 1960s’
countercultural impulses and to artist protests against the established art system, their
primary functions were not to take part in sociopolitical activities, but rather to give
exposure to artistic experimentations. Even alternative spaces with political concerns
primarily functioned as sites for artists to maintain independence from the power of the
mainstream established art system, the major museums, and commercial galleries by
enabling the artists to work on their artistic theses. From these concerns, this
dissertation illustrates the argument that the development of an expanded notion of
medium primarily caused the emergence of the early alternative spaces and vice versa.

This dissertation argues that the first alternative spaces were a venue where
artists experimented with new forms of art and new media and produced discourse
about them, rather than merely a novel form of exhibition institution. This dissertation
addresses how the first alternative spaces created a moment that split from the
mainstream art spaces to establish another experimental realm of art, instead of
negating the existing art institutions; and also examines how they served artists to focus
on their media to form a new artistic topography of the time. This dissertation consists of
case studies of three significant alternative spaces founded in New York City in the
early 1970s: 112 Greene Street, The Kitchen, and Artists Space. They incubated site-
pecific, performance-related work, intervention to urban space, new media experiment,

\[14\] For details about alternative spaces since 1960s, see Julie Ault, “A Chronology of
Selected Alternative Structures, Spaces, Artists’ Groups, and Organizations in New
Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective (New York; Minneapolis: Drawing
Center; University of Minnesota Press, 2002), and Lauren Rosati and Mary Anne
and interdisciplinary practice. By reconstructing and analyzing key artistic projects at the three spaces, this dissertation examines multiple directions that those spaces demonstrated regarding the experiments with art forms and media. The ultimate aim of this study is to provide a detailed picture of the downtown art scene in New York in the 1970s, featured by the three alternative spaces.¹⁵

Chapter 2 examines the contradictions faced by the mainstream art venue in the late 1960s and early 1970s by dealing with the Museum of Modern Art in New York as a counterpart of the three alternative spaces. MoMA attempted to exhibit “advanced” art, 

responding to artistic experiments, artists’ political engagement, and institutional critique prevailing during that time. Two exhibitions that canonized installation art and conceptual art were held: *Spaces* from December 30, 1969 to March 1, 1970, and *Information* from July 2 to September 20, 1970. They exhibited new types of art such as environment pieces, new media installations, and conceptual art, and also encompassed institutional critique along with engagement in a sociopolitical agenda. *Spaces* presented the concept of “actual space” as the new art medium. However, the neutral gallery space detained the exhibited installations in the modernist matrix. *Information* tried to combine the development of communication system and contemporary art on a global level. Although the exhibition accommodated updated radical works, it caused controversy and received negative responses. This fact tells us there is an assumed expectation for the major museum to make an ordered narrative for a part of art history.

Furthermore, MoMA initiated the “Project” series, a program for reformatory exhibitions in 1971 under John B. Hightower’s directorship in order to encompass contemporary artistic practices. Among the series, *Pier 18* exemplified the limit of the mainstream art institution in encompassing artists’ desire to transgress the boundaries of art because this show re-presented previous activities that happened in the downtown site of Pier 18. MoMA was supposed to serve as the modernist institution of the curatorial intervention rather than an actual site of contemporary art.

Chapter 3 addresses how 112 Greene Street gave artists its physical space as artistic material and as performance space; and how it expanded its context from exhibition space, to urban doors, and to artist community. Here the breadth of art
expanded from making an object, to constructing a structure, to engaging in a specific space, to participating in a community, to conceiving an imaginary space, and so forth. From 1970 to 1975 under the directorship of Jeffery Lew, 112 Green Street created a field of mutual communication and an artist community as another territory outside the mainstream art world. The crux is that 112 Greene Street was supposed to supplement, not replace, the museum-gallery system.

I focus on the inaugural exhibition, selective installations and performances, and Gordon Matta-Clark’s indoor and outdoor work to address how the old building and the dilapidated district became the artistic support for spatially-engaged work and performance-related installations. These works generated a more-complicated relationship between physical aspects and semantic dimensions of a work, and also interacted with both the audience and the space in various ways from activating bodily engagement, generating a spatial enclosure, to engaging in the architectural structure. Then, I address 112 Greene Street’s interrelationship with the SoHo artist community by addressing artistic projects at Food restaurant and with Avalanche magazine. Both 112 Greene Street and the Food restaurant operated in loose communal conditions. Their communal nature and sacrificial economy revealed the utopian impulse prevalent among artists invested in the early alternative spaces. Matta-Clark’s concept of “anarchitecture” was based on his experience of the SoHo artist community built in a dilapidated industry district filled with useless spaces. Avalanche magazine, as another part of the self-sustained artists’ community in SoHo, demonstrated video as an emerging new medium for art, and also introduced the network of artists into 112 Greene Street through the collaboration for Video Performance exhibition.
Examining The Kitchen, chapter 4 addresses how an alternative space encouraged the emergence of video as a particularly privileged medium for conceptual art, from an electronic medium for intermedial practice. The Kitchen was founded because of a need to create a new logic for the relation between technology and art and a need for a new venue for artists experimenting with the artistic logic of video. The Kitchen witnessed the development of video art from image-processing technique to artistic concerns about video’s structural and psychological aspects during the 1970s. This trajectory implies the shifting artistic discourse from modernist medium specificity to the postmodernist deconstruction of medium in video art. This transformation stemmed from The Kitchen’s changing organizational characters and social bonds. The Kitchen changed from an informal experimental laboratory theater to a non-profit cultural institution as it moved to SoHo in 1973. The Kitchen increasingly gave exposure to video artists who practiced in the context of the art gallery.

First, The Kitchen played a crucial role in establishing the medium-specific approach to video by encouraging video artists to delve into the medium of video as electronic signal. When it was located at the Mercer Art Center from June 1971 to August 1973, The Kitchen provided equipment and programs for artists to examine the image-processing technique. Indeed, led by the Perception group, The Kitchen as an informal laboratory theater for electronic media crossed recorded, electronic music, with early video art, which exploited the audiovisual quality of video. Technical concerns on the image-processing technique and video synthesizers underlay the intermedia and mixed-media practices conducted at The Kitchen. Furthermore, two Kitchen Video Festivals held in 1972 and 1973 exemplified recent video experimentation, expanding
the boundaries at the levels of conceptual structure and aesthetic language. Artists fused video with other media and art forms, and also explored video as a means of socio-cultural criticism.

Moving to SoHo in August 1973, The Kitchen was not dominated by a specific group of artists, but was run by artist curators in collaboration with exhibiting artists. There was a remarkable influx of video artists who mainly worked in the art gallery. Video artists increasingly presented conceptual approaches to the auto-reflexivity of video. Video artists were fascinated with this quality based on the closed-circuit system of video, because its narcissistic nature traversed the video's critical function, physical mechanisms, and psychology. The medium of video was no longer electronic signal controlled by physical equipment. It was the complicated interaction of the camera, the projected image, the viewer, and the performer/speaker.¹⁶

Chapter 5 examines the transformation of an alternative space into a self-consciously postmodern art institution. Artists Space is a significant example. Although Artists Space was established on governmental support, unlike previous examples, 112 Greene Street and The Kitchen, it was run based on the direct engagement of artists, and sought to meet the urgent demands of the art world. It had to embrace experimental practice and to publicize emerging artists and the new aesthetic.

In the 1970s, Artists Space transitioned from a venue for experimental work to a forum for canonizing postmodern art. This transformation corresponds to the change of directorship in the 1970s. Trudie Grace co-established Artists Space and its unique

selection process by artists themselves, whereas Helene Winer developed regular programs and curator-organized exhibitions. I argue that a succession of exhibitions was a process to formulate the postmodernist aesthetic of expanded media. Crucial examples of early practices at Artists Space are 3 Shows and the PersonA performance series. Through the 3 Shows series, Ree Morton, Jonathan Borofsky, and Scott Burton suggested postmodern transformations of painting and sculpture to the setting for a narrative and approaching theatrical conditions. In PersonA, Burton and Laurie Anderson provided allegorical structure using the concept of theater and the dislocation of linguistic sign. Jack Goldstein’s short films presented in Artists Film Series, initiated the year after Winer took directorship from Grace in fall 1975, marked a significant movement toward classification of postmodern art. More exposure was given to the new mediums of picture such as film, photography, and mass media. These cross-activities created a new syntax of temporality and made prevalent the allegorical structure. In a similar way, Robin Winters and Michael Smith, in the first season of the Performance Series, attempted to rescue performance from its melancholic condition by consulting other art forms and media. The exhibition Pictures, curated by Douglas Crimp, offered one of the earliest and coherent attempts to present the pluralism and a logic that constituted postmodern art practices. Crimp’s exhibition and writings sought to provide a more formalized and theoretically mature description of practices and forms that were beginning to coalesce into new artistic norms.

Finally, the conclusion briefly considers the aftermath of the institutionalization and professionalization of alternative spaces. The mainstream art world increasingly accommodated site-specific, performance-related installation, and art in the discursive
political space. Activist alternatives such as Group Material and the Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PAD/D) attempted to maintain tension with the institution of art. Since alternative spaces transformed the relationship among artists, art forms, and artistic sites in the 1970s, artists expanded their territory outside the art world by intervening directly in sociopolitical, economic, and cultural scenes on national and global levels. The whole situation became the medium of art. In these circumstances artists themselves became the subject to intervene in the given situation.

Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to show that the three alternative spaces encouraged artists to doubt the existing frame and to produce new artistic languages based on their new discourse structures. Those alternative spaces provided new sites where artists questioned the given frame and experimented with new artistic languages. They were the sites for events that marked special moments in the art world of the time.\(^{17}\) This interventional character made alternative spaces differ from the mainstream art world by breaking the limited notion of medium as a physical property and frustrating curators’ function of producing art history knowledge or marketing artwork. Furthermore, in liberating the condition of art, alternative spaces made artists the subject in the process of intervention.

\(^{17}\) Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2005), 174-82. Here I bring up the concept of *evental* site, which Badiou presents in this book. The concept of the event stems from the consideration of the other-than-being, which is historical, as the opposition of nature. Badiou terms *evental* site an entirely abnormal multiple. The event belongs to the *evental* site, which is a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation, although the event belongs to the situation. It can be declared only by an interpretative intervention that the event is presented in a situation.
CHAPTER 2
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART: THE MAINSTREAM ASSIMILATING NEW ART

The Museum of Modern Art held the *Spaces* exhibition in December 30, 1969 to March 1, 1970 and the *Information* exhibition in July 2 to September 20, 1970 in an attempt to assess contemporary artistic practice. These exhibitions were a response to criticisms of the museum’s exclusion and manipulation of living artists' work and artists’ demanding change of MoMA, which “Artists Protest against Museum of Modern Art,” which happened throughout 1969, declared at “13 Demands” submitted by Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC) to Bates Lowry, director of MoMA in January 28.

About a year earlier, *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age* (November 27, 1968 - February 9, 1969) incited an artist to protest against the exclusion of artists from controlling their works collected in museums. On January 1, 1969, sculptor Vassilakis Takis removed his *Tele-Sculpture* (1960) from the gallery, complaining that the exhibition enforcedly inserted his work into other works against his wishes and despite his protestations.¹ His action at the *Machine* show triggered the artists’ protest to MoMA. Months later again, *The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation* (June 18 - October 5, 1969) drew intense criticism by participating artists who bristled at the demand that they donate exhibited works. At the head of the

exhibition checklist, the Museum defined some works submitted for the exhibition as “gifts” without an agreement with artists.\(^2\)

On November 18, 1969, the Guerrilla Art Action Group, the affiliated acting group of AWC, conducted a frustrating performance at the lobby of MoMA. In the center of the lobby at 3:10 pm, Silvianna, Poppy Johnson, Jean Toche and Jon Hendricks, yelling and screaming, ripped each other’s clothes, under which plastic bags filled with beef blood were concealed. As they fell down and writhed, the blood exploded onto the floor. This action was a direct statement about wars in Southeast Asia, especially horrors of napalm. During this performance, leaflets were circulated: “A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art.” The performance and leaflets announced the connection between the Rockefellers and the military-industrial complex to reveal the museum’s nexus to the war business.\(^3\) It was a powerful visualization of the evil network surrounding the museum. Julia Bryan-Wilson connects this performance scene to wartime photographs. The performers’ live bodies in the museum emphasized the cruelty of war. By adding the text, or the systematic summary of the connection between the Rockefellers and the


\(^3\) Guerilla Art Action Group, A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers form the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, November 10, 1969 and Communiqué, November 18, 1969, Lucy Lippard papers, Box 7. MoMA folder, AAA.
manufacturers of war munitions, this performance functioned as a journalism to critique the institution’s engagement in the war.\textsuperscript{4}

Jennifer Licht, who organized the \textit{Spaces} show, tried to accommodate artists’ demands submitted in “13 Demands” of AWC, and attended their demand on exhibitions of installation works requiring unique environmental conditions and technological maintenance. She interpreted the demands as requests of separation between art and market, and embraced what then seemed to be unmarketable artworks, particularly installation art. She wrote,

Some of the aims of the recent artists’ protests have been directed towards disassociating art from the marketing system, and demands were made of museums to accept some direct responsibility. The works for this exhibition will be created especially, and dismantled afterwards. Here we can assume a role that belongs uniquely to the public institution and lies outside the domain of the art dealer.\textsuperscript{5}

Just as she focused on expanding exhibition content, Kynaston McShine, who organized the \textit{Information} exhibition at MoMA, also tried to encompass various activities of recent art directly involving environment and communicating information, on the global level.\textsuperscript{6}

The two exhibitions, \textit{Spaces} and \textit{Information}, showed a sign of change by accommodating contemporary artworks installed \textit{in situ} and encompassing the expanded concept of medium. Both exhibitions dealt with artworks of a more recent time than the usual exhibitions at MoMA. They were simultaneously retrospective and


anticipatory in showing artistic accomplishments of the sixties and foreseeing artistic concerns emerging in the seventies. They also revealed the limitations of the mainstream art institution in embracing recent radical practices when facing controversies regarding display condition and contents of exhibited works. These two exhibitions demonstrated contradictory conditions of the mainstream art venue. The traditional art institution required artworks to be contextualized into the established discourse of the history of art, while recent artistic practices demanded new structures that opened new artistic paradigms and novel mutual relationships.

New art emerging in the 1960s, such as “Environments” and conceptual art as well as minimal sculpture, began to appear in mainstream museums in 1969 and 1970. The concept of Environments was confusing because it was frequently accepted as simply meaning environmental work or installation piece, whereas it initially included relationship between art and life and participation of audience.7 Allan Kaprow explained his Environments as participatory installation work, “we do not come to look at things. We simply enter, are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us, passively or actively according to our talents for ‘engagement,’ in much the same way that we have...

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moved out of the totality of the street or our home where we also played a part. We ourselves are shapes (though we are not often conscious of this fact).” This form was not agreeable to the traditional galleries and museums that privileged the object-oriented works of art.

Accordingly, the exhibition of new art in mainstream was limited in its institutional form, to art that conformed to traditional art media such as painting and sculpture. For example, the 1969 Whitney Painting Annual and the 1970 Whitney Sculpture Annual demonstrated the institutionalization of the Sixties in terms of painting and sculpture, respectively. Besides minimalist sculpture, the 1970 Whitney Annual tried to show the contemporary sculptural trend by including site-specific and environmental work in its diverse exhibits. Although their sheer size did not permit their material manifestation in the galleries, works by Keith Sonnier, Richard Serra, and Robert Smithson were included in the Annual as photographic documentation. This show purported to introduce current trends, but it excluded artists and artworks that did not fit comfortably within a minimal aesthetic and so-called process art. Art critic Kasha Linville said in her review, “It’s interesting to see that minimal and process innovations in construction, materials, and imagery no longer appear radical in these pieces. They have been thoroughly tamed and integrated.” Indeed, the 1970 Whitney Sculpture Annual was an

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8 Allan Kaprow, “Notes on the Creation of a Total Art,” In Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life, 11.
10 Ibid. Linville mentioned works like Bill Boring’s Everygreen Joe Henimis, Alice Adams’s Leaning Wall, and Mary Miss’s Untitled piece. All of them were wooden pieces showing minimalist repetitive patterns recalling Donald Judd or Dan Flavin.
outdated exhibition because it reiterated the artistic and aesthetic discourses of the Sixties to set the current art trends as clinging to the notion of sculpture.

The 1970 Whitney Sculpture Annual exemplified the mainstream museum’s hesitation in accommodating innovative art. For it even failed to cover conceptual art that had been expanding its range by incorporating its way of working into various media since the late 1960s, when serious exhibitions were already dealing with postminimal art and conceptual art in the United States and Europe.¹¹ This lag stemmed from the traditional boundaries of painting and sculpture that still presided over major museums. In these terms, Cindy Nemser appropriately quoted John Bauer in her review on the 1969 Whitney Painting Annual: in his forward in the catalog for this show Baur, an LA-based painter, said, the Whitney Annual “no longer even approximate[d] a cross section of the creative trend of the moment.”¹² It was not until 1973 when it changed into the Whitney Biennial Exhibition that the Whitney Annual, which had alternated painting and sculpture every year, abolished the conventional division between painting and sculpture.

Unlike the Whitney Annuals, Spaces and Information reflected the expanded concept of art form and medium. As site-specific and conceptual works proliferating since the late 1960s, mainstream exhibition spaces were urged to accept the changing conditions of contemporary art defying the traditional process of art making. Artworks

¹¹ Primary Structure, held at the Jewish Museum from April 27 to June 12 in 1966, was the first large-scaled group show of the minimalist sculpture, marked as the beginning of canonization. When Attitudes Become Form: Works – Processes – Concepts – Situations – Information (Live in Your Head) at Kunsthalle in Berlin from March 22 to April 27 in 1969 was the international exhibition to summarize conceptual and post-minimalist art.

were no longer expected to be discrete objects shown at museums and galleries. They could be the construction of an environment to be experienced or be the communicational forms to record and criticize the current condition of art and life. This changing notion of artwork resulted in rethinking the role of the museum transcending its old function as the storehouse of works of art.\footnote{Licht, Exhibition description – American series (December, 1969), May, 1969, CUR, #917b., MoM Archives, NY. Licht, the curator of the Spaces exhibition grasped these conditions when she organized the show.} Dealing with space and information, Spaces and Information attempted to encompass site-specific art and conceptual art, even political artworks attacking the institution of art, beyond the traditional classification of art into painting and sculpture.

**Spaces: “Actual Space” within the Museum**

Licht, who organized the Spaces exhibition, sought to “challenge the usual role of the Museum” and to transform actual space into a resource for art. She attempted this by converting the museum space into a venue for artists to execute their ideas, departing from its traditional role of housing and conserving objects. For the Spaces show, artists were invited to produce works \textit{in situ}.\footnote{Jennifer Licht, acknowledgments to Spaces (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1969), np.} Michael Asher, Larry Bell, Dan Flavin, Franz Erhard Walther, Robert Morris, and the Pulsa group were selected to undertake “the employment of a defined spatial situation in a unified work.”\footnote{Memo, Jennifer Licht to Walter Bareiss, September 23, 1969. CUR. Exh. #917b. Mo MA Archives, NY. She wrote this memo as an informal progress report on the Spaces show.} Each artist constructed an environment in a room given to him and provided a specific way of experiencing actual space. Work in each room contained intermediate elements to help
the viewer perceive space, such as a current of air, sound, light, objects, spatial structures, and an artificial landscape. Even though this show accepted changing notions of artwork and art space, Gregory Battcock’s critique was apt that the space concepts implied by some works were rather obsolete. According to him, overall the exhibition recognized the new idea of space without further interpretation.\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{Spaces} show reiterated the limited notion of space that had begun to be canonized within the boundaries of art. It was also ignored that there were artists who had already been exploring the expanding concept of site-specificity.

Flavin and Bell worked with the physical experience of actual space by inviting the viewer into an environment activating the visual sensation. Flavin’s work was composed of yellow and green fluorescent lights installed on opposing walls like two continuing square barriers (Figure 2-1). Light determined the spatial experience of the room. Here Flavin repeated his minimalist work that extended itself to the whole gallery. This work defined the space by two aspects of fluorescent light. On the one hand, the fluorescent lamps as material delimited the space that the work occupied; on the other hand, the fluorescent light as medium made the space aural. Flavin’s room saturated the viewer with green and yellow light. Experience of this space transcended from vision to body and mind. While Flavin used light to render the space, Bell filled his space with blackness (Figure 2-2). His room itself was black without light, bisected lengthwise into two narrow sections by an interior wall. High on the end wall of each division was a panel of vacuum-coated glass. As perception of the space depended on the time it took for eyes to adjust to darkness, the viewer had to grope for walls to discern the space, on

first entering the room. What enabled the viewer to perceive the space was light from the exterior. Dim light reflected variously on different interior surfaces. Flavin and Bell made the viewers engage their bodies in perceiving space.

In these manners of reducing visual means to two extremes, light and dark, space filled with light extended the vision, while space filled with blackness was void. To compensate the lack, Flavin installed barriers of light, while Bell built rods of glass dimming in the dark. What the viewer encountered in both works was space filled with light or darkness, rather than a physical object. These two artists provided space as a new three-dimensional art medium instead of the traditional sculptural object, which, set on a pedestal, had been the sole vehicle for attention and contemplation. As these works involved time in experiencing space, they made space perceived by sensory organs and then create psychological effects. The light and dark moved the viewer from actual space to space of mind, which could sometimes reach a pathological status agoraphobic or claustrophobic. Thus, these two works were even beyond the minimalist situation, which involved the viewer, the object, and the experience of actual space and time to form the phenomenological perception.

These works seemed to gain a half success in executing what the curator intended: to have artworks produced in situ and to investigate new concepts of space. They still relied on the minimalist space and confronted the viewer with a phenomenological and psychological experience of space. Here the term, in situ, was interpreted literally, and the term, space, was understood unilaterally. In other words, this exhibition presupposed the museum space itself in using these two concepts. As a result, actual space was supposed to be physical and phenomenological, not expanding
its range onto the cultural, socio-political level. This corresponded to the term, \textit{in situ}, which indicated that the work was constructed in the museum, not brought from the outside. \textit{In situ} artwork focused on the process of installing the work, rather than the relationship between the site and the work.

Beyond reversing modernist paradigm, or autonomy from the site, Asher concentrated on space itself rather than a sculpture in its environmental context. He investigated how visual, tactile, and audio sensations defined the space, especially the museum space. His room, located at a corner between Falvin’s and Bell’s rooms, was sound-insulated. A hidden sound generator, amplifier, and oscillator made subtle sound that evoked the viewer’s sensation (Figure 2-3). Asher’s idea was “imposing noise into an acoustically dead space.”\textsuperscript{17} Dim light at the center of the lowered ceiling illuminated the interior. The viewer entered and exited this cubic space through two openings located on diagonal opposites from each other. Floating in the ocean of everyday noise, this room was supposed to be an isolated void with subtle noise, dim lights, and a current of air through its own creation.

As Asher wrote in his letter to MoMA, the confined condition of his room was derived from his idea that the “unassuming nature of the finished work” required the viewer to confront it in complete “innocence” and without preconceived ideas. He believed this kind of installation “goes beyond familiar aesthetic guidelines” because it secures an unrestricted amount of time to perceive. Accordingly, to experience what is taking place is more important than past ideas of aesthetics because the preconceived

\textsuperscript{17} Letter, Michael Asher to April Kingsley, October 26, 1969, CUR, Exh. #917b. MoMA Archives, NY.
ideas are not in the context of the work.\textsuperscript{18} By experience, Asher seemingly means sensory perception within this controlled room. But the actual experience of this piece consisted of acoustical and visual connection between the confined space and its outside, or the work itself and the museum. In effect, Asher’s work implied that the nature of the museum space was in-between a space of tranquility and a space of disturbance. Although this architecturally unified room kept being invaded by visual and acoustic noises from outside, the spatial experience within the museum remained neutral and purely perceptual because the powerful convention of the museum space exceeded that of disturbing sensory factors.

Although Licht tried to interpret Asher’s materials, which were products of technology, as symbols of the contemporary environment, Asher did not go further into the outside world and everyday life.\textsuperscript{19} His main interest was producing “a definite sense of spatial volume and of presence on the persons inside the room.” Its perceptual condition was considered the contextual condition of the exhibition site. Accordingly such concerns could not include the sociopolitical contexts surrounding the exhibition institution. Asher emphasized the innocence of museum visitors. He expected them to simply experience what is here without any preconceptions. This verifies the nature of his critique of the museum space. Ordinary audience accepted Asher’s dark room as a refuge from the fast pace of contemporary urban life.\textsuperscript{20} Notably, the audience translated

\textsuperscript{18} Letter, Michael Asher, undated, CUR. Exh. #917b. MoMA Archives, NY.

\textsuperscript{19} Licht, introductory essay to \textit{Spaces}, np.

Asher’s insulated room of sensory perception into a sanctioned space from a stressful reality. Here the museum was a separate territory.

This exhibition demonstrated a special interest in sensate experience and phenomenology of space. This became clear for the fact that Licht, enormously impressed with his work’s strong effect on eye, had negotiated to invite James Turrell to the exhibition.21 Turrell’s work also concerned dark space with very subtle light. It took time for the viewer to adjust to the darkness and perceive the delicate light. During the loss of vision in this dark space, the viewer could not but rely on his/her body to feel the space. With room the installations involving light and dark, the exhibition provided the viewer with the extreme condition of visual sensation requiring the engagement of body to perceive the space.

Thus, it is paradoxical that the criteria for selecting artists relied on both the minimalist concept of actual space and the modernist concept of neutral space. All works at Spaces assumed the presence of the subject in actual space and its confrontation with the object in the duration of time. Each artist replaced the object the viewer was supposed to confront with space itself by installing a room of light and sound. Because the space was experienced by staying through time, its experience totally departed from instantaneousness, the modernist demand on works of art. But these rooms provided the viewer with reductive sensation of space so that the viewer could encounter the abstract conception of space. Although the spaces involved non-visual senses, each space itself was preserved as a void from psychological effects and social ramifications. Room installations by Flavin, Bell, and Asher, in particular, addressed

space as a medium, as Licht wrote in the exhibition catalogue. This kind of space conception was as narrow as the earliest modernist notion of space, in that this conception was based on homogenous matrix that was not yet adjusted for a specific process.\textsuperscript{22}

Another thing about these artists’ environmental pieces: they were filled with visual and non-visual sensory stimuli. This kind of space is a laboratory for experimentation with perceptual response. This sensory space is on the threshold to space of the psychological effect. Anthony Vidler coined a metaphoric term, “warped space” to designate space that various forces use to diffuse the formal and the psychological. Understanding space in terms of psychology, he defined space as “a product of subjective projection and introjections, as opposed to a stable container of objects and bodies” by various iterations of addressing pathologies of the subject and its relations to space.\textsuperscript{23} These three artists considered perceptual introjections of the viewer, but did not proceed to address this issue on the deeper levels of psychology and psychoanalysis. By contrast, other works in the show seemed to go farther in that they added indirect comments on the cultural and sociopolitical levels to perceptual condition of artwork.

\textsuperscript{22} The conception of space relies on the architectural space in that architecture has been the frame to define and confine infinite space relating to nature and human. Studies of the spatial perception and psychology of a place begin with researching the architectural space. Initially the architectural space was discussed referring to spatial concepts of paintings based on mathematics and geometry. Increasingly the discussion of space has relied on the relations between the place and the subject until it regressed to the Modernist space of homogenous grids. Thus, the Modernist notion of space is a kind of mathematical matrix removed of any heterogeneous geographical, cultural, sociopolitical factors.

Walther’s work addressed specific relations between the viewer and space. Walther constructed in the 54th Street Lobby area an Environment that undermined the autonomy of private aesthetic space (Figure 2-4). His room was canvas-floored, arranged with objects in white canvas or muslin. These objects, which Walther called “Instruments for Processes,” were to be worn and manipulated by museum-visitors. This work was understood as dealing with the spatial relations between art objects and the viewer as a participant. The instruments were offered along with instructions on how to use them. During the stated hours, the artist instructed visitors how to put on, hold, and move these objects, to help the viewer experience spatial distance from others and from objects. In the exhibition catalogue, Licht emphasized play situations of this piece that intruded on or preserved the personal sphere because they led participants to concentrate on their own physical and mental process, arousing their relationship to others. With these instruments, Walther explored “the psychology of personal space and activity.” Since the objects functioned as utensils offered for the viewer to understand his/her own conduct, they were not selected or judged according to aesthetic categories. As mentioned in the catalogue, this point could be extended into a series of innovative suggestions that art objects and the art public engage in social behavior, and that the art be related to society as an active force.

Walther’s space invited the viewer to and reality to take part of the work. A glass wall on 54th Street allowed passersby to look into the room, and allowed the street

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24 Press release No. 162, December 30, 1970, CUR. Exh. #917b. MoMA Archives, NY. These fifty-nine objects produced from 1962 to 1969 were made of canvas, muslin, felt, foam rubber, composition board and leather. Each piece had designation to imply its usage or purpose. For example, the year 1962 pieces are designated as “to be thrown away; our papers to be read; smell; piece for thinking.”

25 Licht, introductory essay to Spaces, np.
scene to be enclosed as part of the room. No matter how limited, the interaction between artwork and its context entered this work. In addition, this environment piece considered viewers as participants. But that interaction was limited. For instance, the viewer could be a participant of this piece only in a specific moment when the artist was present at the venue. When the artist was absent, viewers became onlookers because they were not allowed to enter the room. They could only look into the room from outside the canvas fence. The artist’s assistance was necessary for this piece to function as an intermediate that changed the viewer to a participant. In effect, the viewer remained a perceiver and the room remained a perceptual condition, like the environments provided by Flavin, Bell, and Asher. One reviewer noted that the physical distance and the varying degree of space between visitors and objects ended up producing “hilarity rather than the called-for spatial self-awareness.” The critic suggested that participation in handling these objects had a psychological effect on the viewer. But this possibility was not fully considered in this exhibition.

The *Spaces* show presented a technology-based environment in terms of the sensory perception. The Pulsa group, a collaborative of seven artists, produced a much stronger visual and acoustic environment, using electronic technology (Figure 2-5). At the MoMA Sculpture Garden, they built a kind of ecological environment, comprising electronic sound, lighting, and heating equipment and a feedback system with closed-circuit cameras and cadmium sulfide photoresistors, both of which were responsive to

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26 Gruen, “Fun House in Space.”
presence and movement of people, traffic, and the weather.\textsuperscript{27} The environment interacted with changing temperature, densities of visitors within the garden, and stroboscopic information from the cameras atop the museum. Existing environmental conditions were transformed into audio, visual, and thermal signals that sparked the viewer’s sensory perceptions. In a nutshell, this work visualized the durational process of perception. As Licht put it, “Capturing a sense of it [the issuance of an energy] involves prolonged exposure and gradual comprehension.”\textsuperscript{28} While the control room storing the electronic equipment indicated the physical support of perception, the installations at the garden, or strobe lights, heaters, and speakers, were the contents of perception. The garden area was a field of perception, illustrating reciprocal interaction between these two parts through the passage of time.

Pulsa’s work expanded the concept of space into the field of a reciprocal exchange based on temporal duration, no matter what kind of movement would be made in its course. Battcock said this work addressed “the \textit{time} element of space, or in other words, the time it takes to move through space— the \textit{speed of movement} in space.”\textsuperscript{29} In particular, it “depends upon quick movement via unseen impulses through space.”\textsuperscript{30} According to him, the concept of space as the spatial occupation was obsolete, for it was based on out-dated, slow system. Admittedly, the information technology of the late twentieth century had created a new view of space. Spatial

\textsuperscript{27} For the detailed explanation about the configuration of this piece, see Letter, The Pulsa to Jennifer Licht, October 2, 1969; Memorandum, April Kingsley to Joseph Chapman, January 13, 1970, CUR Exh. #917B. MoMA Archives, NY.
\textsuperscript{28} Licht, introductory essay for \textit{Spaces}, np.
\textsuperscript{29} Battcock, “The Politics of Space,” 42. Italics by Battcock.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
distance was no longer the standard for measuring the dimension of a space; rather, the
temporal duration determined it. But sensational stimuli generated by electronic
machines in this work appealed to the viewer. The control room in a separate location
verified the invisible interaction between the environmental elements and the audio,
visual, and thermal perceptions that were mediated by a computer system. In this
sense, this work ultimately demonstrated the power of technology in controlling the
human environment, rather than the shifting concept of space. Conversely, this work
was contextualized as an example of the expanding medium and spatial proclivity of
current art. Robert Morris’ work was contextualized in this manner as well.

Morris constructed an artificial landscape in a room (Figure 2-6). It consisted of
144 trees planted in diminishing size on four five-foot high pedestals covered with steel
on the side and filled with soil. Since these pedestals occupied the whole room, the
viewer could barely walk through narrow cruciform corridors that hemmed them in. The
room was illuminated with fluorescent grow lights and controlled to a fifty degree
Fahrenheit and eighty percent humidity.31 Thus this room featured manipulated scales
and artificially controlled atmosphere and environment. This work was a miniature to
show a landscape with the deep perspective, and also an artificial environment
controlled by sophisticated technology. In this room, the viewer simultaneously

31 Letter, Jennifer Licht to Robert Morris, September 18, 1969 and to Fred Warner,
Tomlinson Refrigeration and Supply, October 14, 1969, CUR Exh. #917B. MoMA
Archives, NY; Letter, Elizabeth Shaw to C.A. Canham, Kimberly Clarke, October 31,
1969, CUR Exh. #917B. MoMA Archives, NY.
witnessed revival of the perspective that had dominated classical landscapes and presentation of a science-fiction-like dislocated nature as an artificial ecosystem.\textsuperscript{32} 

Besides the distant vistas for the eyes and the confinement for the body, the viewer was expected to experience the space as a constructed ecosystem by sensing humidity and temperature artificially maintained at the optimum condition. Nonetheless, the focus was on the notion of space as a field of sensate experiences of body, instead of advanced electronic technology as the basis for constructing the new environment. For instance, critics mainly discussed this aspect, quoting Morris’ comment, “This is a space of atmosphere, just as much of a sensate experience as a visible one”\textsuperscript{33} and Licht’s statement, “It doesn’t offer you a finite object, but a set of conditions.”\textsuperscript{34} “Atmosphere” and “a set of conditions” were interpreted as devices addressing bodily experience of space. The meaning of using advanced electronic technology in art was almost muted. What was important was space as an art medium involving body in the artistic experience.

Although space was the main concept connecting each work, to create consistency in the Spaces exhibition, the notion of space was vague between visible, physical, and psychological. The artists did not isolate visual perception, but moved to a larger, more encompassing art, whose interior space the viewer could enter and

\textsuperscript{32} Gruen, “Fun House in Space.” Gruen pointed out the odd impression of this work, “Here we enter a surreal and marvelously ambiguous environment. Magritte comes to mind, but Morris gives his three-dimensional landscape an even greater sense of disjuncted reality. It is a strange, complex and completely satisfying exercise in spatial dislocation and it is an environment in which vision, imagination and technical brilliance combine to produce an extraordinary effect.”

\textsuperscript{33} David L. Shirey, ”Art in Space,” \textit{Newsweek}, January 12, 1970, 63

\textsuperscript{34} Grace Glueck, “Museum Beckoning Space Explorers.”
perceive with body. These six projects were selected as “examples of contemporary investigations of actual, aerial space as a nonplastic, yet malleable, agent in art.”35

Displayed under the concept of space, each work lost its particularity and its discontinuity from other works. Licht recognized that space became the central issue of that time, and also that various concepts of space were available, such as “sensorial, social, ecological, and extraterrestrial.”36 But she selected sensorial space as the main concept. The exhibition space flowed from Flavin’s room with fluorescent lights; to Asher’s room with subtle light and sound; to Bell’s darkroom; and Morris’s cool and humid room; to Walther’s playroom; and to the Pulsa group’s garden of light, sound, and heat.

Flavin, Bell, and Asher provided the viewer with their environments invoking phenomenological, psychological effect of dark space. Their involvement of dark space can be interpreted as extension of the minimalist aesthetic, in which Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology was the main theoretical framework, to dematerialized medium, that is, space. In the 1950s Harold Rosenberg developed his concept, “Action Painting” to emphasize the painter’s bodily involvement in making abstract expressionist painting in the 1950s, based on the phenomenological studies of Merleau-Ponty. After Merleau-Ponty’s book, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, was translated into English in 1962, significant interpretations of minimal art in the 1960s embraced his phenomenology to address the experience of artwork in terms of the bodily engagement and the durational

35 Licht, introductory essay to *Spaces*, np.
36 Ibid.
time. Although Licht did not directly mentioned Merleau-Ponty, she used the concept of the phenomenological experience as the main idea of the show, stressing the durational time in experiencing the work. Among the artists, Morris mentioned phenomenology in his writings about sculpture in the 1960s

Merleau-Ponty defines pure depth as depth without distance from here, which is related to dark space, a space of intimacy. He illustrates this space with the analogy of our experience of night. Darkness is not an object to be held from a distance, but rather a sort of unfathomable environment surrounding the subject. By this definition Merleau-Ponty implies that dark space is “perceived as a sort of density, a sort of materiality, a sort of tangibility—one in which I am enveloped and by which I am


\[\text{38 Licht, introductory essay to Spaces, np.}

\[\text{39 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 283. Merleau-Ponty explains the spatiality of darkness as follows: “Night is not an object before me; it envelops me and infiltrates through all my senses, stifling my recollections and almost destroying my personal identity... Night has no outlines; it is itself in contact with me and its unity is the mystical unity of the mana... it is pure depth without foreground or background, without surfaces and without any distance separating it from me.”}\]
immediately, and intimately touched." Eugene Minkowski also defines dark space in its positive value by taking its materiality, featuring it as “much more material, much more tangible, and even more penetrating,” not the absence of light or the impossibility of seeing. The dark spaces installed in the Spaces exhibition offered the same effects on the viewer. Merleau-Ponty and Minkowski extend their discussion on dark space from its perceptual nature to its emotional and psychological aspects by interpreting its pervasive, comingling value despite its loss of all distinction and by reflecting on the spatial experiences of patients suffering from schizophrenia, in which the spatial experience in dark space happens in clear space. In this exhibition, the psychological dimension of dark space was not the main interest. Only on the personal level of experiencing the given environmental pieces could the viewer encounter the psychological effects of dark space.

The six projects in this show, which was assumed to deal with the central concept of space, strictly speaking, actual space, were contextualized within the history of art by connecting them to previous artistic practices. In the exhibition catalogue, Licht


41 Eugene Minkowski, a French psychiatrist known for his incorporation of phenomenology into psychopathology and exploring the notion of “lived time,” contrasts dark space with light space: “this space will be a particular kind of space. Obviously, it will not be an analytic space. Contrary to light space, it will have no "besides" or distance, no surface or extension, properly speaking; but there will nonetheless be something spatial about it; it will have depth— not the depth which is added to length and height but a single and unique dimension which immediately asserts itself as depth.” Eugene Minkowski, Lived Time, trans. Nancy Metzel (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 405, quoted in Cataldi, Emotion, Depth, and Flesh, 48-49

42 Cataldi, Emotion, Depth, and Flesh, 50-53.
brought significant artistic practices from the early twentieth century and the late 1950s. She revived artworks that had been ignored by Greenbergian formalist modernism: Futurist Bocciono’s idea of a sculpture of environment; Dada artists’ environmental practices such as Kurt Schwitter’s *Merzbau* and Marcel Duchamp’s two Surrealist exhibitions; the Russian avant-garde artists’ use of the collage aesthetic; Lissitzky’s and Mondrian’s idea of space shaped by its enclosure or the space around us; the Environments and Happenings of Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, and others; and the tableaux of Kienholz and Segal. Licht connected minimal and postminimal practice with the legacy of the early twentieth-century avant-gardism.

The spatial relations in these practices had shifted from the distinction between the art object and its spatial context to involvement with architectural space. In relationship to a work of art, the viewer became involved in the work as the participant. Addressing such a shift in these artists’ practices, Licht suggested this tendency amounted to the “artistic qualification of space itself.” In short, *Spaces* was an exhibition to survey the artistic concept dominant in the mainstream of the time and simultaneously, to make a genealogy of recent spatial art. The six projects presented at MoMA were not to build enduring objects, but to build environmental situations that gave the viewer sensory experiences of space. This means that the *Spaces* show was aimed to quell criticisms that the museum failed to respond appropriately to new historical and artistic conditions.

This show also sought to expose the museum as a place free from the market, which privileged the object-oriented work. For this, the museum could no longer simply

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43 Licht, introductory essay to *Spaces*, np.
44 Ibid.
collect, conserve, store, curate, and exhibit objects of art. Instead, it must be a place for production and present the current trend of art. Licht said in her earliest exhibition description written in May 1969, “The works for this exhibition will be created especially, and dismantled afterwards. Here we can assume a role that belongs uniquely to the public institution and lies outside the domain of the art dealer.” The *Spaces* show can be evaluated as innovative, for it demonstrated efforts of a major museum to accept some direct responsibility. Especially, it was thought that ephemeral works installed *in situ* were suitable examples of defiance to the market system of art. This exhibition was also a trial to render MoMA as free from the commercial system by presenting temporary installation works.

However, for production cost and technical demands, this show still kept the connection to the established economic system that supported the Vietnam War, which was the critical agenda at that time. Electronic equipment for the show was donated by Major electronic and technology companies, such as General Electronic Company, for Flavin, Asher, Morris, and the Pulsa group. In addition, research institutions provided

45 Licht, Exhibition description, CUR Exh. #917b, MoMA Archive, NY.
46 List of Donors to *Spaces* exhibition, CUR, Exh. #917B, MoMA Archives, NY. Donors of *Spaces* exhibition are as follows: for Michael Asher Space, KLH Research & Development Corporation lent speakers, Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corporation donated soundproofing material and consultation services; for Dan Flavin Space, Curtis-Electro Lighting, Inc. donated Light fixtures and General Electronic Company, lamps; for Robert Morris Space, Duro-Test Light Corporation donated full spectrum vita-lites and consultation services; Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Norway spruce trees; Joseph T. Ryerson & Son, Inc., Cor-ten steel; The Manhattan Gardner, Ltd., horticultural services; Tomlinson Refrigeration & Supply Company, temperature and humidity control systems; for Pulsa Space, Agrippa-Ord corporation donated SPC-12 computer manufactured by General Automation; Ambac Industries, Inc., wanlass power conditioner; ASCOR, Berkey Technical Division of Berkey Photo Inc., giant strobe lights; Bauer Electronics, Inc., polyplanar speakers; Bogen Communications Division/Lear-Giegler, Inc., monaural amplifiers; Electro-Voice, Inc., sensitive microphones and special outdoor speakers;
technological advice to the artists. Battcock called it “the new type of collaboration between artist, on one hand, and research and industry, on the other.” ⁴⁷ He considered the major innovation of the show to be the use of technological material rather than the space concept. According to him, artists who produced works of art that expressed the industrial aesthetic, and also artists who used industrial materials and equipment to produce artworks, appeased the corporate conscience. Thus, industry was willing to support artists and art institutions to conceal their involvement in inhumane activities over the world. ⁴⁸

Spaces exemplified the institutionalized participation of industrial corporations in art making. ⁴⁹ Collaboration with industry is distinctive from appropriation of the industrial aesthetic, in that the former was implemented in a more functional way. For instance, performances presented in 9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering, a collaborative exhibition between artists and scientists in 1966, incorporated electronic devices into

Luminator Division of Gulton Industries, Inc. made infra-red heaters available; Radio Corporation of America donated transistors for the computer programmer’s working model of the Sculpture Garden; Sylvania Electric Products, Inc., strobe light bulbs; Whitney-Blake, Inc., wire; Clairex Corporation, photoresistors; for Spaces catalogue, The Celanese Corporation donated blue acetate for catalogue cover.

⁴⁷ Battcock, “The Politics of Space,” 42.
⁴⁸ Ibid., 42-43. Exhibitions and art projects in connection with industry and technology usually made use of corporate supports: for example, Software: Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art (1970) at the Jewish Museum, New York was sponsored by American Motors Corporation and the 1971 exhibition of Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1966-1971) was supported by important corporations. About discussion on Art and Technology Program at LACMA, see Pamela Lee, Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 9-10, 16-25.

⁴⁹ This was not the first full-scale participation of business world to an art exhibition. In most recent days, When Attitudes Become Form: Works – Processes – Concepts – Situations – Information was funded by Philip Morris Europe. For details, see Bruce Altshuler, The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 254-255.
their work to make special effects for performances: lights corresponding performers’ movement and electronic appliances to make noise. In the Spaces exhibition, each work hid behind walls industrial materials and equipment donated by the corporations. Although electronic equipment controlled these spaces, the viewer could not witness their operation. It was difficult to critique the electronic technology, its producers, and their relation to aesthetic or normal life without visible evidence.

One exception was the Pulsa group’s control room. Since this room with glass walls was built just outside the entrance to the museum cafeteria, anyone could see the electronic equipment, which exposed the way to control sound, light, and heat of the Pulsa’s garden. The visibility of the instruments was the crucial part of the Pulsa’s practices. The Pulsa knew the deceptive effects of invisible technology: “It’s important to understand the tool, so that it can’t be used to manipulate them. Society has got to be aware of all aspects of its tools.”50 The Pulsa also acknowledged “the aesthetic experience is not dependent on the computer even though that’s part of the system, and the total experience.”51 In other words, the aesthetic experience can be detached from its technological support and always accepted as autonomous and pure. Pulsa’s transparent control booth was a device disillusioning the belief that artistic experience is purely aesthetic. Other works in this show were elusive in that they hid their technical support and appeared as if space itself offered perceptual stimuli.

Spaces helped MoMA assimilate new art presented as “a set of conditions.”

Rooms in the show were conceived as actual space that involved the viewer’s body.

This space is not discursive, but sensate. New York Times critic, Kramer described, the Spaces show “simply situates itself at the very cent of that large moral and esthetic void where most of our “advanced” art nowadays exists.” With this definition, he implied that this show divorced from the sophisticated taste of the old culture and the aesthetic concerns of the modernist art. Conversely, this statement verified the possible presence of art that occupied actual space and time without any aesthetic intention. The new art addressed the problem of perceptions, either visual or non-visual, and psychological effects.

At the end of his review, Battcock raised a question, “What is the museum doing about its involvement with art,” presupposing that art is expected to involved itself with “the irrational mechanism of the spiritual.” He alluded to the difficulty of the museum in making and presenting art in an irrational way. The Spaces exhibition surveys the contemporary obsession with space and perception, and arranges those works in the art historic context. The concept of space was defined according to the artistic frame, or the exhibition context the museum offered. As Licht explained in the catalogue, the concept of “actual space” had its root in the early twentieth-century avant-garde practices, which pursued a synthetic idea of art. Sculptor, James Turrell knew the nature of this frame offered by the museum. He rejected the invitation to this show,

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52 Kramer, “Participatory Esthetics."

53 Ibid. Kramer puts this naive quality of Spaces as “a facile synthesis of theater, architecture and technology with none of the responsibilities – esthetic, moral or functional – which these separate disciplines exact from both their artists and their audiences.” Here he regrets the decline of the modernist art.

54 Licht, Spaces, np.
because “he does not want to allow his work to be involved in the ‘system’.” 55 Licht viewed Turrell’s position as resistance against the marketing and promotional system. It seemed a setback to her that “He will never sell a piece or participate in any exhibition.” 56 This reveals an aspect of the museum exhibition that, in addition to the artistic norms and the art historical context, the art market was another frame the museum invokes.

**Information: Communicating Changes**

The artists’ protest was the moment MoMA was transformed from a mausoleum of death into a battlefield for life. The performance occurred a week before the meeting of AWC, unaffiliated artists, and MoMA staff on November 25, 1969 to discuss demands that AWC had submitted, focusing on four points: 1) “Artists’ participation in Museum planning, 2) Admission policies, 3) Community projects, and 4) the Museum exhibition and collection program.” 57 MoMA was a kind of text from which artists could read the present situation of the art establishment and formalize a plan for the future artist community. As Lil Picard wrote in 1970, AWC and its affiliated artist groups were much more interested in cultural, socio-political interests than in discussing aesthetic problems or artistic styles. Devoted to improving structural conditions of the art establishment, they sought free admission to MoMA on Mondays; distribution of the “… and Babies” poster at the Song My massacre demonstration at MoMA; and financial aid for Community Cultural Centers in eight Black and Spanish-speaking, poor sectors of

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55 Licht, Informal progress report, CUR, Exh.#917b, MoMA Archive, NY.
56 Ibid.
57 Letter, MoMA to Joan Snyder, painter, member of Art Workers’ Coalition, November 12, 1969, Lucy Lippard papers, Box 7, MoMA folder 4, AAA.
greater New York. In this sense the meeting on November 25 was a new direction for the Artists’ Protest against MoMA, in which artists shifted their central line from fighting to negotiation. But Boris Lurie evaluated this meeting as the moment MoMA successfully incorporated the artists into the process of cultural manipulation, bringing to ends both guerilla art actions and MoMA as symbol of the art establishment. He said the artists would lose initiative as a power pressure group against the art establishment.

From this the museum aims were as follows:

Although the present staff appears to be interested in making minor accommodations as regards the demands of the artists, the actual purpose of such accommodation is to uplift the tarnished “big corporation” image of the Museum; to keep up with changing times, it being fashionable now to be “liberal” or “leftist”; and to make the public forget the long history of culture manipulation. By making minor accommodations of an insignificant nature, by keeping the dialogue with artists' advisory committee going, the Museum staff is in fact succeeding in pacifying and potential conflict and pulling out the flames even before the fire has really started.

When Hightower was appointed director of MoMA, in early 1970, this “manipulation” was realized in actual exhibitions and programs, which were most closely related to individual artistic practices. For on the level of individual artists, as in the Takis case, the most urgent issues were that MoMA could not exhibit the artist’s up-to-date work; and that the artist had no right to decide whether his works collected by the museum would be exhibited in a specific show. The Information show, as previously

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59 Boris Lurie, “Collaboration or Non-collaboration?,” Lucy Lippard papers, Box 7, MoMA folder 4, AAA. This article was republished as “MoMA as Manipulator,” in *RAT*, New York, vol.2, no. 24, Dec. 25-Jan. 7, 1970. Available at http://text.no-art.info/en/lurie_moma.html. For Lurie, MoMA functioned in the manipulation and promotion of market-place art and furthermore, manipulation of art education, in all of which the museum staff played a role in providing advices for the trustees who would obtain benefits. In this sense the staffs were directly involved in culture-manipulation.
discussed, was an exhibition that attempted to present the contemporary art scene as comprehensively as possible. Although this exhibition began preparations at least three years before Hightower came to MoMA, there was clearly a connection between the artists’ claims for change and the new director’s support for new art, contributing to this innovative exhibition.\(^{60}\)

MoMA found itself by the end of 1970 caught in a number of controversies, triggered by two radical works: Hans Haacke’s *MoMA Poll* (Figure 2-7) and John Giorno’s *Dial-a-Poem* (Figure 2-8). The central arguments about the exhibition, *Information*, concerned the boundaries of art, the relation between art and politics, and the identity of this exhibition. The most immediate response to the exhibition was a suspicion from the board of trustees, regarding Haacke’s question presented with his poll boxes: “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?” Although director of MoMA, John B. Hightower distributed a pre-warning memorandum to the museum trustees a week before opening the exhibition, chair of the board of trustees, David Rockefeller was shocked and raised a question about Haacke’s provocative work. Against Hightower’s explanation on contemporary art and the *Information* exhibition, Rockefeller extended his question to “how many of these works can be considered art,” deploring the fact that “few of the items in the show actually integrate art and

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\(^{60}\) John B. Hightower, “11 West 53 Street: from the Director,” *The Museum of Modern Art Members Newsletter*, November, 1970 Hightower emphasized acceptance of new art as a museum of modern art, “We will continue to try to encourage awareness of human expression through art, whether that expression is pleasing or painful. As a museum of modern art, and particularly as a modern museum, we have no other choice.”
technology” and that the future of the museum seems discouraging.\textsuperscript{61} At the end of the exhibition, the museum again plunged into turmoil because of an article in \textit{Time} magazine. The article introduced Girono’s \textit{Dial-a-Poem}, with a heading, “Dial-a-Radical,” as “more than 600 predominantly revolutionary, tape-recorded messages.”\textsuperscript{62} The article used an example so radical and violent that this work and the exhibition appeared to be filled with destructive intent.\textsuperscript{63} Disapproval of these two works demonstrates how much noise can result from the incompatible combination of artistic practice and its venue. The curator’s expectations aside, this hampered communication between artwork and the viewer, and the subjects involve in the show suffered from bad publicity.

McShine, organizer of this exhibition, sought to present changes in the artist community and culture caused by the development of a worldwide communication system without formalist concern about styles. His ambition expanded into covering every artistic activity broadening the constitution of art and challenging the preconceptions. He noted that much more interested in ideas and their effective exchange, artists experimented with the potential of mass media as an art medium. He wrote,

\begin{quote}
Information has purposely been made broad and informal. It is an introduction to work from which many of the aesthetic concerns of the seventies will probably emerge. There has been no attempt to strictly
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{63} For a response of a museum member, see Letter, A museum member, George B. Kendall, September 11, 1970, JBH, I.3.26. MoMA Archives, NY.
impose a definition of an aesthetic, nor to present a complete historical survey. The assembling of works by so many artists will allow various evaluations, interpretations, and considerations, but it is only a beginning.64

As a result, *Information* turned out as an exhibition encompassing contemporary artistic practices from installations, to earthworks, to conceptual art including politically-engaged works.

This exhibition was a message affected by a high level of uncertainty and disorder in that its extreme inclusiveness distracted from the consistency of the exhibition and detracted from the unity of diverse works. Proliferation of information interfered with communication throughout the exhibition, which McShine wanted to be “an international report of the activity of younger artists” and avoided narrowing down to “the strongest ‘style’ or international movement of the last three years.”65 Exhibition reviews published in newspapers equally pointed out this multiplicity, although their interests were placed on different points. This entropic condition was obvious in the way the works of art exhibited were classified. In a press release, McShine put the works into seven categories: works realized through 1) active participation; 2) documentation; 3) the intellectual climate of the time; 4) use of the mail, telegram, and telex machines; 5) more tangible, but still provocative objects; 6) films; and 7) contributions to the catalogue.66 By contrast, John Perreault, *Village Voice* critic, put the works into four

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65 Ibid.
categories: 1) displayed in the visual juke-box; 2) installed in the museum; 3) presented on the catalogue; 4) and placed at various spots through the city.  

This exhibition results in a rambling statement about current art because these classifications are temporary divisions of exhibited items without taxonomic virtue. An overflow of information on a subject means, ironically, the lack of knowledge about it. Apart from retrospective exhibitions, this exhibition deals with ongoing art not yet assessed and processed as knowledge. Then, how do the exhibited works communicate with the viewer, or how were they organized within a narrative? How do uncertainty and entropy in the exhibition function? What do they imply in terms of the art institution?

Generally, sociopolitical engagement, communication technology, and conceptual dimension were discussed as the main points regarding the Information exhibition. Perrault, Village Voice critic, related “a conceptual and consequently verbal mode” of art to the sociological and political situations at that time, 68 while Kramer, New York Times critic, ascribed the end of aesthetic and individual in the current art to technology, especially electronic and computer technology; political criteria imposed on a work of art; and the central paradoxes of modern art itself, or the liquidation of the work of art. 69 Many art historians have also defined this show as a major museum’s survey of conceptual art or its response to political art and artists’ protests. Bryan-Wilson points out that the exhibition was highly political in two respects. First, it included

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68 Perreault, “Information.”
69 Kramer, “Participatory Esthetics.”
works mentioning the Vietnam War. These works made it plausible that “the exhibition was a compendium of timely, political ‘documents’ rather than artworks.”

Second, museum authorities thought it a means to appease the Art Workers’ Coalition, which protested the conservative attitudes of the museum and rallied for more initiative of artists on their own works. Bryan-Wilson evaluates Information as “repressive tolerance” by the established art institution, borrowing the term from Herbert Marcuse.

But what has eluded art critics and art historians is how to interpret the look of uncertainty and randomness, characteristics of art in the 1970s, increased by the indiscriminate inclusion of recent artistic practices.

McShine intended to organize an exhibition as a report concerning current international art. Ultimately, what kind of knowledge did the whole exhibition formulate? Because of ambition to being comprehensive of current works, there was no obvious coherent narrative in this exhibition. Artworks in Information were not merely objects to be seen; they were statements about the institution of art, the cultural system, or the sociopolitical structure. Then, it is possible to understand the exhibition as a field of discourses to formulate a series of perspective on given subjects. The discursive formation is “a space of multiple dissensions,” where contradiction drives discourse to keep being transformed and filled with discontinuity.

70 Bryan-Wilson, Art Workers, 190.
71 Ibid., 192.
72 Ibid.
73 Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 155. In Introduction Foucault specifies the significance of discontinuity, or interruption in knowledge, especially, the historical knowledge and its transformation into the condition of archaeology. What he attempts in this book is to uncover what the notion of
Based on the physical aspects of works exhibited, it can be said that this exhibition consisted of spatial and participatory installations, participatory performances, conceptual and documental wall pieces, films and video tapes, and contributions to the catalogue. In his essay in the catalogue, McShine defined art as exchange of ideas, including almost every artistic practice during the late 1960s. This loose definition was a gesture, either consciously or unconsciously, to mingle the institutionalized art of the Sixties with current political and performative practices. Most remarkable at this exhibition were participatory works, for example, Haacke’s MoMA Poll, Giorno’s Dial-a-Poem, and Group Frontera’s tape recording booth and six-screen TV set. All of them assumed participation of the viewer in cultural or socio-political situations. Helio Oiticica’s barrack-like installation and Stig Broegger’s wooden platforms physically interfered and involved the viewer’s body. These works contrasted with conceptual and linguistic works, in that they directly provided actual situations, while the latter involved documentation of absent projects and verbal presentation of the artistic idea in the artist’s mind.

Mel Bochner’s Measurement Series: By Formula (Circle), a black chalk circle drawn on a wall, conveyed a critical analysis of the museum space (Figure 2-9). Elements of this work were simply a circle and its various measurements; he wrote down within the circle its diameter (14 feet), radius, area, and circumference according to the 14-foot-high gallery wall. This work concerned the gallery space as the spatial and epistemological venue of a work of art. It was assumed that the dimensions of the discontinuity in the field of historical knowledge transforms and causes. Furthermore, he tries to elucidate the relationship among knowledge, science, and ideology through the four distinctive phases that discursive formation would pass through.
gallery itself were an *a priori* condition for producing and perceiving a work of art. As James Meyer notes, Bochner’s *Measurement* series are an attempt to heighten the spectator’s awareness of the gallery site, tinged with minimalist features: “the thematization of artistic process, art as epistemological inquiry, the foregrounding of the work’s situation or context.” 74

But unlike the minimalists, Bochner focuses on “a conceptual critique of the art institution,” departing from “the phenomenological conditions of the gallery.” 75 His Measurement series is a threshold to the institutional critique, proceeding to the serious critique of specular and ideological conditions of a gallery space. Despite its conceptual aspects, this work still had the potential to be phenomenological because it led, as Robert Pincus-Witten argues, the viewer to the conceptual activity involving actions of perception and the body, rather than practice of reading and the mind. 76

In fact, his black circle drawn on the gallery wall defines the space both physically and conceptually. An installation photo taken from the opposite side shows how this wall piece visually and physically dominates the space (Figure 2-10). The black circle looks tense, placed in an interval between four converging partitions because it


75 Ibid.

76 Robert Pincus-Witten, “Bochner at MoMA: Three Ideas and Seven Procedures,” in *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1977), 91. According to Pincus-Witten, Bochner extends his activity into the action of perception and the body based on information as established or objective data, deriving his position from the reductivist tradition, not working out from his own body. As a result, “his activities appear epistemological in their effect.” Nonetheless, Pincus-Witten emphasizes, his work “produce situations which are actively at work upon the body and perceptions of the viewer.”
touches horizontally the ceiling and the floor, and vertically the opposite sides of two partitions. The circle’s tight volume makes the viewer aware of his/her body. In short, this work is something between image and word, retinal and cerebral, phenomenological and conceptual, perception and critique. The contradictory combination of conceptual and phenomenal aspects obtains a regularity of the exhibition by mixing spatial and conceptual works into an international report on recent activity of young artists.

*Measurement Series: By Formula (Circle)*, revealed two dimensions of conceptual works, or imaginary and symbolic. This work projected physicality in description and image, blurring the boundaries between imagery and linguistic, physical and mental. The gesture of measuring was at the same time procedural art practice and conceptual practice, delimiting an exhibition venue for the material presence of artwork. The result was depicted in two different orders: a circle that belongs to the system of material imagination versus formulas and dimensions that operate in a linguistic and social system. The circle represents “any installation-situation” while the ratio of circumference to diameter and the formula for finding the area of a circle is fixed as a geometric law. The circle as a shape is what the viewer encounters without any mediatatory object, on the basis of dual relationship between subject and object, while its dimensions as the result of measuring evokes the communicational situation mediated by language.

Thus, this work combined the two realms, image/imagination and language/description. The linguistic elements such as letters and numbers create the invisible realm of the signified, the level unspoken by the signifier. Bochner posits
reciprocal relations between imagination and description. He premises the inevitable connection between seeing and imagining. Thus, he defines imagination as “a projection, the exteriorizing of ideas about the nature of things seen,” relating it to re-presentation. For Bochner, re-presentation means “the shift in referential frames of the viewer from the space of events to the space of statements or vice versa.” As “the realm of ideas is the operative link preceding any of the forms of objectness,” art using language inherently bears the material level.

In most works composed of image and text, whatever their purposes—to document absent works, to make self-generating procedures to make art, or to critique sociopolitical situations of the realities—language, in general, plays the role of conveying conceptual stimuli, rather than evoking physical sensations. Joseph Kosuth’s three chairs showed the linguistic dimensions of art by presenting a real chair, definition of chair, and image of a chair. Sol LeWitt’s wall drawing demonstrated how the artist produces art work with language by replacing construction with instruction. Bochner conjoins linguistic conceptualism, dematerialized procedural conceptualism, and the negation of aesthetic contents into the measuring, calculating, and writing process.80

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 193.
80 Alexander Alberro, “Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977,” in Alberro and Stimson, Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology, xvi-xvii. Based on Lucy Lippard’s insightful writings on conceptual art, Alberro classifies conceptual artistic practices in the 1960s into four trajectories: the self-reflexivity of modernist painting and sculpture, reductivism that can be featured as a complete dematerialization of artwork, the negation of aesthetic content from the legacy of Marcel Duchamp, and problematization.
Dealing with phenomenological condition of the gallery by means of image and language, his *Measurement Series: By Formula (Circle)* was on the border of institutional critique. Haacke went beyond the threshold to analyze political networks surrounding the art institution. Acconci experimented with the boundaries between personal space and public space by transforming the museum into his personal mailbox. In terms of phenomenology of the exhibition space, Oiticica’s “nest” and Broegger’s wooden platforms shared affinities with Bochner’s, in that they addressed relationships between artworks and the viewer’s body and they experimented with the nature of the gallery space. Thus, works in this show seemed to form a kind of hypertext on contemporary art. The *Information* show, aiming to conduct an almost comprehensive survey of recent artistic practices, bestowed on each work the potential to be interpreted and connected in various ways, according to the net of a specific discourse.

Broegger’s *Placing Platforms*, which physically resembled skids, was inserted into the museum space (Figure 2-11). For *Information*, eight wooden platforms were placed in various locations around the museum and the city, immediately before and during the exhibition, without permission from authorities. Locations were selected according to social differences, and platforms were distributed by an ordinary truck company. The artist observed some of the platforms and photographed how the public reacted to and used them. This photographic documentation then was exhibited. In the gallery, a platform was installed in front of the wall on which the photographs were hung. It obstructed the viewer from approaching the wall to see the photos closely. The
platform presented itself as the crucial part of the work. Leaning toward the wall, the viewer may have realized that the museum had controlled his/her body with both exhibition conditions and invisible conventions. In this sense, the platform can be seen as a manifestation of the controlling power of the museum.

When it was placed around the city, it became something between utilitarian object and art object. It sometimes functioned as a platform on which to stand on, or sit, but sometimes it was ignored or obstructed pedestrian paths. Depending on the situation, the objects either become integrated or interrupt the surrounding environment. This ambiguity asks one about the use-value of an art object, which has been criticized for its status as a commodity. Broegger’s platform, as an art object, fuses minimalist aesthetic with conceptual art and public art by its utilitarian appearance, public location, and intervention in the situation. It also modifies the expected use-value of a work of art. The concept of value in capitalism is a value that cannot be obtained if the thing is not useful to satisfy needs, because capitalism measures value as exchange-value based on the availability of exchange for a use-value.\(^8\) Use-value of a work of art is to meet aesthetic need, or taste, rather than practical human needs. In the market, a work of art has a use-value as aesthetic commodity to exchange without expectation of practical usage. If a work of art loses its aesthetic quality, it exists as a commodity only with exchange-value in the market. Broegger’s platform implies the possibility of a new use-value of artwork without being employed in the system of exchange-value. By removing aesthetic look, it gains other use-value as artwork in an exhibition. The new use-value

as artwork is creating a moment of awareness and involving mutual communication among artist, artwork, and viewer.

In this sense, Oiticica’s *Barracao Experiment 2* seemed to go farther (Figure 2-12). Its utilitarian value appealed to direct and active bodily participation from visitors. This piece was burlap-draped two-by-fours, which invited visitors to climb to rest in cubicles equipped with pillows and foam mattresses: it was a resting place within the exhibition space. As Oiticica put it, “You can say it is a ‘leisure proposition’ using different sorts of materials which are not important as such … but in the way they can be used during the exhibition.”⁸² The artist posited this work within the much broader context of alternative functions of art, as part of life. What was important for Oiticica was the problem of spectator participation, which would transform the individual works to the collective ones. It became equally important for an artist to communicate something fundamental for the public at large, not for experts.⁸³ In this concern, Oiticica’s work had the potential to expand its meanings into the levels of a real life and social conditions. Although it was within the museum space that *Barracao Experiment 2* generated the bodily participation, the artist believed that it led to “open-behavior,” “life acts.” The act of lying down, as a form of accidental leisure, can raise internal questions, specific

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⁸² The artist’s statement on *Information* checklist, REG., #934. MoMA Archives, NY.
⁸³ In his manifesto of new art, “General Scheme of the New Objectivity,” published in 1967, Oiticica sketches principal characteristics of current Brazilian avant-garde art. What is worthy to note among them are “the participation of the spectator (bodily, tactile, visual, semantic, etc),” “an engagement and a position on political, social and ethical problems,” and “a tendency towards collective propositions and consequently the abolition, in the art of today, of “isms. See Helio Oiticica, “General Scheme of the New Objectivity,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 41-43.
situations, and behavior for a much wider aim of “the total communal cell activity.” According to Oiticica, art will propose a development of life-acts unless the ideas of environment, participation, and sensorial experiment are limited to objectified solutions. He transforms the museum space into a field of new forms of communication that can propose a new unconditioned behavior.

Thus, Barracao Experiment 2 presented the desire of an artist to provide a utopian vision of art. Oiticica suggested that art become “leisure-form propositions” and “exist as a plan for a practice.” He described this suggestion,

They [these leisure-form propositions] are universal (wholly experimental) and this matters a lot concerning Brazilian activity (the country where all free wills seem to be repressed or castrated by one of the most brainwashed societies of all time): they can be exported and act intensely with different forces in Brazil and other places: they can be given: they do not exist as an isolated object: they exist as a plan for a practice: it is what I call-propose as SUBTERRANIA: an open plan that can be expanded, grow.

He called this plan Subterraria, an open plan that can be expanded and grow. This Subterraria is a subterranean moment to form a community on the basis of a new communication network. Given that Antonio Gramsci’s thought diffused internationally from the 1960s onward, after it was popularly received in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, Oiticica’s concept of Subterraria resonates powerfully with Gramsci’s belief in counter-hegemony in the realm of civil society. That enabled the artist to dream art as praxis to construct a new community. At that time, skeptical attitude to modern conviction of the

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85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 103.
Enlightenment task, the left in the U.S. also found its new perspective in the theory of power and domination, and deconstruction theory, which focused on analyzing the realms of language and communication.\textsuperscript{88} Barracao Experiment 2 offered the moment of awareness by the bodily experience that occurred in an unexpected situation.

Artists’ desire to create critical communication conditions was expressed in their experiment on communication equipment and their critique of communicational culture. \textit{Dial-A-Poem} provided by Giorno Poetry Systems was a demonstration of the telephone system as a new way of communicating poetry, as well as a showcase of politically radical poetry. John Giorno, the founder of Giorno Poetry Systems, was more interested in the telephone itself as a poetry medium than the poetry content. Giorno said, on the statement attached to the LP issued in 1972, \textit{The Dial-A-Poem Poets}, “In the middle of the Dial-A-Poem experience was the giant self-consuming media machine choosing you as some of its food, which also lets you get your hands on the controls because you’ve made a new system of communicating poetry. The newspaper, magazine, TV and radio

\textsuperscript{88} John Patrick Diggins, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the American Left} (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 218-383. In the 1960s the rediscovery of Marxism enabled the New Left to arise. The leading thinkers of the era such as C. Wright Mills, William Williams, Michael Harrington, Herbert Marcuse, and Daniel Bell, in particular, inspired many movements and cultural experiments in the Sixties. But after Nixon was elected as President and opposition to the Vietnam War was too universalized by 1970, they were skeptical to the mechanization of the Enlightenment and the belief in the autonomous subject. Instead, they “shared the critical theorists’ conviction that all aspects of modern life – the family, education, popular entertainment, the media – must be probed to uncover the hidden mode of power and control.” The influence of Antonio Gramsci, Adorno and Horkheimer, Foucault, and Jacques Derrida demonstrated “the shift from economics to epistemology, from the structure of organization and distribution to the superstructure of representation and communication.” Power and hegemony based on discourses, or language became important.
coverage had the effect of making everyone want to call the Dial-A-Poem."\(^{89}\) His idea of using the telephone as a new poetry medium was reasonable in light of the then-current study on media by Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan understood the telephone as the extension of ear and voice. Unlike phonetic literacy, the telephone is a medium demanding complete participation on the side of receivers, because it gives a meager amount of information to the ear. At the social level, the telephone collapses the hierarchical structure of communication by its demand for deep participation, which introduces a seamless web of plural centers. McLuhan, thus, said dialogue was possible only among centers and among equals.\(^ {90}\) The same notion of communication was experimented in the *Dial-A-Poem* project. Callers participated in the artist-audience relationship as the active counterpart of the poets, initiating the connection and concentrating on phonetic signs.

Giorno had an ambivalent relationship with the telephone. On the one hand the phone seemed to him a kind of automaton that often possessed potential callers. On the other hand, the phone lost its own nature by allowing the existence of its controller, the caller. Believing in its controller’s mastery, however, must have been a fantasy, he and his contemporaries indulged regarding the electric media technology that rapidly developed during the post-war period. This optimistic vision of media paralleled the social movement, which sometimes exceeded the limit of social tolerance. The *Information* show demonstrated a dispute caused by the mass media intervening in the

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communication process at the communal level. Actually, because of unexpected publicity in *Time* magazine *Dial-A-Poem* was interpreted as a radical political gesture that seemingly intended to subvert the establishment. The first stanza of *Revolutionary Letter No.7* by Diana De Prima frustrated readers, especially museum trustees and members, because it suggested callers find someone who could tell them how to make a Molotov cocktail, the bomb of revolutions.91 Its distorted title, “Dial-A-Radical” and an enclosed photo of a dead cop with a telephone receiver in his hand strengthened the suspicion of a destructive program inappropriately supported by the museum. Moreover, the museum was not supposed to be a place open to artistic practices that directly revealed a radical transgression or desire. In other words, the museum could not be an *evental site, “an entirely abnormal multiple,”*92 from which arises an event. But *Dial-A-Poem* brought to the *Information* show and the museum something abnormal, which would conflict the identity of the institution.

In contrast, Group Frontera, which consisted of four artists from Argentina, more objectively approached “the role of mass media in the identification of a society’s culture.”93 It constructed a small scale of the television broadcasting system within the museum (Figure 2-13). This installation consisted of a set of six TV monitors and one recording room, where the visitor participated in producing an interview situation. After

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91 What is run on the magazine reads, “There are those who can tell you how to make Molotov cocktails, flamethrowers, bombs, whatever might be needing. Find them and learn…” In the original poem this first stanza finishes as follows: “…define your aim clearly, choose your ammo with that in mind.” See “Dial-a-Radical,” *Time*, September 14, 1970, 12.


93 Group Frontera, Artist Statement in *Information* checklist, REG., #934. MoMA Archives, NY.
recording his/her interview in the recording booth, the visitor could watch the playback of the tape on the TV monitors outside the booth. The artists had an optimistic view of mass media: “the mass media—press, radio, and television, above all—are the ‘connection’ between the intellectual society and the masses.” 94 For the artists, TV was “a technical system that distributes cultural items: decidedly (new) informations.” 95 Mass communication systems can change the notion of creation: all individuals are creators, and the mass media incorporates what they create, which is a micro-medium, into the cultural framework. 96 This view of mass media was as utopian as the view of Oiticica, another South American artist in this show, on bodily participation in a spatial work of art.

This utopian attitude stemmed from South America particularity, because of its experiences of political repression and revolution, and the direct connection between conceptual art and political activism. South American artists trusted all cultural systems for their radical practices because it seemed obvious to them that the situation was ripe for revolution, in which art and life would mingle. Thus, the museum could be a site for politically and artistically radical practices.

From a different perspective, Haacke argued that museums and comparable art institutions were political institutions under the power of their supporters. To address what elevates a product into a work of art, one should investigate the economic and

94 McShine, Information, 47.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 47-48.
political foundations shared because every artist works within that frame.\textsuperscript{97} In this sense, \textit{MoMA Poll} debunked political foundations of the museum in the disguise of an objective survey of the political attitude of museum visitors. Visually, two poll boxes displayed the responses of the visitors; the questionnaire alluded to the political networks surrounding the museum. With the confusion of subjective claim and objective survey, Haacke revealed the Rockefeller family and its liaison with government as the covert power influencing museum operation. Exposing this connection by mentioning the government’s policy on Indochina resonated with other political content of this show and with a series of anti-war practices at that time. The act of voting had political and racial significance because of the civil rights movements of the previous decades. In particular, the photograph showing the anti-Vietnam War rally at the Washington Monument in 1969, inside the catalogue cover, implied that political art was a significant part of this exhibition.

This exhibition dealt with what is beyond the formal realm of art and beyond what had happened. \textit{MoMA Poll} verified what Battcock pointed out: this exhibition was a “new” exhibition organized by a “new” curator.\textsuperscript{98} This exhibition was “new” in that it was not retrospective, but rather contemporaneous critic; more concerned with communication than with art. Mcshine included diverse aspects of conceptual art, artworks dealing with communication technologies, and artistic activism. Although his

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Hans Haacke, “All the ‘Art’ that’s Fit to Show,” in Alberro and Stimson, \textit{Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology}, 302-304. This article was initially published as an untitled catalogue statement in \textit{Art into Society, Society into Art} (London: Institution of Contemporary Arts, 1974).
\item Battcock pointed out the limitation of \textit{Information}: “The art works have to be made specifically for the Museum of Modern Art, and that’s what’s wrong. They should have been made against it.” See Gregory Battcock, “Informative Exhibition: at the Museum of Modern Art,” \textit{Arts Magazine} 44 (Summer 1970): 24.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
purpose, various intents of artists, and different artworks were revealed as a kind of chaos, this exhibition has been accepted as the beginning of the major museum’s effort to institutionalize contemporary art.

Thus, it can be said that McShine inverted Haacke’s proposition that every artist works with a frame, into a hypothesis that the frame is imposed upon every artist. Battcock penetrated the significance of this exhibition in his review. Admitting that this exhibition directly questioned the existing museum exhibition process, he said, “The show itself is not as effective as it should be because it accepts certain other values that should also be questioned.” He regretted that the Information show failed to critique the frame of reference, particularly the museum; arguing that the artists should have performed their artistic practices with more absurdity, defying the common-sense criteria. Battcock said, “Perhaps it would have been preferable if McShine had entitled his show ‘Misinformation’ not because that’s what it is but because that's what it should be.” Considering that the frame of reference meant all kinds of settings that provided artworks with meanings, Battcock wished that the artists and the curator critiqued the institution of art and the prevailing information concepts, based on negative gesture, rather than objective criticism. It seemed to him that the exhibition still followed the prevailing information concepts and posed a positive action. For him, the artists did not proceed to negative action of absurdity, but stayed irrational only to the extent allowed by the traditional logic.

Then, what kind of frame prevented the negative and absurdity from playing in the individual works and the whole exhibition? This can be deduced from Battcock’s

99 Ibid., 26.
100 Ibid., 25-26.
denomination of a “new” exhibition and a “new” curator. Compared to the “old”
exhibition, the “new” exhibition is distinct because it is an exercise in contemporaneous
art criticism, rather than an exercise in retrospective art history. In other words, in the
“new” exhibition, the artist speaks his/her desire to the art world; while in the “old”
exhibition, the curator arranges works of art according to the cannon of art history, one
of whose reifications is the museum. What is produced from the “new” exhibition is new
knowledge of art and art history. Here, the artist appears free and autonomous from the
frame of the art world. But what underlies the artist’s practice within the exhibition is the
object of desire, which is indirectly connected to the curator’s knowledge accumulated
through the repetitive practice of the museum, and produced as a result of the exhibition.
Although the artist is an agent driven by his object of desire in the exhibition situation,
the curator, either consciously or unconsciously, contains that desire by means of the
frame of reference, or the exhibition itself. This connection led artists to avoid absurdity,
so defiance against the museum was not completely fulfilled. The museum, as the
frame of reference, institutionalized radical art practices by reducing and weakening
absurdity in artworks.

In other words, absurdity was avoided because it was related to the desires of
artists ready to transgress the laws of the art world and society. When Battcock
critiqued the Information show for being insufficiently absurd, he used the term,
absurdity, to indicate that truth was not revealed, but that it could be revealed through a
radical defiance of existing order. He quoted a phrase from Herbert Marcuse to
emphasize the revolutionary function of the irrational, “The struggle against common
sense is the beginning of speculative thinking, and the loss of everyday security is the
beginning of philosophy.”\textsuperscript{101} Through the history of art, as Peter Bürger notes in his 1974 book, \textit{Theory of the Avant-Garde}, this kind of transgression began when artists saw art as an institution and the historical avant-garde criticized art itself. Historical avant-gardists expected that ultimately the art would become a basis for organizing new life praxis. But this plan was hard to be fulfilled because the museum accepted even this protest against art as art; and because the cultural industry incorporates art and life.\textsuperscript{102} In this circumstance, what the artists did was interpreting the situation rather than creating a new situation. Mostly constituting the \textit{Information} exhibition, works in text and photograph included analyses of artistic conditions in both linguistic and structural terms. Within this major museum, these works abdicated their power to defy the institution of art, for their critique transformed into a artistic means to please viewers and the institution. Viewers, realizing artwork could be experienced through reading and participating instead of viewing, were sometimes elated when they succeeded in understanding the works. The museum could also display its tolerance for radical, even destructive art practices.\textsuperscript{103} Providing the sphere for interpreting the situations, the museum could widely accept current art, and consequently, nullify artistic attempts to

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 26. For the whole text quoted, see Herbert Marcuse, \textit{Reason and Revolution} (London: Routledge, 2000).


\textsuperscript{103} Kirsi Peltomäki, “Affect and Spectatorial Agency: Viewing Institutional Critique in the 1970s,” \textit{Art Journal} 66, no.4 (Winter 2007): 50-51. In this essay Peltomäki argues that institutional critique in the 1970s focused on spectatorship and attempted to frustrate viewers by inducing diverse affective responses, which were mainly abnormal emotions such as aggression, irritation, embarrassment, and displeasure, with unexpected settings or messages. But these practices placed the viewer between the artwork and the institution. As the result, the individual viewer was bound to the collective viewership and the art institution.
transgress the margins. In the end, artists wanting to transgress had to produce their own sites where new situations for new events could be prepared.

**Projects: Institutional Condition of MoMA**

From 1969 to 1970, two significant events urged the change of institutional conditions of late-twentieth-century art in the United States. They were “Artists Protest against Museum of Modern Art” led by the Art Workers Coalition in 1969 and “New York Artists’ Strike against Racism, Sexism, Repression and War” in 1970. MoMA, considered the symbol of the museum system, was their main target. On January 3, 1969, an outrageous sculptor, Takis, removed his work from the “Machine Show” to place it at the Museum Garden, because he thought this work did not represent his current artistic stage. The Museum rejected his request to communicate, and it caused the organization of AWC and their protest against MoMA. Thirteen demands by AWC were released to MoMA on January 28, 1969, including broader concerns about the museum’s relationship to society and community as well as to artists. But MoMA director, Bates Lowry responded tepidly, reiterating a plan to form a special committee and providing scant information about the museum policies and programs in Q&A form during February and March.¹⁰⁴

The open hearing held on April 10 at the School of Visual Arts discussed the agenda of AWC, especially regarding reform of the museum. Kramer, who attended the

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¹⁰⁴ Art Workers’ Coalition, *Documents 1*, accessed July 11, 2011, [http://primaryinformation.org/files/FDoc.pdf](http://primaryinformation.org/files/FDoc.pdf). AWC urged Bates Lowry to make a concrete reply to their demands through letters, a press release, and artists’ statements. Selectively summarizing, on February 22 a letter asking for a public hearing was sent; on March 10 a letter to request his reply was sent; on March 14, a press release was circulated; on March 24, Howard Wise sent a letter to Elizabeth Shaw, director of Public Information for MoMA.
open hearing, understood this discussion as dealing with “the issue of the artist’s moral and economic status vis-à-vis the institutions.” But it seemed to him “the issue obviously went beyond the museum and its polities,” denouncing the entire social system.\(^\text{105}\) As he described the function of the museum,

Museums, too, have tended—correctly, I think—to be wary of political involvement. Though many museums now conduct a variety of community programs—designed for the most part, to bring art more directly into the lives of those who have heretofore had little acquaintance with it—they regard these programs as ancillary to their principal function, which is to act as a disinterested custodian of the artistic achievements of both the near and the distant past.\(^\text{106}\)

The museum’s primary function was to accommodate the past artistic achievement. For him, radical artistic practice was being conducted within the establishment itself like the recent collaboration between major artists and leading industry.\(^\text{107}\) Because he understood “radical” as apolitical only within the establishment itself, he underestimated the impact of AWC artists’ protest on MoMA. New director of MoMA, John B. Hightower tried to incorporate the radical and the new into part of the museum activities by initiating the *Projects* series. The result was the neutralizing of the radical, and renovation of the museum’s nominal identity.

Even prior to these events, artists like Robert Smithson in 1967, already began describing museums as tombs, filled with dead works of art that had become history, which caused the ambience of silence and inertia, as if one went from void to void. This


\(^{106}\) Ibid.

\(^{107}\) Ibid. Kramer defined the new role of the museum as "a kind of broker between the artist and the industrial establishment," taking as an example the the Art and Technology project at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
meant the museum was a space that nullifies actions and where “utility and art don’t mix.” The museum’s traditional function and its phenomenological aspects were the issues here. Around the time of the artists’ protests, the stagnating condition of the museum-gallery system caused inactiveness of the museum. This old system made MoMA hesitant to be open to emerging artists and minority artists, radical artworks, and whole classes of viewers even as they organized exhibitions like Spaces and Information that seemingly offered domains in which various new practices and critical interventions could be showcased.

Rethinking the role of MoMA, Hightower suggested its new directions: “it devoted itself to art that was neither established nor, necessarily, recognized. It took risks no museum had taken before. Its perceptions were immediate rather than reflective.” In addition, he stressed “the intensively human concerns of the seventies,” “approach to modern education from the standpoint of the viewer rather than the object,” and consideration of everything that shapes our surroundings as well as works of art. In short, MoMA needed to accept the broader aesthetic concern encompassing its


relationship to the community, the active participation of the viewer, and the sensitivity to the time.

Hightower brought cultural, sociopolitical viewpoint to the private non-profit organization, seemingly because of his background working for the New York State Council on the Arts. He was interested in art as an active, positive force for social change and in the museum as more than a warehouse for artistic treasures. Although his viewpoint conflicted with that of the trustees, his innovative mind helped MoMA adjust to the changing artistic circumstances of the seventies and accommodated radicality in the museum system.111 Ultimately this enabled MoMA to reach a compromise within its expanded frame between the artist’s desire to defy the established and the curator’s intent to formulate knowledge.

The Projects series, which Hightower initially conceived as the concept of the “Curator’s Choice” program (1971 to 1998) was the culmination of MoMA’s exhibition programs for “really contemporary, cutting edge” artistic practices. The response of curators within MoMA was agreeable because they shared the need for a program to deal with experimental practices:

It is necessary for the Museum to have a continuing program which informs the public of the current researches in the arts. Furthermore, the Museum should develop ways to implement its prospective functions, that of assigning meaning to the not yet well understood processes of the present. In other words we would like to propose that the “Curator’s Choice” program become a pilot project, a laboratory for the concepts and events of the avant-garde. This program would be in the pioneering tradition of the Museum.112

112 Internal memorandum, Emilio Ambasz and McShine to Hightower, Re: Curator’s Choice, February 18, 1971 JBH, I. 3. 29. MoMA Archives, NY.
This program was based on the paradox of a museum of modern art that would meet qualifications for the frame of the retrospective museum, and also challenge the limitations of the frame. It was the curator who retrospectively assessed artworks within the context of art history to produce disciplined knowledge. Defiance of the frame was conducted by artists who have radical doubts and question the established knowledge and system of art. Artistic practice in the Projects series was supposed to be a voice and act from the artist. But in reality the aim of the exhibition, the curator’s intent, functioned as the dimension of truth the artist should refer to, as could be deduced from the program’s first title, “Curator’s Choice.” The curator was still the agent of individual exhibitions, even in this innovative program. In effect, since the curator’s intent could not be separate from that of the museum, the Projects series was a means of accommodating radical artistic practice yet served to reinforce the power-relation within the art world.

How did this ambivalent characteristic of the Projects series translate the artist’s desire into the curator’s intent, or the artist practice into the curator practice? Let me take as an example Projects: Pier 18, held from June 18 to August 2, 1971 (Figure 2-14). This exhibition consisted of photographs documenting the original project organized by Willoughby Sharp and performed at Pier 18 in the Hudson River in February and March in 1971. Sharp invited 27 artists to work in collaboration with photographers, Harry Shunk and Janos Kender.113 Sharp connected the Pier 18 project to his two previous

113 The 27 artists were Richard Jarden, Keith Sonnier, Dennis Oppenheim, Lawrence Weiner, Daniel Buren, Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, John Van Saun, Terry Fox, Robert Morris, Douglas Huebler, Allen Ruppersberg, William Wegman, John Baldessari, Wolfgang Stoerchle, Gordon Matta-Clark, Dan Graham, Lee Jaffe, Vito Acconci, Divid
exhibition projects in 1969: *Earth Art* and *Place and Process*, both of which consisted of works responding to specific sites. The idea of this project stemmed from Sharp’s observation that “a number of artists are doing work that doesn’t get out into the culture.”¹¹⁴ For him, the abandoned pier was “a perfect place, totally disassociated from art-making and open to a large variety of work.”¹¹⁵ He aimed to experiment with the possibility of non-consumable artwork outside the structure and economy supporting the art object for consumption. As Grace Glueck properly pointed out in her review, the original project was a triple project, in which the artists performed their individual works, the whole project itself was a work by Sharp, and documentary photos by Shunk and Kender were also works of art.¹¹⁶ But when it moved to MoMA, the project reduced to a single project composed of approximately 350 black-and-white documentary photographs.

Licht and McShine initiated the *Pier 18* exhibition at MoMA. According to Shunk, they accidently encountered the *Pier 18* project at his studio: “Jennifer Licht and Kynaston McShine happened to see some of the finished prints in my studio and proposed to show the whole project during the summer months at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.”¹¹⁷ Although Sharp considered transference of the project in

Askevold, Italo Scanga, Bill Beckley, Mario Merz, George Trakas, Richard Serra, Michael Snow, and Jan Dibbets.


¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

situ via “the photographic process back into the museum site,” Projects: Pier 18 at MoMA was introduced as the exhibition of a series of photographs documenting the project, not as a group exhibition of conceptual art. Artists who participated in this project were mostly working in terms of conceptual art, process art, and body art. Their works explored the site by using photographic devices and bodily involvement.

Douglas Huebler gave an instruction to Shunk and Kender to choose two spots for long views and two spots for short views, to photograph the most aesthetic shots; and then to take two photographs at each spot, one for far or near vista and the other for the vantage point marked with an “X” in chalk. This work, Location Piece #7, was a conceptual piece, showing the separation between its conception and its execution (Figure 2-15). While the resultant photographs were based on the instruction of the artist, the aesthetic decision was made by the actual executors. Insofar as it was a conceptual work, the instruction to locate four spots on the site was a primary part of the process, and the activity of selecting and photographing them was a secondary part. But the latter became primary for Sharp, who organized this site-specific project, and also for MoMA, which exhibited their documentary photographs.

Dan Graham— Pier 18 performed by Dan Graham consisted of photographs of his activities and photographs he took during the activity (Figure 2-16). He photographed vistas from various viewpoints on his body. Starting at his feet, to the top

\[\text{References}\]

\[118\] Ibid.


of his head, the camera moved in a spiral, through his body. Each part of his body where he put the camera when taking a shot became a virtual eye to look out at the scenery of the pier. This piece was a spin-off of his *Body Press* in 1970. In *Body Press*, two people inside a mirrored cylinder film while rotating their cameras in a spiral around their bodies upward to eye level, exchanging respective cameras when they are standing back-to-back. This piece deals with the viewing process by combining the activity of filming and the act of seeing. Involving the body parts as a kind of tripod, the artist relates the kinesthetic movement to the optical process. *Dan Graham—Pier 18* was its open-air version. Graham photographed surroundings of the pier from his body tripod, while Shunk and Kender photographed the artist in activity. The resultant photographs were divided into two groups: randomly taken photographs of the site and documentary photographs of the activity of the artist. But the exhibition at MoMA flattened distinct character of this work as these photographs were aligned together with photographs documenting other performances.

Blindfolded, hands tied behind him, and ears plugged, Acconci left himself to a person he didn’t trust, Lee Jaffee, to lead at the end of the open narrow pier. Jaffee was the only person who could make sure Acconci did not fall off into the water. Acconci said this work, as implied by its title, *Security Zone*, dealt with everyday relationship by making a situation risking security and forcing one to have trust (Figure 2-17). Although he explored the site with a blind-and-bound body, the pier was not the first purpose of his performance, but rather the relationship between two people in a situation that

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121 Ibid., 40 and plate 28-29.
tested one partner's trust in the other. The artist was curious about continuation of the trust and its deservedness. Photographs were no more than documentation of the activity.123

The installation of these photographs at MoMA homogenized individual pieces of the original project, Pier 18. As the original organizer, Sharp wanted the project to focus on the site itself, individual works transformed into a group of site-specific works. The visual effect of the exhibition display flattened each piece's characteristic into black-and-white photographs. Thus, one might criticize an interpreted of this exhibition as a "meaningful show of conceptual art."124 The twenty seven artists’ practices at the pier were re-presented via photographs at Projects: Pier 18, not presented as actual performances. The museum could not be a here-and-now venue for artists to perform their works, but rather a place where they revived their activities according to the intent of the curator.

How can the relationship between the site and the museum be inferred? Begin by considering the relation between individual works and the site. Cooke interprets the relation among Pier 18, individual works in situ, and their photographs at the museum in terms of Robert Smithson’s concept of non-site. For Smithson, non-site as a substitute for a site is things framed and brought to the gallery space, including photographs,

124 Alfred Frankenstein, “Pier 18 Conceptual Projects of Artists,” San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, July 4, 1971, 30, quoted in Cooke, “From Site to Non-Site,” 40. Alfred Frankenstein interpreted this exhibition as “the richest, most clearly defined and most meaningful show of conceptual art I have ever had the pleasure of seeing.” Cooke criticized Frankenstein. First, he misunderstood this exhibition as “a group exhibition of a coterie of Conceptualists" rather than documentation of a show that had occurred earlier; second, he ignored the activities of its curator and photographers for the exhibition.
maps, drawings, texts, films, and materials from the site. According to the logic of site and non-site, the non-site becomes the center of the system, while the site is posited at the periphery as far as this logic should presuppose presence of the gallery space. Then, photographs of individual practices of the Pier 18 project are non-sites in relation to the site, the Pier 18 area. At MoMA, indeed, ephemeral activities in situ disappeared, and only documentations of individual works were left. The museum space contrasted with the exterior site in the way to be involved in artistic practice. The exterior site, the pier, was a performative site where the artists realized their own ideas. This venue generated artwork and became the place of production. On contrary, the museum was a representative site where the curator reran the artistic practice done earlier.

Hightower said in an interview, “The Museum of Modern Art was not established as a foundation to support the livelihood and lifestyles of artists. It’s an institution to support the works that artists produce.” This statement articulated disapproval of the artists protesting MoMA for their right to participate in policy-making and in improving the museum’s relationship to artists, society, minority communities. A further serious thought on what his statement nuanced was that he separated the artists' life from their work, the artist from the museum, and life from art even though he thought art was an active force for social change and that the museum should function for more than preservation.

125 Cooke, “From Site to Non-Site,” 41.
In effect, Hightower did not accept the artists’ stake in the museum because he could not understand that the artists thought of the museum as their museum. He did not realize the artists’ desire to expand their practice from phenomenological involvement into cultural, sociopolitical engagement in terms of art as praxis; and also from mere exhibition space to performative space. The first expansion was conducted inside and outside the museum through institutional critique of artists in exhibitions and the protests of AWC and affiliated artist groups. The second expansion had to be outside the museum system, because the museum barely functioned as performative space for the artist. Since the curator, who was also museum staff, selected the most representative artworks and controlled the exhibition, it was almost impossible for the artist to transform the space into a site where they produced artworks. The institutional condition of MoMA, as the symbol of the mainstream art world, only allowed the Projects series to be an exhibition program to assimilate contemporary artistic practices, not generate them.

On a logical level, the artist’s studio might be an alternative to the museum despite its vulnerability to the museum system, because it is, above all, the place of art production. Daniel Buren contemplated this possibility in his writing on the function of the studio in 1971. Noting that the artist’s studio was rarely mentioned despite its primary importance, Buren defined the function of the studio as “the place where the

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127 Oral History Project; Interview with Lucy Lippard, 1999, p. 53. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Lippard stated the Artists’ Protests against MoMA as a kind of expression of their affection for MoMA as their space, “In 1969, I started divorcing myself from the institutional part of the art world. Museums were the enemies, because they wouldn’t speak out against the war. The trustees were in the military-industrial complex. We went for the Met really more than the Modern. But we went for the Modern a lot, because they were our museum. We perceived them as our museum. They didn’t perceive themselves as our museum at all.” Italics mine.
work originates”; “generally a private place, an ivory tower perhaps”; and “a stationary place where portable objects are produced.” These definitions need to be revised in terms of contemporary art that departs from the conventional concept of art-making. But in this essay, he showed insight into the dilemma of artist's studio in relation to the work and the museum:

The following contradiction becomes apparent: it is impossible by definition for a work to be seen in place; still, the place where we see it influences the work even more than the place in which it was made and form which it has been cast out. Thus when the work is in place, it does not take place (for the public), while it takes place (for the public) only when not in place, that is, in the museum.129

In this situation, it is always possible that the artist’s studio will submit to the museum system. Despite his lamentation over the loss of “the work’s place,” he still believes it is possible to “preserve the relationship between the work and its place of production,”130 learning from Constantin Brancusi, who stipulated preservation of his work in the studio where it was produced.

Among artists in downtown New York were those who tentatively converted their studios into exhibition places to reach the audience without the mediation of the museum-gallery system. The 10 Downtown show, held annually since 1968 and organized by an informal network of artists, embodied a kind of artist community. Every spring ten artists, selected by the artists who had exhibited the year before, opened their studios to the public for three weeks. The 10 Downtown show was commenced in

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129 Ibid., 113.
130 Ibid., 116.
the mood of social change and artists’ desire for self-determination of their work.\textsuperscript{131} But their attempt was limited to expanding the opportunity to exhibit works, rather than leading the artistic trend by experimenting with art media and the concept of art.

Lawrence Alloway reported the art of \textit{10 Downtown} as follows: “The art of 10 Downtown has been non-Conceptual and non-reductive. The record shows that 10 Downtown has been consistently pro-painting and pro-sculpture, stressing art as material entity or as manual process. Neither the death of easel painting nor the dematerialization of the object has been among its themes.”\textsuperscript{132}

The \textit{10 Downtown} show was rapidly followed by co-operative galleries and alternative spaces for exhibitions outside the commercial gallery system.\textsuperscript{133} But \textit{10 Downtown} and co-operative galleries were an alternative to the gallery-museum system for the purpose of exhibition and distribution of artwork. They did not demonstrate different functional levels regarding art production and its relation to the space. They did not further the concept of the artist studio, Buren addressed, but only slightly transformed the old artist’s studio into the exhibition place.

What could be truly alternative to the established museum-gallery system? Above all, it should be capable of encompassing the contemporary artistic practice that demanded performative space, which even an innovative museum could hardly obtain. With the proliferation of performance-related and site-specific installation art,

\textsuperscript{131} Lawrence Alloway, “100 Studios,” in \textit{10 Downtown, 10 Years} (New York: 10 Downtown, 1978), 3-4.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 4. Since the first co-operative galleries were found in SoHo in 1969, the Bowery Gallery and the First Street Gallery were opened at 55 Mercer Street, in 1970 and A.I.R Gallery, in 1972.
experimentation with new media, and artistic engagement in sociopolitical agenda, artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s required a space for producing and exhibiting art at the same time. This resulted in the space itself as an artistic place, with no other agent but artists. This increasing need coincided with the flourishing of artists’ lofts in the SoHo area, which enabled artists to build their own space outside the mainstream.
CHAPTER 3
112 GREENE STREET: AN EXPANDED CONTEXT OF ART

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, SoHo became a hotbed for artistic experimentation and for development of utopian models of artistic community. This area of New York City, far from uptown commercial galleries, had conditions that enabled artists to produce their own work and exhibition spaces outside art institutions. Artists took over the empty lofts left behind after most industry moved to new large-scale places outside New York City. Starting in the mid 1950s, newly arrived artists, many of whom did not belong to the mainstream art world, began to move to SoHo because of extensive work space and cheap rent. Many signed commercial leases but lived in their studio too, living under the constant threat of eviction. “The culture of illegal residence”\(^1\) had been a dominant way of artists’ life in SoHo until New York City legalized the residential use of lofts by artists in the full forty-three blocks of SoHo on January 21, 1971.

The complete legalization of artists loft living extended artists’ awareness of their neighborhood. The Artists Tenants Association, founded in 1960, struggled for secure living in SoHo and to support artist housing in manufacturing areas. They gained amendment of New York State Multiple Dwelling Laws in April 1964, which allowed

\(^1\) Charles R. Simpson, *SoHo: The Artist in the City* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 120-127, 185. Simpson uses the term “culture of illegal residence” to indicate the residential culture in the industrial district of SoHo during the 1960s that artists created, living in manufacturing lofts and averting the eyes of authorities that watched the illegal occupation of lofts restricted to be used only for the commercial or manufacturing purpose. Also see, Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (New York: The Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010). This book also shows how George Maciunas’s Fluxhouse generated and supported artists’ community in SoHo in the condition of illegal living during 1960s and 1970a, and its transformation after legalization and gentrification of this area.
artists to live and work in commercial manufacturing buildings in SoHo. Article 7-B was recognized as an “enhancement” to urban life, and artists were believed to deserve special housing provisions. However, artists’ communities continued to be threatened. Landlords hesitated to rent their lofts as artists’ residences because of the inconvenience of stringent fireproofing provisions; the city planned to remove this “commercial slum” by boosting new enterprises and building the Lower Manhattan Expressway.²

In April 1960, the City Planning Commission agreed to raze the area, but the community organized the Antiexpressway Coalition to protect their neighborhood from destruction. Opposition, initially localized, was particularly intense, and promoted neighborhood preservation in terms of potential appeal throughout the city. Artists joined Artists against the Expressway, motivated by their anxiety about losing their lofts. In the end, Mayor Lindsey nullified the Lower Manhattan Expressway project. A series of events regarding the city development plan and the community caused artists to recognize their status as community members and to further their own community as an enclave. This differed from the established reputation of New York as the modernist international art center since the 1940s. The notion of the New York artist community changed from “a cosmopolitan status community, structured around formal

² Simpson, SoHo, 131-134. The “commercial slum” had been a label put on the South Houston Industrial District, the waste lands of New York City since the move of industry and residents from that area. This area was under the pressure of clearance. But Chester Raptin analyzed this district as an “incubator area” for new enterprise based on its industrial activity, the structural condition of the buildings, and cheap rent, removing the “commercial slum” label in his report submitted for the New York City Planning Commission in 1962.
organizations, a set of occupational values, and informal social networks\(^3\) to a territorial, local community.

This transition meant that artistic practices came to encompass the notion of community and engagement in local issues. By diversifying or inventing their own medium, artists made art encompass something other than the purely artistic. On the level of art making, these lofts were the best places for artists to explore art media within the discursive contexts related to social, cultural, and political realities because here opposite activities often overlapped each other: art and life, making art and seeing art, solitude and communication.

The first alternative spaces grew out of the artist lofts’ multi-functionality: residences for artist living, studios for making art, and showcases for displaying artwork. They marked the shifting of two spatial supports: the artist studio and lower Manhattan. Artistic production centered in the artist’s studio transferred to these collective, experimental spaces. This move itself also indicates a shift from object-oriented modernist to situation-oriented postmodernist practice. Putting aside the residential purpose from consideration, these lofts were primarily the place of art making, or “the place where the work originates,”\(^4\) in Daniel Buren’s notion of the artist’s studio. Buren contrasts the artist’s studio with traditional institutions for displaying and distributing works of art. Unlike the “sterilized” environment of the museum, the artist’s studio is closer to the reality of the work as a product of a particular space of artistic production.\(^5\)

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\(^3\) Ibid., 127, 151.


\(^5\) Ibid., 110-17.
The first alternative spaces reflected the changing downtown Manhattan during the 1970s. The 1970s' New York art related to the significant change in downtown Manhattan into “a dysfunctional, half-ruined space, which offered alternative modes of coexistence and unexpected meanings.” This interrelationship between art and the city contrasted to that of the 1960s, which Joshua Shannon argues in his recent book that the abstraction and materiality of New York art in the 1960s represented its transformation into a postmodern city characterized by the systematization and consumerism of the decade. Just departing from the modernist master planned city, this process was related to the urban renewal caused by suburbanization of living space and collapse of the local material world. Shannon interprets art in New York in the 1960s as “a materialist confrontation with a world becoming more abstract.” By contrast, the alternative spaces and the New York art in 1970s demonstrated literal intervention in the local urban fabric and community, which were abandoned after losing the old industrial base.

The dilapidated industrial areas of lower Manhattan represented the blurred identity of the urban space. Eviction of the manufacturing industry from this district transformed the neighborhood into a dangerous crime-prolific area. The black market of illegal products replaced the capitalist economic system. A lack of enterprise, jobs, and

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6 Manuel J. Borja-Villel, introduction to Mixed Use, Manhattan: Photography and Related Practices, 1970s to the Present, ed. Lynne Cooke et al. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 9-10. This is a catalog accompanying an exhibition with the same title held at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid from June 10 to September 27, 2010.

residents led to dysfunction of the urban space. This urban wasteland erased its identity and became a void from which unexpected events and undetermined relations were generated by the lack of a structured way of life. The alternative spaces sprouted up from this void. Thus, the alternative venues were the result of blurring the boundaries between places of art production and art exhibition. These crumbling spaces, exposing raw materials on their surfaces, were synecdochical counterparts for the worn-out urban space.

112 Greene Street was the most notable alternative exhibition venue, predating other so-called alternative spaces that emerged along with the Federal Fund, National Endowments for the Arts and artists’ workshops and the commercial galleries that moved from uptown to downtown in 1973. 112 Greene Street, which was named after its physical address and also called 112 Workshop, was initially sculptor Jeffrey Lew’s work space and opened to his friends in 1970. This space embraced the utopian impulse for an artist community and total freedom of experimentation, especially in its earlier period. Lew, the artist and owner of the building, opened its ground floor and basement to artists who gathered as a loose community. Initially, Lew ran this place without formally organized personnel or an administration system; it was just for artists who wanted to work and to look at other artists’ work. The way artists held exhibitions at 112 Greene Street mirrored their own more informal practices, showing with colleagues in someone’s loft. For example, Alan Saret often invited artists to his loft to participate in or look at a series of events, which accompanied banquets or dance concerts.⁸

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Whereas Saret’s loft was a social art studio where artists shared the process of art producing, Lew’s 112 Greene Street was a public exhibition venue that still maintained the nature of a private art studio. Saret’s loft and 112 Greene Street differed from artists’ studios open to the public during the *10 Downtown* shows, whose goal was to promote artworks to the art audience and dealers. Differing from the latter posing as a substitute for the system of art market, the former constructed its own territory outside the system.

This chapter focuses on the earliest phase of 112 Greene Street between 1970 and 1974, just prior to its official institutionalization as an administered structure. Alice Aycock characterized the space during this period as artists’ own, a real alternative to ensure artists’ freedom. 112 Greene Street was necessarily distinct from institutionalized alternative spaces that emerged in the mid-1970s. Away from the institutions of art, 112 Greene Street supported postminimal aesthetic of devoting to materiality and literalness of medium. Furthermore, they functioned as venues for experimenting with performative art. It enabled artists to expand the artistic context to the exhibition space, the urban outdoor, the local community, and the global network by guaranteeing them self-organization and unrestricted exhibition.


10 Mary Jane Jacob, ed., *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985), 33. Aycock described the early period of 112 Greene Street, “The 112 space was not holy. It was a place that artists could call their own—a real alternative. Each artist set up hours, actually moved in, and worked in a really free way. Trakas cut a hole in the floor. It was a completely different way of making sculpture. You didn’t even think about it; you just responded to the place.”
Beyond the Museum-Gallery System

Three aspects distinguished 112 Greene Street from major museums and commercial galleries. First, without any established curatorial principle, it was perfectly committed to the work process itself, rather than to an exhibition arranged for a specific concept or audience for profits. Second, 112 Greene Street was a more social space for artists than the white cube, the modernist museum gallery, or the artist’s private studio. Third, this relied on principles of self-organization rather than an administered structure. Artists determined various aspects of the day-to-day activities of the space. Furthermore, 112 Greene Street was also made possible through the economic sacrifice of a few individuals. There was no official board of trustees for donations that maintain the space. These characteristics generated intersubjective relationships within the space different from those in museums and commercial galleries.

112 Greene Street understood the work itself as a process rather than the exhibition as a result. Its nonhierarchical, open organization generated a mode of intervention focused on experimentation with the forms, materials, and processes of art.

As Tina Girouard recalls:

The reason I committed myself so strongly to 112 was because they were interested in the project itself, not in putting together a concept show or basing shows on dates or individuals. The way it worked was, you had a project and went into the space and saw where you wanted to do it. If someone else was working there, you just said, tell me when you’re going to be finished. Then that piece would come out and you could get to work. The artists were the ones who kept the gallery open.

Girouard’s statement demonstrates the anarchic nature of this space and its propensity to the artistic experimentation. Unlike the social movements that continued beyond the

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11 112 Workshop, viii.
1960s, the artists of 112 Greene Street were committed to artistic experimentation involving site-specific conditions instead of directly intervening in social issues. Richard Nonas acknowledged 112 Greene Street as an aesthetic enclosure: “we didn’t go there because it was a social experiment. We were really restless and impatient and we had work to get out then.”¹² Their memories verified the fact that 112 Greene Street was an artists’ enclave separate from contemporaneous sociopolitical agenda. Nonetheless, their commitment to new art’s aesthetics reflected the underlying circumstances of social movements. Artistic experimentation was a part of engagement in the transformation of social conditions, in that both of them required the breakdown of the existing frame. When Jackie Apple organized a retrospective exhibition reviewing the early history of the alternative spaces, she summarized the characteristics of these artist-generated spaces as creating an experience and breaking out of the frame. Beyond the system that supported the formalist principle, art since the 1960s has aggressively critiqued the art object doomed to be collected and stored in the museum.¹³ This meant that the first alternative spaces mixed art with something outside the traditional concept of art, something that would transform medium-specific art into socially engaged art, and transform the exhibition space into the meeting place of artists who pursued artistic experiments and an artists’ community.

At a functional level, 112 Greene Street was a hybrid of private studio and exhibition space, at its earliest stage. The studio situation fused the place of life and the place of art. Artists working in SoHo chose their lofts to live in and work in, and

¹² Ibid.
responded to those spaces while producing artwork. But these artist lofts had a social character different from the artists’ studios of the 1940s and 1950s. As Caroline Jones argues, the sociality of the studio since the 1960s is connected to the nature of home. Actually, artist lofts in SoHo were simultaneously workspace and living space. The nature of home was contrasted with the sanctified romantic studio of the Abstract Expressionist, positioned as the isolated individual man. Just as Jones uses the home as a metaphor for the sociality of the new artist’s studio, so the concept of home can be also used in addressing the first alternative spaces where artists communicated and collaborated together. Home, the residential place is the conjunction of private life and social life.

Vito Acconci conducted a metaphoric project combining the private studio and the public exhibition space. His *Room Piece* at Gain Ground in January 1970 extended his apartment into the exhibition space by moving the contents of one section of his apartment into the gallery every weekend. Acconci thought of the gallery space “as transaction area, a place for an agent;” not “as exhibition area, a place for a perceiver.” He used the space of Gain Ground as an additional studio, just as artists in 112 Greene Street did. Here 112 Greene Street obtained the feminine values of productivity, opposing the white cube gallery’s masculinity of sterility, to isolate the

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artwork and the artist from a variety of social bonds. 112 Greene Street, as a space for productivity and sociality, enticed artists who wanted to work in an informal relationship, and in flexible conditions.

Besides its commitment to the work itself, its economic structure was another important factor that led 112 Greene Street to become an emancipated domain for artists. Generous expenditure of excess private capital on a nonprofit and nonproductive area was the economic basis of 112 Greene Street. Its economy was different from a museum in that donation was conducted as if it were the private waste of money, not through administered process. It was not until the 1973-74 season that it was run in a more formally organized structure. When Alan Katzman was invited to work in 1972, 112 Greene Street began to formalize the grant process and to schedule shows regularly on a biweekly basis. Before then, 112 Greene Street was backed by private funds from Alan Saret’s uncle, Kurt Wasserman, who was a manufacturing chemist, and Robert Rauschenberg, the neo-avant-garde artist. The so-called director, Lew, provided part of his building as the exhibition space for free.

Gordon Matta-Clark, the main figure of 112 Greene Street until 1974, made the best use of these operational conditions while making his work. Pamela Lee addresses his work in terms of sacrificial economy. She calls Matta-Clark’s economy a sacrificial economy, relying on George Bataille’s interpretation of the logic of general economy and expenditure. These two concepts explain the unproductive consumption of resources, which uses up excess energy hampering a system’s growth, and generates

17 112 Workshop, x. The changing into an administered structure was due to the requirement of administration in applying for public funds such as NEA and NYSCA.

a condition of zero to start over.\textsuperscript{19} Lee approaches Matta-Clark’s economy by reading his artistic activity as “intervening in the collective imperative to waste.”\textsuperscript{20} She interprets his work as “a dialectical compliment to this expenditure, its ‘non-productive’ use as artistic and social play.”\textsuperscript{21} This relates to Bataille’s notion of expenditure, particularly unproductive expenditure based on the principle of loss, which is the main mechanism for general economy to lose excess energy. Here expenditure is opposed to both the principle of production and the obsession of accumulation in the capitalist economy.\textsuperscript{22} Luxuries and wastes physically exemplify the principle of loss. Matta-Clark produced his work out of the wastes: he cut abandoned and soon-to-be-removed buildings and explored the useless space in urban space. The Food restaurant, Matta-Clark’s \textit{de facto} long-term performance piece, addressed later, is an example of the unproductive expenditure. \textit{Food} operated on Carol Goodden’s money unexpectedly inherited by her grandmother, and Goodden used up the fund to feed artists. 112 Greene Street was also based on the imperative of sacrificial economy to waste. Its mechanism of waste insisted on the imperative to destroy the accumulated material resources in order to transcend past the established boundaries of creative production.

Under these conditions, 112 Greene Street catalyzed a horizontal intersubjective relationship among artists, audiences, and directors. Distinguished from other mainstream galleries, 112 Greene Street was a rare alternative exhibition venue where

\textsuperscript{20} Lee, \textit{Object to be Destroyed}, xv, 236-37 n7.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., xv.
artists worked for an audience of artists. The artists’ community, which aimed to experiment with the condition of art, was formed around this space. Here artists attempted to do what they were not able to do within the commercial galleries and the museum system, both of which commodified and canonized new art as a precondition of profit-making. The horizontal relationship between people involved made 112 Greene Street the freest space in New York. As Lew recalls,

None of the doors in 112 were ever locked. It was the most open, socialist art system in New York at that time. There wasn’t really a first show because everybody just arrived. Gordon Matta, Alan Saret, and everybody came there and worked. They would say, “Jeffrey, could I have a show here?” My answer would be “No!” but then of course they would have their show. They would just walk in and do it. That’s what I liked about it—the fact that there was no administration. None. […] 112 had no political interests. It was a free space where an artist could come in unknown, without a resume, and have a show.

Without political interest, Lew loosely uses the term “socialist” to indicate 112 Greene Street’s openness, relating to its lack of administration and regulation. His statement acknowledges that there was no hierarchical relationship between artists and the owner of the space. The owner just provided artists with his property for creative production. Even though this space was dedicated to apolitical artistic practice, distanced from the direct action for artist rights, it had a political implication that artists could and should build a new territory for freedom based on the communal relationship between artists. 112 Greene Street was, above all, the space of artists’ meeting and of artistic practice, whether the art market system operated here or not. It unfolded a sphere where desires


\[24\] 112 Workshop, 2. Italics mine.
of artists could be discussed and performed, for no director who was not an artist intervened in exhibitions. The primary aim of this space was not selling artwork.

The quasi-members of 112 Greene Street were Lew, Saret, Matta-Clark, and artists who gathered around Matta-Clark.\textsuperscript{25} Matta-Clark was a particularly important because he was the first artist that moved into the space, organized the earliest shows, which consisted of installations and performances, and formed the Anarchitecture group to discuss architecture. Although they sometimes collaborated for a project, artists at 112 Greene Street were a group of individuals. Lew emphasized this:

> I don’t think it’s a question of selling or not selling. If you do good things there’s going to be money around, people won’t let it go down. I have some trust in people right now. I’m doing this because it’s time for action and for clear thinking. There was once a time or being chaotic and letting yourself completely freak out. Now I just don’t feel that way, I feel like getting it together. I’ve been going to artists meetings and hearing everybody scream and carry on. I think artists are really un together as a group, but very together as individuals. The things which make you an artist can make you a revolutionary, can make you change your own environment.\textsuperscript{26}

By “the things which make you an artist,” Lew alluded to the ironic situation of the artists’ protests that those protests emphasized collectivity rather than individuality of artists. For him, direct engagement in a sociopolitical agenda caused confusion of artists who were supposed to commit themselves in their own artistic projects in their own language. His current state of composure stemmed from the recognition that it was “time for action and for clear thinking” as an individual artist. Each artist existed as a singular subject, but every artist shared a desire to question the frame of art and the

\textsuperscript{25} The intersubjective relationship within 112 Greene Street was contradictory, in that it was both inclusive and exclusive because the personal connection among particular artists involved in establishing the space dominated the constitution of artists using this space as their playground.

\textsuperscript{26} Lew and Saret, “112 Greene Street,” \textit{Avalanche}, no. 2,13.
role of the artist. The group exhibitions did not have definitive themes, and did not offer restricted terms and conditions. Artists had their own frame to work by. This creating their own frame was what made an artist a revolutionary and what made an artist change his/her own environment. Because artists wanted a voice in the museum-gallery system and the political-corporate system, as Lew states, artists generated their own space and a new form to protect the creative process.

However, in terms of the judgment of quality, 112 Greene Street seemed unable to replace established museums and commercial galleries because it did not have a systematic process to evaluate and select works of art. 112 Greene Street was a site for practicing art rather than a gallery showing artwork selected by a particular standard. According to Lew’s memory, Robert Smithson argued that 112 Greene Street should end probably because works shown were not selected.27 Lew understood Smithson’s argument as the need for a selection process to estimate the quality of works of art.

But, to my thinking, Smithson might point out that there was no tension between artwork and 112 Greene Street, taking it into consideration that he explored the dialectic between site and non-site in artistic practice. The gallery space divides the artistic realm into site and non-site. The former is the actual space where artists worked with their media to produce artwork; the latter is a metaphoric presentation of the site within the frame that transforms what is presented into a work of art.28 112 Greene Street set almost no limits. From his viewpoint, a question arises: whether the artist is artistically freer in the site without limits or in the gallery with limits. Smithson’s answer would be

27 112 Workshop, 2.

that the limits in the gallery ensure the freedom in the site, because there is greater freedom if you realize that you have the limits to work against. As he puts it,

I think that artists are now very conscious of strict limitations and they see them very clearly and can expand them in terms of other limitations. There’s no way you can really break down limitations; it’s a kind of fantasy that you might have, that things are unlimited, but I think there’s greater freedom if you realize that you have these limits to work against and actually, it’s more challenging that way.29

This dialectic is between the framed realm of art and the outside of that frame. However, 112 Greene Street departed from the dialectic between site and non-site generated by the institution of art. It was a liberated area outside the institution of art, not merely an alternative way to exhibit and distribute artwork. For an artist who works intimately with the limits of traditional art institutions, the radical openness of 112 Greene Street posed the problem of whether artistic freedom could find expression in an endlessly free context or not. It provided artists with the possibility of working in an unlimited fringe.

Thus, 112 Greene Street was revolutionary in nondialectical terms, in that it nullified the limits and invented a new field where Smithson’s concepts of site and non-site fuse.30 This space was a place resulting from formalization of a new sphere to practice art, not from the interpretation of the institution of art to exhibit the work of art

29 Ibid., 185.

30 Alain Badiou, The Century, trans. by Alberto Toscano (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007). In this book, Badiou provides a thought on the contrast between the two terms, revolutionary and dialectic. Defining the twentieth century, he focuses on the dominated sense of the real present, which made the twentieth century the century of revolution. Here revolution destroys the old and creates the new. He understands the old and the new as a non-dialectical couple. In the similar way, the passion for the real in the art “no longer privileged the historical form for the presentation of the absolute idea,” but pursues a break of existing formal law by the invention of a form. This formal ruptures are connected to art in the present and the war of formalization against interpretation. See, Ibid., 136.
itself. The museum’s exhibitions tried to interpret past art and to arrange recent past art in connection with the art historical trajectory. The chaotic collective at 112 Greene Street encouraged artists to act based on their desire for creating something beyond the established norm. Lew once remarked that he “was the head administrator. And of course, nobody listened to” him.\textsuperscript{31} Anecdotes about George Trakas demonstrate how the radical openness of 112 Greene Street made the artists free. Even though Lew had rejected Trakas for the inaugural show because there were so many artists, Trakas brought his work in his truck and insisted on exhibiting on opening day. Finally, Lew let him install his work in the basement. About a month later, he sneaked into the space in the early morning, and cut a large hole in the floor to install a work connecting the ground floor and the basement. Ironically, the existence of the administrator, Lew, to whom no one listened anyhow, sanctioned the absence of administrative and authoritative restrictions, which enabled artists to transgress the conventional procedures occurring at a gallery, but instead, to rely on the social connection for access to the space.

For the artists, transgressing was the presupposition for beginning the new from zero, that is, for “reaching over into another dimension.”\textsuperscript{32} 112 Greene Street was a venue where artists produced new artistic language and conditions by denouncing the frame of the institution of art and the artistic norm of late modernism underlying the mainstream art world. However, the new and the zero were imaginary because artists already worked with the frame of art and in the context of recent art. Nonetheless, the

\textsuperscript{31} 112 Workshop, 2.

imaginary unlimited ensured their freedom from the institution of art. Artists worked with postminimal sculptures, performances, and outdoor and community-based work. This space became not only the site where artists produced works of art and performed artistic activities, but also the part of work that corresponded the unprocessed, raw condition of the building. Furthermore, it demonstrated the extension of the artistic site outside the frame by embracing any media and formal inventions breaking the established conventions. The inaugural exhibition presented various works interacting with the material condition of the space. This exhibition made 112 Greene Street open as an exhibition venue that had no curatorial translation of artistic desires into a specific theme, and also as a sanctuary for artists to enjoy an anarchical atmosphere.

**A Continuous Inaugural Exhibition: The Building and Artworks**

From October 1970 to January 1971, seventeen artists successively conducted and exhibited their works on a first-come-first-served basis, in a dilapidated building at 112 Greene Street in SoHo. They were artists who just arrived at this place: Bill Beckley, Bill Bollinger, David Bradshaw and James Brown, Rafael Ferrer, Lee Jaffe, Barry Le Va, Jeffrey Lew, Gordon Matta-Clark, Brenda Miller, Larry Miller, Richard Nonas, Doug Sanderson, Alan Saret, Majorie Strider, George Trakas, and Richard van Buren. This series of exhibitions served as the inaugural exhibition of 112 Greene Street. Lee calls this exhibition “Lew’s ‘non-existent’ first show,” because the exhibition just happened, rather than being directed by a specific intent.³³ Lew had no intention to open a gallery, but just opened the space for his friends to have fun. When *The New York Times* printed an article about them, they realized that they were opening a

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³³ Lee, *Object to be Destroyed*, 61.
Most pieces inherited literality and materiality from minimalism. In addition, the raw materiality of this half-ruined building attracted artists searching for a powerful space to experiment with sculptural scale and the formless materials of postminimal sculpture. Some artists conducted architectural critiques or engagement, such as expanding the sculptural medium into an architectural dimension by making physical and metaphoric connections between sculptural works and architectural surroundings. This was possible because the spatial and discursive contexts in which these works were exhibited departed from those of the modernist white cube.

The inaugural exhibition did not directly critique the museum-gallery system; rather, it became indirectly involved in it, by challenging the artistic language. The artists showed works that defied the aesthetic norms the modernist gallery presented. Peter Schjeldahl defined this exhibition as representing “the most vigorous and disconcerting” recent sculptural trend, stressing proliferation of “informal” sculptural works. For him, this exhibition was not a statement of “anti-establishment,” but a reflection of “the new art’s esthetic.”

For some, it represents a blessed relief from unhappy relationships with commercial dealers whose eagerness to keep step with the avant-garde has understandably been chastened by the experience of devoting their expensive showrooms to work that is by its very nature, not to mention its outrageousness, practically unsalable. Not that the artists’ acceptance of funky ambience necessarily constitutes an anti-establishment “statement.” Rather, and more important, it reflects exactly the new art’s esthetic.35

34 Lew, “Interviews” in The Early Years, 14.

35 Peter Schjeldahl, “Sculpture ‘Found’ In a Rag Factory,” New York Times, Nov. 1, 1970, 125. Schjeldahl counted that about eight artists participated in this show because he wrote this critic in the middle of the exhibition. Actually it continued to January 1971 and almost impossible to exactly define who exhibited what. Because of such obscurity, Lee called this inaugural exhibition as the “non-existent first show.” See Lee, Object to be Destroyed, 61.
Schjeldahl observed that this exhibition did not aim to conduct a critique of the institution of art, but rather attempted to experiment with artistic material and medium. 112 Greene Street was another territory outside the museum-gallery system, not intended to replace it. Because of its unique position in relation to the art world, the institutional critique here would lose the effect it could have had, when it was conducted within the mainstream context. Thanks to this self-subsistent space, artists in this exhibition were able to devote themselves to delving into postminimal aesthetic, which was estimated as a "break with the recent tradition of formalism."³⁶

In what follows, this chapter will attend to a few exemplary exhibitions at 112 Greene Street that illuminate how and to what extent artists transformed specificity of medium into a context-oriented condition. Already in the inaugural exhibition, artists expanded their practices to engagement in the architectural and the social space. These practices accompanied contemporaneous critiques of galleries and museums, practiced most notably at that moment by conceptual art and Site-specific art. As discussed, instead of totally negating the museum, Smithson entered into a dialectical relationship between the gallery as the non-site and the site where artistic practices are performed in open limits. In these terms, 112 Greene Street can be the example of a gallery in open limits, fusing site and non-site. This space became the site where artworks are produced and artistic activities are performed; and also encouraged artists to deal with the raw space itself as a material and technical support. This means 112 Greene Street transcended the limits a gallery was supposed to bring to artists and their work, by embracing any technical support and experimental practices. 112 Greene

³⁶ Schjeldahl, “Sculpture ‘Found’ In a Rag Factory.”
Street figured its limitlessness in artistic practices involved in powerful sculptural forms, unexpected materials, medium experiments, and outdoor urban action.\(^{37}\) The sheer exposure of materiality itself stressed the expanded experience in art by removing the frame.\(^{38}\)

First of all, most of the works in the inaugural exhibition aggressively exposed materiality more than form. Lew, Nonas, Saret, Strider, Trakas, and Matta-Clark demonstrated different phases of correspondence between form and material. Their experiments with materials were always interacting with the material and spatial conditions of 112 Greene Street. As Martin Beck points out in his essay, “Alternative: Space,” these artists “treated the physical structure of the exhibition space as primary material for their work.”\(^{39}\) Since it was built in the 1890s, 112 Greene Street was used as a factory space for textile manufacture and then a rag-picking warehouse until the early 1960s. For decades before its use as an alternative art space, it appeared dilapidated and unpolished, with its architectural structure revealing its materials. The ground floor and the basement, which were used as the exhibition space, were left


\(^{38}\) Walter Benn Michaels, *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 90-93. The frames of art include every convention related to art as form, representation, aesthetic, meanings, etc. Michaels uses the concept of “frame” as a device that Modernist critics insist on in order to distinguish the work of art from the object. According to him, the frame functions as a kind of the generator of a field for representation. Within the field of representation, the primacy is given to the medium itself not to the object that appears on the surface. He says, “The point, rather, is that once the object becomes a representation, the beholder's relation to it is that of a reader rather than a viewer [...].” Experience doesn't matter, but rather reading, which is a performance to interpret meanings, is crucial.

unfixed, and exposed their material rawness. The rawness of those spaces inspired artists to render in their work the strong materiality, the surface textures, and the physical structure of the building.

Lew’s *Polyester Box* and Nonas’s *Blocks of Wood* pieces inherited minimalist cubic form and serial arrangement, but mixed them with the postminimalist aesthetic of formless matter and material process. Lew’s box consisted of a steel tank containing water and a floating rectilinear form of polyester resin and stone material on plywood, which was also filled with water (Figure 3-1). By making this water tank of steel pieces taken from the floor of 112 Greene Street, he gave the anonymous Minimalist box a site-specific aspect. Furthermore, the steel tank was a metaphor for the building, which had crumbled walls and was located in a collapsing industrial district. When pressed down, the floating box was immersed in the water, defying the expectation that it would pop back up. It lost its buoyant force because it leaked. This implied the loss of energy and order, or the entropic condition. In contrast, Nonas exhibited *Blocks of Wood* pieces in January 1971, which was almost at the end of the show. His work revealed its relation to the space in a poetic way. In the basement was a 30-foot, single-row of wood planks standing vertically with slant-sawed tops. Entitled *Light to Dark/Dark to Light*, this work might appear to reiterate the late-1960’s’ minimalist literalism and emphasis on seriality (Figure 3-2). But its crude material and allusive title offered the possibility of reading this work in connection to its spatial context. Just as old buildings in SoHo represented the declining local history throughout the century, the long aligned wood blocks created a kind of rhythmic flow, implying the flow of time that wears things down. Another work

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40 112 Workshop, 4.
was a bunch of wood pieces, about four feet long, hanging from a basement wall with a 5-foot-long rope. This work demonstrated gravity and its influence on materials, and highlighted the cross-hatched cement wall. As the wood bunch was inclined at a quarter-degree from the wall, it resembled a plank peeled off from the dilapidated wall.

Although Lew and Nonas may not have intended to allude to the space, but sought only to attend to the specificity of their materials, the 112 Greene Street site where the works were placed permeated the works by activating those historically, socially, and culturally significant meanings as well as their bodily experience. Lew, the founder of 112 Greene Street, says, “In the beginning, we were reluctant to fix up, not wishing to disturb the raw power of the space.” The raw space becomes an expanded medium that is beyond sculpture, the traditional three-dimensional medium. Richard Van Buren, one of participants in the show, stressed the power of the space of 112 Greene Street and stated how it formulated his work:

For the opening show at 112 Greene Street, I decided that I did not want to bring objects into the space. The gallery seemed alive to me without latex-white-skin walls and sanded varnished floors. It was a chance to use the space before it became another Art Gallery. The network of cracks between the floorboards was the space that I chose. I thought of the cracks as molds. I cast into the “molds” with polyester resin until they were filled. The piece could be experienced in the gallery on the ceiling of the basement, and on the floor of the basement. I was interested in building a situation that would point out to other artists what existed at 112 in terms of architecture and attitude.41

Van Buren and most of other artists could feel the force of the space, and responded. As Jay Jacobs pointed out, the task of critics was to differentiate between art and casual

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41 Ibid., 10.
debris at 112 Greene Street. Artists here had a desire to engage the space and to figure it in the work presented. Many works dealt with materials corresponding to the space, and proceeded to use the space itself as a medium of artistic practice.

Saret and Strider more directly utilized the physical structure of the space. Saret installed mixed materials on a wall of the basement. *Rubber, Raffia, Cloth, Tube, Wire and Weights* (Figure 3-3) looked as if the wall vomited these contents through a rough opening. But he did not rely on chance to drape the materials, using brass and aluminum bars and bundles of wire to support and shape the soft fabrics and pliable materials. His work represented the condition of urban life in SoHo and the historical legacy of the area. The materials used were drawn from an industrial district in decline, and carefully culled from a rag-picker’s collection. Meanwhile, Strider used the front window upstairs to experiment with yellowish plastic foam in her *Building Work #1* (Figure 3-4). This piece looked like foam oozing from the building’s windows, albeit already hardened. From habitual perceptions, its form suggests liquid viscosity, but it was actually in the solid state. Like Saret’s work, this solid foam bleeding from the old cast-iron building implied fossilization of the history of SoHo and the meltdown of its economic prosperity. The material framework of the space became the primary technical support for these two works. The crumbled space activated the materials’ aggregative conditions so that they could unfold the potential of sculpture to engage the actual space where the work is exhibited. Although this condition was already becoming

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43 *112 Workshop*, 8-9.
44 Ibid., 9.
realized in minimalism, Saret and Strider’s departure from the rigid form of minimalist sculpture led to the loosening of formal consideration.

This “formless” condition generates a more complicated relationship between physical aspects and semantic dimensions of a work. In his essay “Anti Form” from 1968, Robert Morris focuses on the strong interest in physicality rather than form in late 1960s’ art. He thinks of this tendency as the more direct revelation of matter itself, departing from the cubic and rectangular forms in rigid material, and also recovering the process of making art, which results in final forms. This means that artists no longer considered order in making art objects, but depended on chance and indeterminacy in dealing with material itself.45 But works in 112 Greene Street needed a more elaborate explanation of their withdrawal from formalism because the crude materiality revealing its process implied performativity beyond its physical status. Examining artworks from 1950s through 1960s, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss define this slippage from formalism as “formless,” reinterpreting George Bataille’s informe in terms of performativity. According to Bataille, the informe (formless) can be found in what is “neither the “form” nor the “content,” or “the operation that displaces both of these terms.”46 As Bois points out, “these operations split off from modernism, insulting the very opposition of form and content—which is itself formal, arising as it does from a binary logic— declaring it null and void.”47 It is a performative function that is notable

47 Ibid., 16.
with regard to Bataille’s concept of the *informe*. Here the performative stems from the formless, which is parallel to the unlimited and unframed situations for art. The absence of a frame means the impossibility of definition. In effect, the formless is understood as the operation of declassification or the alteration of “interpretative grid,” which consists of formal and semantic dimensions. Here one has the opportunity to break up established aesthetics and the notion of medium.

In this sense, Matta-Clark’s *Incendiary Wafers* (Figure 3-5), which he made of agar and other food ingredients in 1969, was a formless work that had a performative function concerning the concepts of art medium and art making. To make this work was to challenge the way a work of art is produced and understood. Matta-Clark spread the agar-mixed material on a big, shallow, rectangular tray; placed it on the floor, and let it dry. He analogized the process of making this work to cooking, as seen in the culinary title. The main material for the work was agar. This gelatin-like organic matter made from certain seaweeds generated a connection between making art and cooking, an everyday activity. Cooking is often related to the alchemic practice: it changes raw material into a desired condition. The admixture material containing microorganisms was treated as growing during the process of display, or dry. Thus, *Incendiary Wafers* was interpreted as demonstrating the collapsing boundaries among art making, cooking, and alchemic transmutation. As Lew pointed out, this piece transmuted the exhibition

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48 Ibid., 18-21. Bois means by “interpretative grid” “the structure that has long permitted to assimilate the morphological or semantic registers” in reading works of art.

space resembling free residential space: “We showed the agar pieces in 112, and 112 became a home, haven, sanctuary for Gordon.” Here the flaccid matter and the unidentified process implied removal of the frame of institutionalized art. Instead, Matta-Clark suggested a new frame, in *Incendiary Wafers*. He changed raw matter as a meaningless signifier into a less repressed artwork, and introduced into art making the culinary culture, which can expand into social life by means of food.

In the religious context, the word, “wafer,” was loaded with catholic significance by relating to the Eucharist and symbolizing the Last Supper and the sacrifice for people. At the same time, this work represented the human body, which would die and decay even though it was well feed while alive. This religious connotation combined with culinary activity to form the idea of new cannibalism, which Matta-Clark realized in the *Food* restaurant.

In addition to the encounter between raw material and a new frame of art, 112 Greene Street also enabled artists to examine architecture as the basis for a new, destructive, sculptural practice. George Trakas installed two works: *The Piece That Went Through the Window* in the basement and *The Piece That Went Through the Floor* on the street level, incorporating them into their space by expanding each of them horizontally and vertically (Figure 3-6). The piece through the window consisted of a glass and wood structure held by a rope to the opposite wall, out of the air shaft window. Its entire dimension was $56 \times 201 \times 64$ inches. The large sheet of glass stood between the wood structure and the rope, with a heap of sawdust piled up on one side. As the extending rope connected the exhibition space with the world, the physical and

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50 Jacob, Gordon Matta-Clark, 32.
environmental condition of the outside directly influenced this piece. A few days after its installation, the entire piece collapsed because of a heavy downpour, causing the rope to pull out the glass and wood structure. The piece through the floor consisted of a squared hole cut on the street-level floor of the space, revealing the architectural scaffolding and the basement itself. Trakas suspended a trapezoid wood frame across two steel rods, from which ropes dangled into the hole itself. The ropes fell just above a table-like wood structure in the basement. The work measured 108 x 60 x 222 inches. This piece connected two spaces vertically by exposing the hidden underground through the aperture and transmitting light from the ground floor to the basement.

Trakas called this work a “demolition piece,” an apt description for this new sculptural practice. He constructed structures, let it communicate with the external conditions, and allowed the conditions to destroy the constructions. The process implied by his work was transformation of things to debris, the process of destruction.

By contrast, Matta-Clark suggested a backward step of this process: from death/debris to life/organism. He transformed a physical structure of the building into a site that generated heterogeneity of art, encompassing raw matter, refuse, and non-functional space as material supports for his work. In an abandoned elevator shaft under the steps of basement he created *Winter Garden: Mushroom and Waistbottle Recycloning Cellar* (Figure 3-7), a cellar containing waste bottles he collected in the neighborhoods between October and December 1970. He installed a diagonally cut plank wall with a long, rectangular opening at the front of the shaft. This space was then diagonally divided into two parts. He filled the upper portion with empty bottles and grew

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51 112 Workshop, 10-11; Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 118-120.
mushrooms in the lower section. The empty bottles shined with sunlight from the shaft, whereas the mushrooms grew in the dark house. As Carol Goodden, a dancer and his partner, points out, this work demonstrated Matta-Clark’s interest in “garbage, discarded items, and abandoned or dead spaces, and making them come to life again.” Later, he built a glass furnace and melted the bottles to make ingots of glass. Matta-Clark melted empty bottles, the debris of urban life and everyday consumption, into glass ingots. Here he transmuted dead, everyday items into raw matter itself. Melting is an entropic process par excellence. Glass ingot represented the state of rawness, that is, the state of disorder. The abandoned elevator shaft was a useless space from which Matta-Clark found a use value at the non-functional level. For him, everything turns into a formless and entropic condition because it loses innate order and energy to decline into the state of refuse. His work in the inaugural group show dealt with the entropic process and its reversal with absurd involvement in dead space and refuse material.

In another work, Matta-Clark dug a hole in the basement floor and planted a live cherry tree in the hole, with a heap of earth he dug up next to it (Figure 3-8). The tree grew for a while under an infrared lamp, but then died. About 6 months later, he made Time Well (Figure 3-9) in the same place where Cherry Tree had stood, filling the hole with a ceramic chimney pipe, pouring concrete in it, covering it with a zinc well-cover, and marking the joints with molten lead in the rectangular form. The basement made

52 112 Workshop, 5. Also see, Jacob, Gordon Matta-Clark, 30 and Corrine Diserens, ed., Gordon Matta-Clark (Valencia, Spain: IVAM Centro Julio Gonzalez, 1993), 369. I identify the date of the work by comparing the dates on these catalogues with one that White Columns Archive presents on the web, accessed October 20, 2011, http://www.whitecolumns.org/archive/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/244.
53 112 Workshop, 5.
54 112 Workshop, 6; Jacob, Matta-Clark, 29, 31; Diserens, Gordon Matta-Clark, 369.
the border between the growth of things and the death of things blurry in these works. Lee interprets Matta-Clark’s basement pieces as expressing the “subterranean conditions,” which connected to “a sensibility taken by the atavistic, the entropic, and the uncanny.” She also stresses “more rigorously architectural” terms in reading these works because Matta-Clark originally attempted to reveal the building’s hidden foundations. But he could not fulfill this attempt. According to Lee, the space of 112 Greene Street was conditioned as the site for artistic experiment, not as the architecture proper. Removing the utilitarian function of a building, 112 Greene Street provided its architectural environment for artists as a material and a technical support. Not only did this site foster the integration of destruction as an aspect of the sculptural medium, it also helped artists explore the relations between body and space, and expand artistic context understood expansively to include its architectural, historical, cultural, and social aspects.

**Installations and Performances: On the Borders of Space and Body**

After the opening group show, various sculptural experimentations and large installation works proliferated in most group exhibitions and solo exhibitions held at 112 Greene Street during the early period. Among others, Jene Highstein, Suzanne Harris, and Gordon Matta-Clark exhibited powerful works of scale and resonance. Their work interacted with both the audience and the space in various ways from activating bodily experience, to generating a spatial enclosure, to engaging in the architectural structure. It revealed the intense interest in the phenomenological experience of the three-

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55 Lee, Object to Be Destroyed, 65.
56 Ibid., 67.
57 Ibid., 65-67.
dimensional work, presupposing the physicalized body and conforming to the literal condition of the space. The material conditions and non-organizational structure of 112 Greene Street allowed artists to push the sculptural medium to the levels of architectural intervention and archaeological exploration. This led to the expansion of site-specificity in the work. The artists’ focus was more to extend the literal site at 112 Greene Street than to address it as a functional site. They carefully explored and critically analyzed the architectural structure and the urban environment, instead of dealing with the functional aspects of the exhibition space.

Highstein exhibited Human Scale Container (Figure 3-10), a triangular plate glass and plywood structure (8 x 8 x 11 inches) in the group show between May 12 and June 2, 1971. This diagonally severed rectangular box had a rectangular glass front with the other sides in plywood. Viewers could see the inside of the structure through the glass plate, and also see reflections of the surroundings on it. This was a pseudo-container that could only accommodate reflected images on its glass front: not something physical inside it. As a result, viewers experienced the work in two ways. First, they bodily encountered the work because of its scale and its reflections of surrounding space. Second, they visually perceived the division between the inside and outside of the work. This was a variation of the minimalist sculptural theme, whose experience always supposed artwork encounter the viewer, ceasing existing as an autonomous entity. Here artwork is located in the position of the object. The subject

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58 112 Workshop. 17. Group Show: May 2 - June 2, 1971 was organized by Gordon Matta-Clark with Randal Arabie, Jared Bark, Peter Barton, Stefan Eins, Dieter Froese, Jene Highstein, J. Jaroslav, Gordon Matta-Clark, and Hisachika Takehashi.
encounters the object whose existence presupposes the existence of the perceiving subject.

In *Group Show: September 1 – 21, 1972*, Highstein exhibited a triangle of welded \( \frac{3}{4} \) inch steel rod, laid on the floor with one of its angles folded and raised (Figure 3-11). This combination of two-dimensional and three-dimensional elements dealt with line, surface, and space. As its raised angular part broke its subordination to the plane, this work transformed from a triangular line on a surface into an object in a space. Despite the abstract quality caused by its sheer interest in form, the dilapidated condition of the building blurred the boundaries between actual space and aesthetic space. It assimilated this steel rod with the raw space. But this piece maintained its range safe with the acute linear triangular form. Meanwhile, Harris built a hollow, truncated wedge with cardboard, wood, and glass for this show (Figure 3-12). It looked like it had fallen down: the smaller, open end protruded into the space; while the taller, back end was connected to a small, high window. This work was a purely artistic experiment to transplant a sculptural structure made of industrial and commercial products into an architectural environment. It showed a minimalist aesthetic in its basic form and perceptual aims. It could also be functional in practical or artistic terms. It resembled a hut with as a small opening one could crawl into, or a *camera lucida* constructed as a room without its 45- degree-tilted mirror, though it was not clear whether Harris got the window to accept light from outside. Here, it became not just a sculptural piece for artistic values, but a shelter for hiding one’s body. Nonetheless, its serious approach to form and spatial relationship made this work a descendent of minimalist sculpture, rather than a transgression from it.
Matta-Clark installed more discursive works in his solo exhibition also in 1972. His one-person show held between October 21 to November 10 consisted of a newspaper installation work, Walls paper, and cut pieces from his Bronx Floors project (Figure 3-13). Walls paper was long strips of newspapers with light-colored printed images of half-demolished buildings and abandoned streets of New York. Rectangular or L-shaped pieces of walls and floors cut from a building in Bronx and the Food restaurant were put on the floor or on a table, with paired photographs of the holes made by cutting the walls and floors. Matta-Clark’s focus was the holes on site; not the chunks of walls and floors displayed in the gallery. As Goodden recalled, “He never was as interested in the pieces as he was in the hole. The light and lines interested him much more than the piece, which was simply documentation. He was taking something that was dead-looking and making it alive again.”59 The photographs provided visual descriptions about the site and the indexical marks of cutting activities, whereas the building chunks were physical remains or evidence of them. Accordingly, the photographs seemed more in Matta-Clark’s interest. Walls paper was a visual documentation of his expedition to the partially torn down buildings in the city. What he wanted to do with these pieces was to reveal the internal structures of buildings and to make the hidden spaces accessible.

This attempt was related to a kind of voyeurism. As he noted, “openings onto other spaces and other people’s realm”60 had impressed Matta-Clark more than other architectural elements since his childhood, when he lived in downtown New York. Bronx

59 Ibid., 35.
Floors and Walls paper were in-depth field studies of the dilapidated downtown area, to broaden visibility of the hidden architectural structure and to explore the entropic urban conditions. In effect, the exhibition was a visual report of his exploration of the site and a voyeuristic view of the architecture. At the social level, these projects became a discourse on urban planning and slum clearance, which the city of New York also experienced at that time.

Since he dealt with architectural structure as a reality, not sculptural gesture, Bronx Floors and Walls paper reconstructed a virtual reality of the abandoned city area. The photographs and the fragments of the abandoned building harmonized with the roughness of the space. These installation pieces transformed the whole gallery space into a landscape of the demolished slum with bundles of newspaper and scantling on the messy floor. In addition, the cut pieces offered the same experience as minimal sculpture, because they also appealed to the viewer more as a work of art as empty signifier than as sheer materials. Standing on the border of the sculptural realm, Matta-Clark worked with the architectural reality that “oscillated between entropy and order.” According to Gloria Moure, Matta-Clark viewed the city as “unstable and polymorphic,” and to emphasize his point he worked with garbage and abandoned buildings. His works convey politics and criticism, as well as appraisal of modern architecture and the city and urban planning.

Meanwhile, Highstein and Harris continued exhibiting large sculptural pieces that focused on the relationship to the space. These monumental sculptures installed

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61 Ibid., 36.
63 Ibid.
indoors became the dominant type of work shown at 112 Greene Street through the 1970s. Highstein constructed steel rods vertically or horizontally within the space, in his personal shows in 1973 and 1974; while Harris built triangular structures, using the exhibition space as a literal site and a material support.

For *Jene Highstein: Sculpture*, held between February 10 and 22, 1973, Highstein constructed three large pieces in milled steel (Figure 3-14). Each piece was composed of two standing half-cylinders connected by a slab.64 These vertical works corresponded to seven Corinthian columns in the space. Overall, the work made interactions between two vertical units of each piece, and between the whole pieces and architectural elements of the space. In a sense, the literalness of their material and the roughness of their form made these works look like a prehistoric Stonehenge, built in a crumbled room. Contrary to the somewhat primitive aesthetic of these works, the next solo exhibition, held from January 26 to February 7, 1974, seemed to present the industrial aesthetic of the twentieth century (Figure 3-14). The viewer could find grid units for standardization from divisions made by the original columns, standing in a row in the middle of the room; and two long, seamless steel pipes installed horizontally between the opposite walls.65 The exhibition space in process of installation resembled a construction site in the process of building a heavy steel structure. As Alan Moore

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64 Ibid., 44. The first piece had a horizontal slab (15 3/8 inches x 21 feet) connecting two vertical elements, 6 feet 8 inches in height. The second one, standing 8 feet in height, was connected by a rusted long piece lying on the floor spanning 24 feet. The third piece, 7 feet in height and spanning 26 feet, was considerably wider than the other: it measured 42 ¼ inches in girth.

65 Ibid., 61. Highstein installed two seamless steel pipes; each 16 inches in diameter and 36 ½’ in length; the one nearest the door was 8 feet 6 inches from the floor; the other one was 6 feet 4 inches from the floor. The room is 36 x 8 4x 16 feet each. The pipes were set into the brick walls parallel to the floor and to each other.
noted in his review, the pipes made the space depart from an exhibition space to a
“quasi-industrial adjunct,” like a boiler room.\textsuperscript{66}

These two shows demonstrated inversion between sculptural and architectural
practices within an exhibition space. Vertical and horizontal pipes created a dynamic of
space and bodily experience in each show. The viewer standing by the vertical columns
and passing under the horizontal pipes experienced the presence of his/her body as
well as of the metal structure. At the same time, the horizontal pipes and vertical
columns intersected, creating a perception of space recalling linear perspective.\textsuperscript{67}
Although Highstein installed the milled steel columns as mass occupying the space in
the 1973 show, he used the two steel pipes as a means to visually divide the space in
1974. The 1973 installation was sculptural in positive terms, because the steel pieces
themselves were the artist’s medium. The 1974 installation was sculptural in negative
terms, for the artist attempted to deal with the space rather than the installed steel
structure. He recalls: “I had a huge studio in Coney Island and at a certain point, I
realized that I could make a sculpture wherein the entire volume of the space was the
sculpture. I suddenly started thinking of lofts in terms of shoe boxes or arbitrary
rectilinear volumes and putting pipes in the spaces as markers for key junctures.”\textsuperscript{68} This
statement relates to the minimalist interest in activating the relationship between body
and space; and also relates to the main interest of modernist architecture, to practice
the volume of space rather than the mass of architecture.

\textsuperscript{67} Carter Ratliff, “Jene Highstein: Form in the Active Mode,” \textit{Art in America} 62 (July-
\textsuperscript{68} 112 Workshop, 61.
Harris built two wedge-shaped, floor-to-ceiling structures with cardboard taken from boxes in each of her personal shows in 1973 and 1974, both entitled *Fours* (Figure 3-15). She varied each triangular structure by choosing different shapes and by rotating the position. In the 1973 show, she built a right-angled triangular structure, which was projected out from the wall, with a rectangular hole cut in the lower part of the slope; and a structure that protruded from the ceiling to the floor, with the lower part truncated.\textsuperscript{69} In 1974, she used an equilateral triangle as the basic shape of the structures. She constructed two floor-to-ceiling sized structures with the apexes of the triangles open. One had its base down, while the other was inverted.\textsuperscript{70} Since they were placed side by side toward the rear, occupying nearly the full width of the space, the viewer met them as if viewing an Egyptian pyramid and its inversion. This work was a monument in physical and metaphoric terms, because the structures were large and were called “Mem,” which one can guess to mean “memento” or “memoir.” Cardboard taken from used boxes created an ironical combination with the monumental triangular form, which is usually associated with hard material. Block-like cardboard patches on the structures became the veneer of the trash monuments. This strange monumentality stemmed from the interaction with the crumbled exhibition space.

Thus, 112 Greene Street supported experimentation with large sculptures because of its rawness and spaciousness. As Highstein noted, “Anywhere else I would have thought that doing this was impossible, but at 112 it simply became a technical problem which I solved with the help of my friends.”\textsuperscript{71} The unpolished space enabled

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 50.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 69.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 61.
\end{itemize}
artists to maximize its volume, its architectural elements, and its material condition. In other words, 112 Greene Street functioned as a perfect technical support for installation work that needed huge space and free construction. Its rawness meant the possibility of loosening the frame of art, generating unconventional works, and even activating performative practices.

Harris’s *The Wheels* and *Flying Machine*, exhibited between March 17 and 29, 1973, combined mechanical structures and bodily performance (Figure 3-16). *The Wheels* was a large, wooden construction of four interconnecting cogwheels. It was activated when performers moved the gears by pressing their body weight on the bars connected to the cogs. *Flying Machine* was a 12-foot-long apparatus suspended from the ceiling; and raised by a winch with a harness-like contraption that held performers. Hung from the ceiling, performers swung and experienced flying against gravity. The performers’ bodily involvement tended to activate the pieces; and at the same time, through the performance, performers interacted with their own bodies as well as with the physical conditions the pieces provided. The physical interaction within the relationship between performers and works can expand into the interaction between performers and audience, if the audience is allowed to participate.

112 Greene Street was a performative space allowing various events to happen. It was a performative space in two respects. First, it encompassed the experimental practices that constituted new art forms and materials. Second, it actually served as the stage for performances. Exhibitions at 112 Greene Street were events where artists committed acts of defiance against the given conditions of art, and generated the audience’s bodily engagement to their works. That most audience of 112 Greene Street
were artists\textsuperscript{72} facilitated the reverse of the subject-object position between performer and audience, because they were “in sympathy with the ideas involved and therefore understood the work on all its levels,” as Tina Girouard recalled.\textsuperscript{73} Artists focused their attention on the process of production and reception of their work as an event. In other words, their communications and interactions at 112 Greene Street resulted in self-generating of the alternative structure of art production; and beyond that, interacted with the exterior environment by introducing materials from human life. The consequence of these processes was the expansion of artistic support and the range of artistic practice.

Regarding the notion of performativity, it is helpful to consult Erika Fischer-Lichte’s discussion, because she addresses performativity in terms of bodily engagement in theatrical situation and interaction between the performers and the audience to create a sense of community. She tries to describe the specific characteristics of performance and to grasp its new aesthetic criteria. Performance emerged as the crucial art form in the 1960s, when the arts made a performative turn by dissolving boundaries. Although most of her examples come from theater rather than performance art, she insightfully discusses the emergence of materiality and the shift of the binary relationships between subject and object, at the moment that theater shifted its focus from literature and characters to performance and the bodily presence of actors.\textsuperscript{74} She defines performative acts as “self-referential” and “constituting reality,”\textsuperscript{75}

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\textsuperscript{72} Eden, “Alternative Spaces—SoHo Style,” 38.
\textsuperscript{73} Alternatives in Retrospect, 40.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 27.
referring to John Austin’s language philosophy and Judith Butler’s gender identity. Her notion of performativity explains the shift from the minimalist concern with specific objects and bodily experience, to postminimal development and reference to minimalist materiality and theatricality, to performance art in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Performative acts, characterized as bodily acts that open possibilities to accomplish ritualized, public performance, destabilize existing convention and structure, to constitute new identity and frameworks. In terms of the arts, every art form has a performativ nature in that it has continued to redefine its identity through the history of art. Performance explicitly addresses performativity by its transient and dynamic process leading audience to physical participation in experiencing the materiality of real bodies and real space. This encounter can expand to the communal and social context. Thus, performance art is defined as an event between performers and audience, rather than a work of art.

The audience’s physical participation and the emergence of sheer materiality collapse the dichotomous relationship between subject and object, to defeat the signification process in which materials become a sign to be interpreted. The audience

\[\text{\cite{76, 24-29}.} \]
\[\text{\cite{77, 30-36}.} \]
\[\text{\cite{78, Max Herrmann, who was one of the pioneers of a detailed theorization of performance and focused on the relationship between actors and spectators, provides his deliberation on the significance of performance as a relational event, “[The] original meaning of theatre refers to its conception as social play-played by all for all. A game in which everyone is a player-actors and spectators alike … The spectators are involved as co-players. In this sense the audience is the creator of the theatre. So many different participants constitute the theatrical event that its social nature cannot be lost. Theatre always produces a social community.” See Max Herrmann, “Über die Aufgaben eines theaterwissenschaftlichen Instituts,” written in 1920 and republished in Theaterwissenschaft im deutschsprachigen Raum, ed. H. Klier (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchesellschaft, 1981), 19, quoted in Ibid., 32.} \]
experiences a performance piece as participants who primarily involve themselves in physical sensations and bodily interaction. The emergence of materiality is the significant part of performativity and performance, because materiality diminishes the illusion, initiates the artists’ and the audience’s attention to themselves, reverses their subject-object position, transforms them into co-subjects, and generates the autopoietic feedback loop between them. The presence of the artist’s body, spatiality of the site, and temporality of the performance piece generate the specific materiality of a performance as an event.

In May 1971, Tina Girouard performed Live House (Figure 3-17) with Jared Bark, Norman Fisher, Caroline Goodden, Michael Kern, Barry Le Doux, Penelope, and Hummingbird. Girouard invited the artists to perform “a room in a house,” as she orchestrated the whole performance by supplying materials and helping the performers select a place. The “entrance” and “hallway” was given as a theater piece by hanging patterned fabrics to make large sections; Girouard performed the “kitchen” on the floor of the street level; Goodden, a “back porch” in the basement; Kern, a “bathroom” over a hole in the floor; Fisher, a “closet” by using the old elevator shaft; Bark, a “library”; Penelope and her baby, Hummingbird, a “bedroom”; and Le Doux, a “roof” by using the right-angled space between a floor and a wall. The participants performed daily routines or a specific function of each room, to present their rooms. Girouard drew a table, pieces of tableware on it; and chairs on the floor with cooking ingredients such as flour, sugar, water, cayenne pepper, and coffee. Goodden demonstrated the “back porch” by combining a swinging hammock and squeaking crickets; while Kern and Fisher

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79 Ibid., 17-18, 46-51.
constructed a “bathroom” and a “closet,” respectively, by using spaces showing homologous structures, such as over a hole in the floor, and in the old elevator shaft. Meanwhile, Bark performed the “library” by acting the typical behavior at a library, quietly sitting and reading a book. Similarly, Le Doux walked on four slanting slats to perform the “roof” and marked its end with fog from a fog machine. But Le Doux’s action functioned to complete the formal resemblance of the slanting slats to the roof.²⁸⁰

Similar to the sculptural works above, the power of the site had influence on the performance piece. Because this old, iron-cast building at 112 Greene Street looked like as if it were an untamed wilderness, one can interpret Girouard’s Live House as a kind of ritual to domesticate the crude and raw space. Actually, Girouard had rooms of a house performed in this space. This room performance converted an uncontrollable wasteland into regulated functional sections, no matter how metaphoric the conversion was. Her action of putting the materials on the floor repeated the domestic activity of table setting; and that action also appropriated the sand-painting ritual, in metaphoric terms. Other performers participating in Live House also relied on the same dialectic, which operated on the premise that a specific activity performed in public was deprived of literalness, and endowed with figurativeness; and as a result, obtained a kind of ritualality.

This process suggested the transformation of everyday experience into artistic practice, or the cooptation of the former into the latter. In this sense, Live House inherited the notion of Allan Kaprow’s Happenings in the late 1950s. This work created an opportunity to reverse moments of art and life, even though audience participation

²⁸⁰ 112 Workshop, 16.
and improvisation were much less a part of her performance. Because most of the audience of 112 Greene Street was artists willing to respond to artistic experiment at any level, a condition where daily experience and aesthetic experience could be congruent was easily formulated. For instance, Billy Apple also transformed an everyday activity into an artistic practice in *Window Cleaning*, performed on June 5, 1971. From noon to 6 pm, he cleaned two dirty glass panes, in collaboration with Geoff Hendricks. Cleaning the windows implied reversal of the relationship between material and its support: “the removal of matter (cleaning) as opposed to the placement of matter in a given situation (context) using the absence of vision as a means of creating the absence of dirt.” Since the early 1960s, Apple had attempted to transform himself as an artist into an artwork, or to create an identity for a long duration of time, as part of his effort to “break down the separation between ‘art activity’ and ‘life activity’.” In this way, his window-cleaning performance was an attempt to blur the boundary between artistic practice and daily activity, as were his floor-scrubbing pieces.

Vito Acconci showed a direct encounter between the subject’s body and the other object in the crude space by performing *Combination* (Figure 3-18) on June 5, 1971, from noon to 6 pm, while Apple simultaneously performed the window-cleaning. Acconci used the old elevator shaft in the basement, with the remains of Matta-Clark’s *Winter Garden*. He brought three roosters and cramped himself into the lower part of the *Winter Garden* structure, embracing the roosters. This enclosed space consisted of a dirt floor, four feet by three and a half feet, a diagonal ceiling, a chicken-wire opening,

81 Press release, Negative Condition Situations, Billy Apple’s performances, April 21 and 28, 1973, Lucy Lippard papers, Box 1, Billy Apple folder, AAA.

82 Ibid.
and mirrored walls. Within this space, he tried to keep holding and recapturing the roosters that struggled to escape from him in order to make them feel his body as a part of natural surroundings. Acconci attempted to merge two different bodies by performing a space. He expanded his personal space to the point that it blurred the boundaries between him and the roosters. Mirrors installed on the wood structure reflected the merged image of the two bodies in contour.83 His activity was a kind of camouflage, or mimesis. At that time, Acconci was committed to the problem of merging spaces and bodies by mirroring, imitating, and manipulating; he studied the relationship between agent and subject in a certain region or situations, which could overlap each other and be transformed by activities of the agent. The audience was supposed to be passersby, not active participators for this activity. But once they looked at this performance, they became intensively engaged in this situation, because the room around the opening through which the audience could look was too small to accommodate casual viewers. The audience in this small space would try to determine the boundaries between human and animal bodies; and also between the combined bodies and the messy surroundings. This performance blurred the distinction between body and space by combining two bodies and nullifying the figure-ground distinction. Acconci wrote about this piece, “Performing a space: bringing the space to a point— if I concentrate on a limited region, I can be numbed to the rest of the space, and unavailable to other people— bringing the space to a finished state.”84 In effect, this piece demonstrated how the corporeality of the subject and the materiality of the space merged.

84 Vito Acconci, “Combination,” Avalanche, no. 6 (Fall 1972): 56.
Performances at 112 Greene Street, thus, were closely related to both the physical condition of the space and specific exhibition situations. Many performers dealt with large-scale installations that activated the space and the body. The Natural History of the American Dancers performed a dance improvisation on October 15, 1972, with the collaboration of Carmen Beuchat, Suzanne Harris, Cynthia Hedstrom, Rachel Lew, Barbara Lloyd, and Judith Padow for dance; and Richard Landry and Richard Peck for music. This event accompanied Richard Mock’s *Environmental Fabric Installation* exhibited in October 7 to 20. Mock hung long and wide fabrics on the wall and the ceiling. Some covered the walls; some dropped from the ceiling, like Spanish moss; some trailed on the floor, like a long wedding veil (Figure 3-19). Mock’s installation transformed the space into a jungle of fabrics. As the audience sat freely, wherever they wanted in the chaotic environment, the performers danced and moved in the remaining space. The performers believed their improvisational approach secured artistic freedom. This “anarchic, leaderless” improvisation enabled each performer to work in her individual style, with sensitivity to the body, to movement, to temporal patterns, and to spatial awareness.\(^{85}\)

Girouard’s installation piece, *Four Stages* (Figure 3-20), exhibited from December 16 to 28, 1972, was also activated by performers. The four stages were *Wall Space Stage*, which consisted of layers of printed cloth hung parallel to the ceiling; *Floor Space Stage*, a construction of boards and slats that could be arranged in a variety of ways; *Air Space Stage*, which consisted of pipes and boards hung at various levels; and *Sound Space Stage*, which was invisible piano wire strung along the floor. The space

\(^{85}\) 112 Workshop, 34.
was always filled with music from a tape record player. Every set continuously intrigued the audience and performers to work on the pieces.\textsuperscript{86} As Girouard recalls, “Things that I did then would never have been possible for insurance reasons. If I had tried to install this set in a regular gallery or museum, the architects would not have permitted me to.”\textsuperscript{87} The rough physical condition and the loose organization enabled 112 Greene Street to provide the artist with the technical and relational support for installation art and performance art. A whole string of performances occurred in 1971 and 1972, when 112 Greene Street was without any authoritative, administrative directorship.

Just as these installations became the support for both performances and a community, Matta-Clark’s \textit{Open House} (Figure 3-21), installed and performed in May 19 to 21, 1972, was a work that interrelated urban space and performance to create a community. This piece was a dumpster placed on the street between 98 and 112 Greene Street, whose inside was divided into three rooms with discarded doors and timbers. Ted Greenwald, a poet invited by Matta-Clark, installed a speaker and a cassette recorder playing the six and a half hours of sounds recorded while he drove a newspaper delivery truck around his delivery route. Matta-Clark also installed a piece on the sidewalk, with umbrellas and Goodden’s dog, Glaza. On opening day, his friends, Barbara Dilley, Tina Girouard, Richard Landry, Suzanne Harris, and Robert Prado performed with passersby. They moved through the narrow corridors in the dumpster with umbrellas held above, and walked or reclined with umbrellas, on the top of the container. People on the street could see their movement by the umbrellas. Matta-Clark

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{87} Liza Bear, “If I’m Lyin’, I’m Dyin’: On the Road to Catahoula, An Interview with Tina Girouard by Liza Bear,” \textit{Avalanche}, no. 8 (Summer-Fall 1973): 51.
barbecued a pig beside the container, for participants. This event was a kind of house party with food, inviting friends to hang out.  

On the artistic level, this piece demonstrated expansion of the exhibition space outward and expansion of the artistic material and medium into a broader range. Urban trash was used as the material for an installation work that was in-between sculpture and architecture. This ambiguous stance was how Matta-Clark experimented with the notion of art with architectural language. What he explored in these works was architectural elements such as a basement with an abandoned elevator shaft, parted walls and floors, and activities occurring in abandoned buildings. Open House brought architectural structure and experience into minimalist structure and experience. This piece consisted of rectangular structures and was supposed to be bodily experienced. But its structure referred to architecture and made the audience experience it as architectural space rather than sculptural space. As Stephen Walker points out, Open House gave visitors the “intensive or experimental experience” of a spatiality that relied on bodily experience rather than vision. He ascribes this experience of “other modes of navigating (or involving non-optical vision)” to a too-small space for visitors to visually explore from a certain distance. This installation piece was given so that visitors could experience actual space, encouraging the role of bodily memory in experience.  

Thus, it transcended the phenomenology of minimalist sculpture by reminding us of bodily movement and experience in everyday life, rather than raising a sense of bodily perception within the artistic setting.


Furthermore, the dumpster provided a physical site for the artists’ performances. *Open House* combined various conditions: readymade, assemblage, site/theater, architecture, sound performance, and audience participation. Performance generated a merging of these artistic supports and provided the possibility of formulating a community among participants. The pig roast was an aspect of feasts or rituals based on a community. Performances that led the audience to participate caused the blurring of boundaries between artists and audience. The audience came to complete this performance-related installation work. *Open House* was a kind of arena theater that removed the physical barricade between actors and audience, to cause a new subject-object relationship. Because the stage was installed in the street, as a makeshift house for a party, the interaction between participants was more mundane than artistic. The role reversal in the participatory process made the audience mingle with the artists and the work; and their bodily co-presence and the feedback loop between them created a sense of community.\(^{90}\) *Open House* suggested the situation of urban living, in terms of the housing problem and the community culture. This was the moment when the artistic might transmute into the sociopolitical.

*Open House* was a critique of urban living conditions, a suggestion for an alternative homeless residence, and a critique of American consumption producing excessive garbage. The piece itself was the practical equipment for urban life, a dumpster. It resembled the functional structure of a residence, because the three rooms inside had doors between them. This piece promoted a sociopolitical discourse about

\(^{90}\) Fischer-Lichte, 40-41, 51.
housing problems and the waste crisis of the city in the early 1970s. As Trisha Brown interprets it, this was an awkward interpolation of a suburban activity as an aspect of the good life into the bad life surrounded by garbage. Lee also notes the issue: Open House was connected to Matta-Clark’s other works such as Garbage Wall (1970) and Winter Garden (1970), because all of them equated art and architecture to trash and urban waste. Lee sees this equality of sculpture/architecture and garbage as a gesture toward the gallery, which can be displaced to the sewer. In other words, Open House implies the dislocation of art into the entropic condition of urban life in SoHo. Here artistic media and principles mixed and collapsed into a status of disorder, which resulted in blurring the boundaries between art and life. In many aspects, 112 Greene Street functioned as the basis for this transition of art into a jumble, because it became the site that contained heterogeneous media and activities together; and at the same time, expanded exhibition context to urban resources and life. In addition, it had the possibility of creating a community of participants.

Matta-Clark’s previous works, Garbage Wall and Pig Roast, had already anticipated this expansion of artistic practice to life: the former provided a setting for a four-day performance of domestic activities, while the latter inserted the communal pig barbecue feast into the urban environment filled with junk. In Garbage Wall, Matta-Clark installed a wall made of combined, solidified urban junk on the street in the front of St. Mark’s church’s 10th Street entrance. This work was a combination of sculptural project and theater. The street with the garbage wall became the site for working, eating,

91 Lee, Object to be Destroyed, 198-201.
92 Jacob, Gordon Matta-Clark, 43
93 Lee, Object to be Destroyed, 198.
washing, cleaning, and other domestic activities, whose debris were removed to a street container he rented. Matta-Clark called this piece “a home-street cycle.” St. Mark’s church, a venue for poets and performers in the 1960s, provided a performing site that encompassed the garbage wall and the performance. Matta-Clark performed *Pig Roast* under the Brooklyn Bridge, with *Jack*, his work made of crashed cars and debris, and urban trash as the backdrop. In *Pig Roast* and *Garbage Wall*, Matta-Clark combined communal and domestic activities with the dilapidated urban environment. *Open House* was in the same vein. Besides critiquing urban life and the environment of the Capitalist economy, these works implied a common thought: the community Matta-Clark tried to present through these projects was based on the collective imperative to waste and the new vision of human life and society.

**Food: Art in the Communal Context**

The *Food* restaurant (Figure 3-22) epitomized both the notion of a community that Matta-Clark showed in *Open House* and *Pig Roast* and the reality of artists’ life in SoHo. The network composed of 112 Greene Street, *Food*, and *Avalanche* magazine demonstrated the ways artists built their community at the local level. As the artist of 112 Greene Street, an early alternative art space, Matta-Clark’s idea of producing art corresponded to the way this space was run and what it implied about the relationship between art and life. He understood art in a social context “as an essentially generous human act” to encounter the real world and to imply the degree of freedom in a society. For him the urban fabric became the main medium and site for his works, because it meant “social economic and moral conditions as much as the physical state of streets or
structures throughout the city,” just as 112 Greene Street served as the support for artistic experimentations. As previously mentioned, the early alternative spaces had a close connection to the artists’ lofts in SoHo at that time, which were also residential places for poor artists: both of them functioned as working and social space for artists. Matta-Clark treated the artist’s studio as both a space beyond the confined white-cube gallery space and a space for artists’ living and working for themselves. Furthermore, the alternative spaces reflected downtown New York’s dilapidated physical state and its anarchic conditions. These environments surrounding artists in SoHo led to the melting of art and life. Matta-Clark utilized these circumstances in expanding his artistic practice into the creation of an artists’ enclave in that area. Douglas Crimp views him as the symbol of the 1970s’ SoHo art world: “Matta-Clark is currently the figure most identified with the spirit of downtown Manhattan as a utopian artists’ community and site of artistic experimentation in the 1970s.” In this conjunction, his involvement in the Food restaurant demonstrated his utopian impulse and its effect on the artists’ community and its incorporating art into life.

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95 Art Cards, ca. 1973, Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark on deposit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, reproduced in Moure, ed., Gordon Matta-Clark, 410.

The *Food* restaurant was an artistic reflection on the ideal American life represented through the modernized kitchen of a suburban home in the postwar period, whether the artists involved intended it or not. As Vice President Nixon argued for the virtues of the American life based on “a utopian ideal of the home complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles” at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959, suburban life combined with consumerism had been the model of American home and life. By the late 1960s, the antiwar movement, the countercultural trend, and the new feminism broke this consensus of postwar domesticity. A note written by Matta-Clark, entitled “The Better Homes & Garden” and referring to the “Large color photos taken in model Westinghouse kitchens,” shows that he matched the ideal American life to the suburban home. This note implied a critique of the suburban community of domesticity and consumerism. *Food* replaced this postwar concept of community based on suburbia and suburban homes, with the culinary communion in the inner city. Matta-Clark emphasized that opening this restaurant was not for profit; it was to restore “the art of eating with love.” In other words, he renewed cannibalism to provide “fulfillment by giving ourselves to the tastes and delights of a banquet.” He contrasted this cannibalism to “cannibalism suburbia,” by which he meant the defoliation of the vegetable domains by the spread of insulated

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98 Ibid., 157-158, 175.
homes in arable lands and forest. Food was a new model of the ideal life in the
dilapidated city, when ideal life in suburbia concluded with the exploitation of nature by
consumerism. Here the kitchen transformed from the appliance-laden space of
domesticity and consumerism to the gathering place for a communal banquet.

The Food restaurant revealed the utopian impulse that artists engage in
establishing and running this center of the artistic community to support their art and life.
When Goodden opened Food at Matta-Clark’s suggestion in September 1971,
cooperating with Suzanne Harris, Tina Girouard, and Rachel Lew, she wanted this
place to be multifunctional for the community of local artists:

I wanted to have fun cooking and it seemed to me that it would be just as
much fun to have dinner outside, rather than in people’s homes all the
times. I also wanted to provide a meeting place for the community because
there was nothing there. The third thing I was after was to make a working
environment for artists that they could survive in. There was very little work
around that would allow you to work just the amount you needed to and
give you the freedom to go off and do a show. I never asked anyone how
long they intended to stay.

The takeover of a failed Puerto Rican restaurant, Cominas Criollas, initiated the
Food restaurant. Since there were few amenities for living in the abandoned industrial
district of SoHo at that time, Food was a kind of resource for living as well as a venue
for artistic practices; not to mentioning its function as a public kitchen and dining room in
this ruined city. Running a restaurant in a district where few residents lived, risked
producing little profit, and even losing money. The restaurant, Food, was a business
that contradicted the logic of capitalism. This inefficient business came to an end in
1974, when Goodden sold it to an English woman.

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101 Cannibalism Suburbia, Notebook 1262, ca. 1969-71, EGMC, transcribed in Moure,
Matta-Clark Writings, 75.
102 112 Workshop, ix.
The *Food* restaurant was part of the artists’ own economy of support, based on sacrifice and collaboration; spending more resources on the well-being of local artists than on producing and accumulating profit. It provided meals for local artists, using the best ingredients at a relatively low price. Every morning, about 4:00 A.M. Goodden went to the Fulton Fish Market to buy the catch of the day; and received fresh bread baked nightly from Mad Brook Farm, Vermont, to whose residents she gave free rent. Richard Nonas recalls that Goodden bought ingredients and cooked food as she did at home. Because of *Food*’s seemingly noncommercial nature, no one was willing to pay for the food, and worried about Goodden’s losing money in running the restaurant. She hired untrained artists as restaurant staff. She paid them enough to live and allowed them flexible work hours to continue their artistic careers. Artists were free to suddenly drop out for their shows and to come back when they finished. Although over 100 artists worked at *Food*, providing all types of labor during the first year, nobody seriously concerned about the fiscal problem. Artists thought of this place temporary like everything existing as material for them. Goodden recalls the unproductive character


105 Waxman, “The Banquet Years,” 31, 33 n22. Artists’ names that appeared in “Food’s Family Fiscal Facts” posted in *Avalanche*, no. 4 (Spring 1972) counts about 125. Goodden confirmed in an email dated January 9, 2005 to Waxman that these artists all worked at the restaurant.

106 Ahmed, “An Interview with Richard Nonas.” Nonas, He recalls the mood of that time in SoHo and a general thought of *Food*, “Most of us thought of everything as temporary! We were full enough of ourselves to think of everything temporary as existing primarily as material for us to make things out of. Everything was there for us to change and discard. None of us took it seriously as an ongoing thing except Carol.”
of the restaurant, “Though we consumed food, *Food* consumed us. It was a free enterprise which gave food away much too freely. The joy is the idea. The idea, as an idea, worked. It was a beautiful, nourishing, vital, stimulating new concept, which was a living, pulsating hub of creative energy—and piles of fresh parsley.”\(^{107}\) In terms of economic profitability, it was an absurd business to spend money to compensate for the deficit caused by ineffective management of personnel and ingredients, and support of artists’ creative activities. Those involved committed themselves to producing and participating in temporary events there, rather than doing the ordinary work of running a restaurant.

Most artists thought of the *Food* restaurant as an artistic practice. Matta-Clark was the most committed to combining his artistic practice with this restaurant. Its whole preparing process and its first year were a kind of performance work artists collaborated on. Even in the initial phase of organizing the restaurant, Matta-Clark, who cofounded it with Goodden, tried to sell the idea of *Food* to Leo Castelli as an artwork.\(^{108}\) In August he wrote “A Matta’s Proposal” to his friend, artist Lee Jaffe, suggesting he collaborate with *Food*, as a culinary communion performing a banquet, but Jaffe did not accept this proposal.

Actually Matta-Clark designed the restaurant interior and its culinary appliances during this preparation period. His sketches in 1971, *Ideas for Food’s Kitchen*

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\(^{108}\) Jacob, Gordon Matta-Clark, 39.
demonstrated his arrangement of the kitchen and its appliances. His engagement in the kitchen design was in connection with his interest in alchemic and culinary process, revealed in his laboratory-like studio on Chrystie Street and his organic works such as Agar pieces and Incendiary Wafers in 1969 and 1970. For him, building Food was, in a sense, to build a workshop for alchemic or culinary experimentation.\(^\text{109}\) He installed the kitchen open to the restaurant hall, like a performance stage. Customers could see the whole process of cooking, and became a part of the culinary activities. The flow of activities from the kitchen to the dining hall created the community of a banquet, by converging separate eating activities at individual tables into the kitchen, the resource of that eating practice.

Meanwhile, the poster announcing the opening of Food and the advertisement appearing in the fall 1971 issue of Avalanche magazine resembled a photographic documentation of a performance piece, because they presented the restaurant under construction; not its resultant appearance. These images still showed the old sign, “Comidas Criollas;” not the new one, “Food.” Two artists on a ladder were about to take down the old sign of Comidas Criollas, with the window panes foamed to clean and with three people watching the scene. These images emphasized the phase of tearing down the old restaurant, rather than the phase of constructing the new one, which implied invasion of art into life and vice versa, beginning with a break from the existing system. Here, the setting, performers, and audience for an artistic event merged with everyday life.

During the first year of *Food*, Matta-Clark made a film portraying a day at *Food*, from early morning to late night. The 1972 film, *Food*, a black-and-white sound film running 43 minutes, contains the whole day of the restaurant *Food*, from shopping at the Fulton Fish Market in the early morning, preparing ingredients, and cooking, to serving customers, to wrapping up a day by cleaning and checking out the day, and preparing for the next day by baking bread late at night after closing the restaurant. This film was intended to document the routine of *Food* and to show how art and life merged in everyday activities. By starting the film with the sequence of shopping at the Fulton fish market, and continuing the next sequence at *Food* with market sounds overlapping, Matta-Clark connected these two places and tightened this connection with the scene of carrying the box of fish into the kitchen. These sequences imply the influx of both life itself and its energy into the restaurant that was concurrently an artistic venue. The first 25 minutes show the process of preparing food. The camera runs from the storage room to the kitchen, scanning the cooking activities and the long cook tops. The long kitchen stretched into the dining section. These two interlocking spaces mingle two culinary activities: cooking and eating. The later part of the film shows food being served to customers, some of whom are artists and some are normal customers. As Matta-Clark is filming, Goodden casually talks with customers and artists using a microphone. This quasi-interview leads them into an artistic community, by sharing the process of making a video documenting a scene from life. This film sketches the restaurant business of *Food* as a mixture of artistic activities and everyday activities.

Matta-Clark organized a guest chef program on Sundays and converted the restaurant to a performance place. For him, *Food* did not differ from 112 Greene Street.
Both of them provided a venue for artistic practices. *Food* invited artists for cooking performances, which were a combination of artistic events and special dinner menus. Its open kitchen, uncommon in American upscale restaurants in New York, became a stage one could watch from customers’ tables. At night, when the restaurant was lit up, one could watch the stage and the audience through the long bank of windows from Wooster Street. A guest artist chef’s cooking and serving at *Food* was transformed from ordinary labor to artistic performance. Guest chefs included Matta-Clark, Michael Goldberg, Donald Judd, Richard Landry, Italo Scanga, Joan Shapiro, and Keith Sonnier. Most of them brought experimental dishes or an experimental approach to their dinner. Mark di Suvero, for instance, planned to serve food with his crane through the window, but this did not happen. On the contrary, Robert Rauschenberg, who was a regular, served homemade chili.110

The most infamous meals were Matta-Clark’s. One was live brine shrimp in the hollow of a hard-boiled egg sliced in half, which was called “Alive.” When he served it to customers, he enjoyed watching their reactions. Some stared at the live shrimp or screamed in surprise. Some got up and walked out of the restaurant.111 Another infamous meal was the “Matta Bones,” a full-course meal featuring oxtail soup, green salad, marrow bones, stuffed bones, frog legs provençal, pot-roast bones, sliced peaches, and coffee or tea. Afterward, diners brought home the leftover bones—Hisachika Takahashi, who was then an assistant to Rauschenberg, drilled holes through and strung them together.112 “Alive” and “Matta Bones” experimented with two

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110 Ibid., 38; Waxman, “The Banquet Years,” 28-29, 33n18.
111 Ibid.
relationships: between subject and object and between artistic practice and communal activities by means of an everyday space. In terms of performance, the live shrimp reversed the subject-object position, or that of performer and audience. In cooking phase, Matta-Clark was the performer who demonstrated the process of preparing the meal; the customers became the audience, by watching that performance. When the plates were set in front of customers, the customers were transformed into performers. Their responses to the food became artistic performances. For the Matta bones dinner, Matta-Clark used byproducts of leftovers food as material for craftworks to be given to the diners. These bone necklaces were souvenirs of visiting this artistic venue, or trophies of a ritualistic feast celebrating an imaginary, successful hunt. During the dinner, *Food* was a site representing human activities ranging from primitive to civilized. The guest chef dinners continued until fall 1972 when Matta-Clark lost interest in *Food*. Between then and 1973, Robert Kushner, initially hired as a dessert chef, grew into *Food*’s acting manager. This performance-like special dinner program began to disappear as the restaurant was controlled in a more systematic and administrative way.

Matta-Clark also dealt with *Food* as the material and semiotic support of a sculptural piece. One of his first cutting pieces, exhibited with *Walls paper and Bronx Floors* at 112 Greene Street, stemmed from this support. This piece was a chunk of wall cut out from the old structure of the restaurant in 1971, when he renovated the building to open *Food*. This piece of wall showed the site of origin and a physical part of the

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113 Waxman, “The Banquet Years,” 32.
building. It was part of architectural syntax to create association process to imagine the whole structure.

*Food* was an optimal site for artistic experimentation, mostly because it was “organized without organization.” Despite everyday routines of restaurant business, Matta-Clark and Goodden made opportunities for artists intervene in this culinary business scene with artistic practice. As Nonas points out, *Food* was almost a liberated community of local artists:

> The rest of us thought of Food as a party in which everyone who was involved, including the customers, were as much a part of it as the organizers, because Food was organized without organization. The problem that Carol faced with Food was that no one really believed her when she said that she was in charge – no one paid any more attention to her than they did to anyone else. Things were organized by whoever chose to organize on that day! That level of short-term energy, when everyone thought that they were in charge of what they were doing until it began to collapse, actually meant that everything was being done in the least efficient way.\(^{114}\)

Like 112 Greene Street, *Food* was a self-organization of local artists whereas its owner took care of financial matters. Most artists in SoHo thought of this restaurant as a long banquet of the artists’ community. This is one reason *Food* could generate artists’ performances and meetings. The locality of *Food* was based on the fact that a home and a family represented the main aspects of relationship constituted within *Food*. This was revealed in the advertisement, “Food’s Family Fiscal Facts” that appeared in the spring 1972 issue of *Avalanche*. The use of the word “family” to indicate artists who worked there demonstrated that they thought *Food* was a community absent interested relationships. This restaurant was the result of a strange utopian impulse to build a community in an urban void where everything for living evacuated, after the collapse of

\(^{114}\) Ahmed, “An Interview with Richard Nonas.”
the manufacturing business. When more spacious industrial sites were developing outside the city, another urban lifestyle was emerging from the abandoned industrial district, the incubator of experimental art.

**Anarchitecture: Rejoice in Architectural Problems**

After *Food*, Matta-Clark organized the *Anarchitecture* group, a loose group of artists who mainly worked and exhibited at 112 Greene Street, including Suzanne Harris, Jene Highstein, Tina Girouard, Richard Landry, Lew, Nonas, Laurie Anderson and Bernard Kirschenbaum. They met about once a week, in 1973 and 1974, usually at Richard Nonas’s studio; though they would move around from studio to studio and from bars to restaurants.¹¹⁵ They pursued the other side of the dominant modernist notion of a city and architecture. When Matta-Clark studied architecture in Cornell University, he had an opportunity to rethink modern architecture based on the legacy of Le Corbusier’s functionalism and to defy the formalist approach to architectural modernism, by enrolling Colin Rowe’s Urban Design Studio. The focus of this studio was on architectural contextualism and a critique of modernist architecture. However, Rowe was interested in the translation of any given context into abstract form, without speculative understanding of specific environment and historical context. Ironically, this despicable architectural education allowed Matta-Clark to engage with the boundaries of architectural space, departing from the rational and systematic approach to architecture. For his artistic career began shortly after graduating from Cornell in 1968.¹¹⁶ It seemed to Matta-Clark that artistic activity provided more room to deal with ambiguity of architecture.

¹¹⁵ Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark*, 33, 121.

Anarchitecture was initially the idea of Matta-Clark. The meaning of the term is elusive, but generally indicates the meeting, the exhibition, and Matta-Clark’s idea of architecture. As shown on the invitation for the exhibition, there were thirty-three variations of puns with “anarchitecture.” This means anarchitecture presupposed openness to any architectural ideas. The Anarchitecture group, first of all, rethought the modernist architectural language and provided another side of architecture, in the Anarchitecture show held between March 9 and 20 in 1974 at 112 Greene Street (Figure 3-23). While the term Anarchitecture was settled through group discussions, by combining “anarchy” and “architecture,” Matta-Clark developed the concept throughout his drawings and writings, proposals, and interviews. Predating the Anarchitecture group, Robin Evans first used this term in his article in 1970, “Towards Anarchitecture,” to address conditions of maximum choice or maximum freedom for architectural design. Concerning the relationship between freedom and order, Evans said, “It is not necessary to structure human patterns of action to obtain anti-entropy of the overall social system.” Whether Matta-Clark read this article or not, he certainly used this term to indicate a new architectural approach beyond functionalist modernist architecture. “Anarchitecture” deals with spaces that present values beyond their

possible use. He specified these spaces as “metaphoric voids, gaps, left-over spaces, places that were not developed.” His focus was to discover and present the functional level that could be parallel to the nonfunctional level; in other words, to ridicule the idea of function with absurd imagination of space.

In the Anarchitecture show, found photographs, black-and-white in 16 x 20 inches, were exhibited by each group member, except Anderson and Nonas, who exhibited drawings; and Highstein, who exhibited a photo collage. Since they had different interests and ideas on architecture, their works did not fit into Matta-Clark’s proposal, sent to the members a few months before the show. The exhibition mainly consisted of images of wrecked vehicles and buildings ruined by disasters, of absurd moments and scenes related to architecture and a city, or of urban garbage and traces of street lives. They included partially demolished buildings and a collapsed construction site, a parking lot covered with debris after a tornado, wrecked boats at a marina, houses moving on a trailer or a barge; a partially demolished building whose wall has a sign saying “available,” three gravestones with a cityscape in the background, a man peeping into a board fence through a square opening, a man in a manhole looking at a woman’s legs, heavy construction machines with skyscrapers as the backdrop; a stack of garbage bags on the sidewalk, empty liquor bottles on the sidewalk, a temporary shelter tent built of trash in a landfill, a littered nook with traces of making a fire in an empty can.

The wretched vehicles and buildings represented nonfunctional conditions, which Matta-Clark was interested in regarding architecture. Attlee points out that these photo

120 Bear, “Gordon Matta-Clark: an Interview,” 34.
images are “on the metaphorical level, representing the opposite of the harmonious structuring of society and the urban environment that Le Corbusier believed was the highest aim of civilization.” Matta-Clark imagined the *Anarchitecture* exhibition as a showcase of ambiguity of architecture. His intension was much clearer in his proposal than in the actual exhibition. He sent a letter to Goodden from Paris, written on December 10, 1973 as a proposal for the exhibition, to illustrate his anarchitecture ideas to the group (Figure 3-24). The proposal consisted of two parts. Part one presented twenty anarchitecture ideas and part two contained nine word works. These ideas traversed three categories: a reversal of architectural function, a new concept of the residential place, and activation of absurd nonfunctional spaces. The proposal converged on different concepts of space and architecture from the concepts of modern architecture and urban planning had pursued. Matta-Clark must have dreamt of a utopia at the local level, departing from a utopia based on the functionalist principle and advanced technology. Here his idea of architecture corresponded with the artists’ community in SoHo formed around 112 Greene Street and *Food*, and other alternative spaces and artists’ collectives. In this sense, his proposal for the *Anarchitecture* exhibition was a preparatory work to mock the dream of the modern architectural utopia.

The first idea he presented in the proposal letter was “a reaction to the prime-crime axiom of modern design fighters,” which accompanied a drawing of a rectangle board, on whose edge, “Nothing works. Form falls function” was written. These

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121 Attlee, “Towards Anarchitecture.”
122 Ibid.
two sentences were the reversal of the functionalist axiom of modernist architecture, “form follows function,” which was what Matta-Clark called “the prime-crime axiom of modern design fighters.” By “fallow,” he simultaneously punned on “follow” and reversed the meaning. Space and architecture nullifying use value, function, were the topic of item 8, “Fake Estate,” and item 15, “A Machine for not living.” This was a reversal of Le Corbusier’s functionalist dream of architecture. The mocking of functionalism reached its peak at Fake Estates, a project Matta-Clark had been conducting since 1973: purchasing useless spaces such as gutters and curbs, at auctions sponsored by the City of New York. Through this project, he collapsed the concept of architectural property based on functional value, by collecting leftover slivers of land gridded for city planning. Owning these inaccessible spaces was the conceptual play that formed the absurdity of anarchitecture.

Furthermore, Matta-Clark imagined the city or residence available for vermin, such as rats, flies, or other bugs. Item 2 was related to reversal of the sanitation system: “Ideas for accommodating domestic pests,” with the examples “Rat Run City,” “Dead Fly Housing,” and “Our Six-legged Friends.” Matta-Clark specified the first two as a steel case, multiple dwelling for rats; and an adhesive paper to catch flies. Modern architecture and city planning separated animals from the urban area. As the result, animals went underground or were exterminated. The idea of accommodating domestic pests meant the city could embrace a habitat for vermin. Atlee takes this suggestion as was transcribed as “form follows function” in this book. Here I think “fallow” was not a typo, but Matta-Clark’s intentional choice of word, evoking a pun.

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., 371, 373.
126 Ibid., 370, 372.
Matta-Clark’s black humor that the rat and its “shadowy unexplored regions” should be cherished.\footnote{Attlee, “Towards Anarchitecture.”} On literal and metaphorical levels, this idea related to the expansion of human lives into unexplored or prohibited regions.

This reversal of architectural function legitimized the discovery of hidden spaces and the imagination of absurd spaces. He imagined movable spaces, which would be based on his observation that the modern city was mutable and unstable, such as item 10, “The Collision between a House on Wheels and a Bridge Shown,”\footnote{Moure, \textit{Matta-Clark Writings}, 370, 372.} and item 17, “Space Travel.”\footnote{Ibid., 373.} They proposed to use a photo of a New York State motor vehicle accident report and to deal with spaces between moving vehicles and other moving vehicles, respectively. Item 18, “A Perfectly Comfortable Place to Live between the Stones,”\footnote{Ibid.} was an absurd take on the residential place. This place could be possible only in an imagination beyond the conceptual play with gutter space as real property in his \textit{Fake Estates} project.

Matta-Clark implied his new concept of residential place, reflecting his interest in street and homeless lives. Item 9, “Paper Bag Privacy,”\footnote{Ibid., 370, 372.} was a project to collect empty bottles in paper bags, at the corner of Houston and Bowery, and to take snap shots of spaces likely to appeal to peeping Toms. He intended to address the problems of freedom and privacy related to street life. Item 8, “Shopping Cart Housing,” was a temporary shelter and vehicle for street life. Without images, Matta-Clark described this

\footnotetext{127}{Attlee, “Towards Anarchitecture.”}
\footnotetext{128}{Moure, \textit{Matta-Clark Writings}, 370, 372.}
\footnotetext{129}{Ibid., 371, 373.}
\footnotetext{130}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{131}{Ibid., 370, 372.}
project as “The Story of a Bum on Wheels. The Review of Hovel Homes with Examples of Cardboards Newspaper Shelters.” This combination of shopping cart and cardboard structure was a movable, multifunctional, and compact residential device street people invented for the minimum of needs.

Item 19, “A Living Place to (Carry-All),” was a packable residential space for travelers and the homeless to carry on the head, in the mouth, in the backpack, around the waist, and on the feet. It was an attempt to expand the residential space into streets and roads and to blur the boundaries of architecture, vehicles, and clothes. What Matta-Clark thought of here was not only the homeless life, but also the nomadic life. Nomads could enjoy their lives on the road with maximum individual mobility and freedom, relying on advanced technology as Marshal McLuhan had already anticipated in the 1960s. But Matta-Clarkian nomadic life was not based on high-tech devices, but on equipages reusing urban garbage.

Interestingly, Matta-Clark’s ideas were reiterated, enlarged, and materialized in the exhibition, The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere, at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, May 2004 to March 2005. Of the four sections of the exhibition, these three related to Matta-Clark’s ideas: Nomads, Reclaim the Streets, and Ready to Wear. Gregory Sholette has recently suggested that the artistic

\[132\] Ibid.
\[133\] Ibid., 371, 373.
\[134\] Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette, ed., The Interventionists: Users’ Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 11-12. This exhibition consisted of four sections as follows: Nomad presents artists who produce work that encourages individual mobility and freedom; Reclaim the Streets, artists who produce actions that occur within the public sphere; The Experimental University, artists who deployed aesthetic strategies in other discourses including
utilitarianism this exhibition highlighted was “disconnected from comprehensive visions of radical, social transformation.” Nonetheless, he stressed that the interventionist art is based on realization of the current situation, characterized as globalization and commercialization of culture. When the business world has coopted even the avant-garde’s aspiration to merge art into life, this show demonstrates a new form of resistance: interventionist art, which provides a socially engaged aesthetic in unsanctioned space, or outside the mainstream.

The exhibition organizer, Nato Thompson notes that “interventionism is not a political movement disguised as art,” instead, contemporary interventionists provide tools for engagement and the opportunity to recognize individual politics in life. To develop tactics for small subversions in life, interventionists collaborate with other fields outside the art world and connect with other spheres of activism. What they share with Matta-Clark is the belief that they want not results, but opportunity, or possibilities. They suspend the political for more specific issues. Just as the interventionists do not contribute to a political project or a revolution, so Matta-Clark did not commit himself to solving a major architectural problem. Instead, he dealt with ideas outside the formal anthropology, biotechnology and urban geography; and Ready to Wear, artists who produce tools and clothing to augment the wearer’s sense of personal autonomy.

Gregory Sholette, “Interventionism and the Historic Uncanny: Or; can there be revolutionary art without the revolution?” in Thompson, The Interventionists, 140.

Ibid., 133-140. Gregory Sholette notes that the artists who participated in this exhibition inherited the radical legacies of the Russian avant-garde and of artists’ groups between 1960s and 1980s. Constructivism and Productivism attempted to contribute to the revolution by combining art into life; the artists groups used art as an analytic instrument to criticize politics and powers hidden in life and society. But the exhibition represents the way in which artistic practice combines with other social and cultural fields and activists in the period of growing globalism and cultural industry since 1990s with the political suspending.

architectural discourse to mock the principle of modern architecture pursuing functionalist control of the whole system.

In a proposal for a project regarding the World Trade Center, he defined anarchitecture as follows; “This term does not imply anti-architecture, but rather is an attempt at clarifying ideas about space which are personal insights and reactions rather than formal socio-political statements.” Analyzing the word into the prefix, “ana/an-” and “architecture,” anarchitecture is loaded with meanings of the prefix, “up; upwards, back; backwards, again, anew.” This indicates a new way to view and do architecture. The idea in this proposal was for individual politics to recognize the architectural reality of everyday life, rather than a master plan to revolutionize the architectural system. Matta-Clark already noted this tactic of anarchitecture, “Anarchitecture attempts to solve no problem, but rejoice in an informed well-intended celebration of conditions that best describe and locate a place.” He contrasted “solve” and “rejoice” in this statement. These two words epitomize the difference between a revolutionary program and a political intervention. The latter is implemented on the level of daily life.

In addition, anarchitecture was connected to the local community and other cultural activities. Matta-Clark lived in Greenwich Village in his childhood and experienced the community’s fight against the New York City’s renovation plan. This led him to search for a new approach to the urban space and architecture, different from “a mass-produced utopia built on strictly functionalist foundations.” The emphasis on

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140 Attlee, “Towards Anarchitecture.”
locality was a precursor for a virtue the interventionists demonstrated to attack the
globalism that accelerated in the 1990s. Matta-Clark's architectural gestures also started
with the local community of lower Manhattan. The abandoned industrial district and the
dysfunctional urban environment betrayed the dream of the modern utopian city. The
useless spaces Matta-Clark and the Anarchitecture group dealt with were leftover and
hidden spaces that defied the principle of profit production. The local community was a
backwater of globalization that had just begun to formulate in the 1970s. Local
communities were doomed to be leftovers of the globalized era as self-contained
enclosures with their own economy and communication networks.

Within this enclosure, Matta-Clark dreamt of a utopia, which was an inversion of
both a rural utopia and an urban utopia. It was based on neither a modern architectural
plan nor high-tech appliances. His concept of anarchitecture suggested an alternative
architectural utopia within the abandoned city zone; while Food and 112 Greene Street,
in which he was intensively involved, were the realization of primary communities in a
metropolis. Matta-Clark summarized his dream for this anarchitectural utopia in two
proposals for the Anarchitecture project:

DESIGNING FOR COLLAPSE
DESIGNING FOR FAILURE
DESIGNING FOR ABSENCE
DESIGNING FOR MEMORY\textsuperscript{141}

Matta-Clark's artistic practice indirectly anticipated the notions of relational art and the
relational aesthetic; and interventional art and the social aesthetic.

\textsuperscript{141} Letter, Gordon Matta-Clark to the group, Gordon Matta-Clark's projects for
Anarchitecture, December 10, 1973, EGMC, reproduced and transcribed in Moure,
Matt-Clark Writings, 371, 373; Proposal for Anarchitecture, Endless City, 1974, EGMC,
reproduced in Moure, Matta-Clark Writings, 376-77.
Avalanche and Video Performance Show: Expansion of Artistic Network and Emergence of New Media

The year 1974 witnessed significant shifts at 112 Greene Street. 112 Greene Street began to change into an administered structure. Matta-Clark left the space, finishing the early period of his career with the Anarchitecture show, his last project at this space; and began indulging in building dissection through national and international sites. The first group exhibition for video performance was held. These changes implied extension of the artists' network and institutionalization of alternative space. The self-sustaining artists' community at lower Manhattan included 112 Greene Street, Food restaurant, and Avalanche magazine. All of them gave artists physical support for artistic practice; and also social support, by establishing social networks among local artists. Among them, Avalanche magazine, founded by Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear, had a wide connection to artists in other national regions and other countries.

Avalanche magazine shared its artistic interest and economic system with 112 Greene Street. It also focused on the recent art trend of crossing the boundaries between sculpture and performance. Bear and Sharp knew that interdisciplinary practice based on the mutual influence of New York sculptors, choreographers, and composers was a strong trend for the postminimal period. Like 112 Greene Street and Food, Avalanche was positioned at the border between the self-sustained community and the capitalist system. It primarily aimed to support art by serving as an

alternative space for artists and become a long-term conceptual work for the artists involved.\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Avalanche} supported artists departing from object-oriented work, and covered minor artistic venues. It was certain that \textit{Avalanche} did not work on the principle of capitalist economy; rather its role was to disseminate their artistic discourse against commercialization, throughout the art world. Ironically, the magazine functioned as a space for anti-commercialized work and as publicity for it. Sharp acknowledged that he did not deny the market: “If anything I was trying to encourage these artists to get into the market, helping them market their work. I’m not against the market.”\textsuperscript{145} As Gwen Allen says in her book, \textit{Artists’ Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art}, \textit{Avalanche} played an important role in transforming the SoHo community “from a loosely affiliated group of like-minded individuals into a thriving artistic community.”\textsuperscript{146} In effect, it provided artists with opportunities to critique the art world and with means to penetrate the art market.

In this context, the \textit{Video Performance} exhibition demonstrated video as an emerging new medium for art, introducing the network of \textit{Avalanche} magazine into 112 Greene Street. Sharp organized the exhibition in January 1974, with the first issue of \textit{Avalanche Newspaper}, which had just shifted its format from magazine to newspaper, doing a feature on this exhibition (Figure 3-25). Ten artists, Vito Acconci, Keith Sonnier, Robert Bell and Richard Serra, Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Ulrike Rosenbach, Dennis

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 13. Along with sweat equity, \textit{Avalanche} was financed exclusively by advertising, international subscriptions, newsstand and bookstore sales (many from Europe), and public and private grants. Its publisher from 1970 to 1972, Kineticism Press had no capital; since 1974 \textit{Avalanche} had received grants through Center for New Art Activities, Inc. a small not-for-profit corporation.

\textsuperscript{145} Allen, Artists’ Magazines, 111.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 115.
Oppenheim, William Wegman, and Sharp, performed nine events every evening, January 13 through January 20. Since there was no budget for this exhibition, each artist had to finance his/her own production and to use his/her own video equipment or borrow it for nothing from the Media Equipment Resource Center (MERC), the Young Filmmakers’ Foundation.\textsuperscript{147} This exhibition was truly collaboration of three: the artist, the organizer, and the exhibition space.

Literally and metaphorically, the \textit{Video Performance} show anticipated delocalization of 112 Greene Street by inviting artists from nationwide and international venues to the SoHo art community. Joseph Beuys, who made his first visit from Germany to the U.S., participated in this exhibition by showing the videotape of his public dialogue at 112 Greene Street on January 12. This public dialogue was conducted at the New School on January 11, at 8 pm, with an audience of about 350 filling the auditorium and hundreds of people waiting outside.\textsuperscript{148} German artist Ulrike Rosenbach did her first performance in New York, \textit{Isolation is Transparent}, at this exhibition. Chris Burden, who newly entered the New York art world from California, performed \textit{Back to You}, his first New York performance at 112 Greene Street during the show as well.\textsuperscript{149} This exhibition was the extension of \textit{Avalanche}’s modus operandi, which was basically a close collaboration between two artists, one from inside the magazine and one from elsewhere in the world.\textsuperscript{150} For the \textit{Video Performance} exhibition,

\textsuperscript{147} Liza Bear, editorial for \textit{Avalanche Newspaper} (May-June 1974): 3.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 5. Beuys visited to the U.S. from January 9 through January 19, 1974 at the invitation of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Inc. Andy Mann shot a videotape of the whole thing.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} Bear and Sharp, \textit{The Early History of Avalanche}, 6.
112 Greene Street provided the exhibition space while *Avalanche* organized the show by developing the concept and inviting artists from the New York art world and from outside. Becoming part of the *Avalanche* network at this show, 112 Greene Street had a chance to encompass artists working outside New York and the emerging video medium.

Many events at this exhibition used the video medium as means for critiquing the changing communication environment. They treated the video medium as a socio-cultural support for communication, rather than as a material support for art. As delving into the technical support of video, they also looked into the mechanism of the video-based communication system in society. Sonnier’s *New York—LA Hook-up* dealt with a telephone-call situation; Acconci’s *Command Performance* set up an audio and video circuit with a video installation; Burden put his body performance into TV reality in *Back to You*; Wegman emphasized the audio element of the video medium by using a radio broadcast situation; Serra and Bell, referring to the game theory, criticized the dilemma of choice in the commercial TV structure. Here the artists covered communication at the daily level to mass communication.

Sonnier set up a situation connecting two places via telephone line: one was a private line for the Grinstein residence in L.A.; the other was a public line for the audience gathering at 112 Greene Street. What Sonnier stressed here was the collision between private and public communication. Technical difficulty in realizing the speaker phone for about 300 people at 112 Greene Street revealed the conflicts of multiple communication situations. Sonnier emphasized the private character of the telephone call. The performance at 112 Greene Street was to transmute this private aspect into a
public situation, to see what happened when the audience was “listening to supposedly private conversations in a public situation,” and the audience as a receiver could “formulate a story line.” This performance concerned an unexpected personal communication situation, where the spatial identity, the localized time, and the subjects involved at each spot were different and indeterminate.

In *Prisoners’ Dilemma* (Figure 3-26), Serra and Bell used game theory to make a dramatic event using television conventions; and to interpret the choice enforced by the commercial TV situation. As the audience entered the space, a documentary audiotape was played. It dealt with methods used in criminal investigation. The audience then viewed pre-recorded footage of a district attorney investigating two murder suspects. The attorney separately urged each suspect to sign a confession by proposing that the first to sign got a reduced penalty and the other, a raised penalty. This first part presented the morality of the prisoners’ dilemma: “to confess or not to confess” as a TV convention. Here Serra tried to reveal “on the one hand the politics of TV programming and on the other hand the specific dilemma of politicians like Agnew and Nixon.”

Serra was interested in representational relationships between the home audience and television actors, and between television and people in their daily lives.

The second part was a live performance that repeated the same situation as the prerecorded play at 112 Greene Street. Leo Castelli and Bruce Boice were separately asked to choose one of two options. If both chose A, they would have to stay downstairs.

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for four hours; if both chose B, they would have to stay downstairs for two hours. However, if one chose A and the other chose B, the one who chose A would get 100 dollars and leave immediately, while the one who chose B would have to stay downstairs for six hours. The performance scene was separated by a board wall, to keep the audience from viewing the scene directly. The audience could view the event only on the four monitors. Serra structured the space to resemble a TV system in which the remote audience watched event on screens. By this, he was “trying to make a political point about how we exist in relation to commercial TV as a medium.” The audience simply wanted to watch something. He inverted the casualness of the home audience to explore the home audience confronting the possibility of manipulative television network television. By this, he tried to transform the isolation of the home audience into their solidarity.

This live performance projected on monitors revealed the politics of television network and the politics of the art world. Here Serra came to observe the same mechanism in the art world as the network television. He said, “the audience felt that the precarious artist-dealer-critic balance was going to be exposed and ridiculed.” But Castelli and Boice did not fall into the trap. Both of them chose B and stayed downstairs for two hours. They kept their dignity by both choosing to lose a little, rather than try to win and risk complete defeat. Serra read their choice as deliberate and in collusion with each other. Though it was unintentional, their choice dealt with the politics of image rather than power relationships among dealers, critics, and artists.

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153 Ibid. 27.
154 Ibid.
In *Command Performance* (Figure 3-27), Acconci constructed a circuit of two video monitors and one camera: “The space is dark. At the foot of one column, a video monitor faces a stool in front of the next column; the stool is lit by a spotlight, from above—a video camera is focused on the stool, transmitting the image to a monitor in front of the third column, where a rug is set down for viewers to sit as they enter (the viewer can watch the stool position come on screen, become a show).” Acconci pre-recorded a videotape of him lying down humming, singing, and whispering to himself, with the camera gazing down on him. As this hypnotic incantation became increasingly agitated, he is driven further and further into his fantasy and hallucination. This pre-recorded tape was played on the first monitor. On the second monitor the audience viewed an empty stool in a spotlight.

Acconci focused on the television circuit and its function to paralyze the audience. He combined “video with something live” to set up a situation of video’s use of home companion and video as a place for close-up. The audience viewed live video of the empty stool on the second monitor, and heard live sound from the pre-recorded video on the first monitor. For Acconci, the position of the stool was “a built-in limit, a point of withdrawal,” because it was the ambiguous position from which one could watch and be watched. If the viewer was in front of the first monitor, he or she was in the analyst position to observe Acconci, or the patient. However, the viewer could only listen to his hallucination with an empty stool on the second monitor. The absence of the subject transferred the viewer from the analyst’s position to the patient’s position. This

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155 112 Workshop, 56.
implied that television’s closed circuit hypnotized the audience to relegate them out of the critical position into passive consumers.

The collaboration between 112 Greene Street and *Avalanche* constituted a new field of discourse regarding the emerging video medium in the age of television. This enabled artists to critique the communication system, from personal communication to network television. Along with Matta-Clark’s *Anarchitecture* show, the *Video Performance* exhibition led art practice to the discursive political level. The latter exposed the politics of video medium applied to a public communication system; while the former exposed the other side of the modernist city planning seeking harmonious structure of an urban environment. Here the artists stood at the analyst position. They asked the audience about existing repressive conditions and environments, which allowed them to invent new language. Since this new language was based on unuttered desire, which had no boundaries, 112 Greene Street experimented with it in the early 1970s.

Separation from the mainstream art world enabled 112 Greene Street to insecure the artistic freedom of the local artists’ community. 112 Greene Street and *Food* composed a utopian space that allowed an imaginary enclave for artists. By establishing these spaces, artists in SoHo went beyond a mere utopian impulse to the level of daily life. Noticeable here is the concept of closure. Fredric Jameson describes its meaning as “here as elsewhere.” Closure serves for the system of the imagination. Jameson develops this “here as elsewhere” into the utopian space that could be momentarily formed as a “self-contained backwater within the general differentiation process and its
seemingly irreversible forward momentum." This notion formalizes the emergence of the first artist-founded alternative spaces in lower Manhattan. In the middle of artists' protests against mainstream museums, such as MoMA, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Guggenheim Museum, artists at these spaces, away from both this turmoil and art institutions, seemed to focus on self-reflective experimentation for rethinking the concept of art and medium. Although 112 Greene Street and its neighborhood were not part of a particular utopian program, one can grasp the concept of closure here. Suzanne Harris notes this aspect, "We didn't need the rest of the world. Rather than attacking a system that was already there, we chose to build a world of our own." As Jameson suggests, "utopia emerges at the moment of the suspension of the political." The artists' community formed around 112 Greene Street had utopia's strange externality from the social field. It can be said that artists' utopian community transiently exist on the border of the social field. The fact that the idea of 112 Greene Street began from parties at Saret's loft at Spring Street and that the idea of Food evolved from a party at Chrystie Street hosted by Matta-Clark emphasized the characteristic of these spaces as a temporary and special event departing from the

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157 Fredric Jameson, Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 15. For another conception of imaginary utopia, which indicates the preformed utopian space in a narrative before it is historically formulated, see Phillip Wegner, Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).


sociopolitical context, but at the same time a part of human life. In fact, it was only during the first two or three years that 112 Greene Street and *Food* functioned as truly liberated artists’ spaces.
CHAPTER 4
THE KITCHEN: EXPLORING THE VIDEO MEDIUM

In June 1971, the kitchen of the former Broadway Central Hotel was transformed into a laboratory theater. Three artists, Andy Mannik and Steina, and Woody Vasulka, established The Kitchen to showcase electronic media in collaboration with the Mercer Art Center, which was an Off-off-Broadway theater complex. Mannik found the physical space, while the Vasulkas provided technical resources for running this space. The Vasulkas wanted to share their works, electronic equipment, and video knowledge with other artists in a more expanded space than their loft, which already bustled with artists wanting to experience the new medium. They attempted to locate video as an artistic medium in the interdisciplinary arena that encompassed music, performing arts, and electronic technology. Under the administrative umbrella of Howard Wise, The Kitchen could function as a free experimental space, apart from institutional restrictions related to personnel and fiscal concerns.

The Kitchen emerged against the backdrop of a new socio-cultural topography shaped by communication technology and television culture. The new electronic technology seeped into every aspect of society, including the language of art. For this reason, The Kitchen encouraged artists to cope with such circumstances and to extend the potentials of electronic media, paving the way for creative use of electronic technology in art. Video emerged as a privileged medium that provided an innovative vision of the world with a new sense of space and time. Video functioned as electronic medium, to form a specific audio-visual imagery; and also as a new cultural logic, to deconstruct the established logic of representation. Increasing interest in video among artists coincided with increasing doubt about the viability of Greenbergian modernism.
Ironically, video artists crossed the border of formalist medium specificity by pursuing the medium properties of video. This was made possible because the video medium seemed so complicated that it should be defined with multiple properties and technical support. Video had its technical base in the electronic signal that can be transformed into both sound and image. The Kitchen functioned as an experimental venue for artists to elaborate the intermedial character of video. The video medium’s intermediality was the crux of the development of The Kitchen as an interdisciplinary venue in the 1970s.

By the early 1970s, The Kitchen was the only space on the East Coast that regularly presented electronic media art. It moved its site twice since it opened on June 15th, 1971: in summer 1973, it moved to a loft at 59 Wooster Street in the SoHo district; and in 1988 it moved to the present building at 512 West 19th Street in the Chelsea district. Before Mary MacArthur initiated her directorship in January 1978, The Kitchen was under the artist directorship of the Vasulkas from 1971 to 1973 and Robert Stearns from 1973 to 1977. In 1973 it was officially incorporated as a not-for-profit institution, with the legal name, “Haleakala, Inc.” However, its organization was still informal. During the artist directorship, The Kitchen still maintained its status as artist-run space that encouraged artists to practice challenging projects and brought radical work to a mainstream audience. By contrast, under the tenure of MacArthur, it transformed from an experimental artist-run space into a well-administered multidisciplinary institution.

Here I examine activities at The Kitchen from 1971 to 1977. Video art emerged in the late 1960s and developed through the 1970s. The Kitchen was a place open to any informal, elusive media and events and to every artist who wanted to conduct interdisciplinary projects.
In his 1975 article, “Television: Video’s Frightful Parent, Part 1” David Antin summarized two significant discourses regarding video art.

Actually two discourses: one, a kind of enthusiastic welcoming prose peppered with fragments of communication theory and McLuhanesque media talk; the other, a rather nervous attempt to locate the “unique properties of the medium.” Discourse 1 could be called “cybercrat” and Discourse 2, because it engages the issues that pass for “formalism” in the art world, could be called “the formalist rap. Though there is no necessary relation between them, the two discourses occasionally occur together as they do in the talk of Frank Gillette, […]”

The first discourse was related to communication technology and television industry. It generally concerned television’s special concept of time and space, especially its illusion of immediacy, and its cultural dominance in everyday life. The second discourse concerned early video artists who tended to use video as a new electronic tool to create and manipulate image. He emphasized that both discourses occurred together, although they seemed logically discrete. In other words, these discourses are equally based on television as their technical basis and working reference.

Beyond the technical novelty, video also appealed to artists’ interest with its critical potential, which stemmed from “temporalization of space in video” and video’s closed-circuit structure. Rosalind Krauss discussed the psychological condition of video by analyzing the mirroring function of its closed-circuit structure with psychoanalytic concept of narcissistic neurosis. Particularly, the video feedback, caused by the closed-circuit structure of video, relates to the “suspended space of narcissism,” where temporality and separation between subject and object are erased.¹

analyzed this closed-circuit structure of video by correlating video art with television system and television culture in his book from 2007, *Feedback: Television against Democracy*. He figured the image-event effects of video, examining commercial and noncommercial practice of video (television, and art and activism) from 1960s through mid 1970s. The closed circuitry of television created the one-way communication and prevented participation of audience. Video art and activist video production enabled feedback and participation by opening the circuitry of television and broadcasting.\(^3\)

Whereas Joselit finds a critical potential of video from its referencing to media environments, Maureen Turim focuses on the technical aspect of video. As she puts it, “video has the potential to participate in the delegitimation of the functionality of actions and narratives of causality. It can question the “natural” order of things by and through which legitimation is grounded.”\(^4\) Video broke down the identification of a narrative formation within a moving image with reality itself by altering “our usual orientation to time and space” and showing editable reality in moving images. Video had possibilities to create different concepts of time and space so we can open new visions of the world. In effect, video art could provide an opportunity to reinterpret the realities. In this way, The Kitchen allowed artists to experiment with the potential of the video medium to intervene into a broader cultural discourse.

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3 David Joselit, *Feedback: Television against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), xii. Joselit classifies the effects of commercial video into three categories: feedback (rational interchange or destabilizing feedback), the viral (parasitic function of image circulation), and the avatar (generation of false icon resisting the nominal identity). Video art and activist video production criticize these anti-democratic aspects of the television.

This condition of radical openness interlocked with the loose organization that ensured artists freedom and the indeterminate position of video as a medium in art. This chapter addresses how The Kitchen played a role as a testing ground for video art to expand the notion of the video medium from its phenomenology to its cultural and psychological logic. In particular, diverse video activities, such as image-processed videos, intermedial performances, and closed-circuit video installations, proliferated in The Kitchen because of the equivocal identity of the space. In effect, The Kitchen was an open forum to present the expansion of video’s possible medium, from its technological and physical capabilities, to its intermedial properties, and to the video medium beyond its physical support.

**Technology, Television, and Video Art**

Before the founding of The Kitchen, remarkable events showed the permeation of electronic media and television into the realm of art. Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) was founded in 1967; *The Medium is the Medium* was broadcast on WGBH in March 1969; and the exhibition, *Television as a Creative Medium* was held at Howard Wise Gallery in May 1969. These three events illustrate the transforming relationship between artistic expression and electronic technology at that time. Artists’ engagement in new electronic technology during the late 1960s and early 1970s shifted focus from collaborating with engineers to creatively using video for artistic expression. This shift to artists’ independence for use of video implies that the optimistic anticipation of combining technology and art was hard to be expected under the hegemony of capital, which participated in the Vietnam War, because art was used for the conscience of the management. Pamela Lee interprets the art and technology collaborations in the
1960s as “reciprocated by a love of art by technologists.” Art came to depend on the technical achievements of industries, and also on economic support from the corporation.

E. A.T. was one famous example of the collaboration between art and industry in that period. Billy Klüver, Robert Rauschenberg, Fred Waldhauer, and Robert Whitman founded it in the aftermath of 9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering, a collaborative exhibition between artists and scientists in October 1966 (Figure 4-1). This exhibition demonstrated how sound and visual equipment incorporated with artistic activities, and also sought a way for artists to access new technology, scientists, and industries. The 10 artists participating in this show, Steve Paxton, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Robert Rauschenberg, Yvonne Rainer, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Robert Whitman, David Tudor, and Öyvind Fahlström, worked with engineers and scientists from Bell Telephone Laboratories. Experiencing the effects of collaboration among artists, engineers, and sponsors, the founders of E.A.T came to expect their organization to “act as a transducer between the artist and the industrial laboratory.” They believed E.A.T. could “catalyze the inevitable active involvement of industry and technology, and the arts” and that it would “guide the artist in achieving new art through new technology.” They had an optimistic vision of the cooperation of art, technology, and industry to ensure that artists get relevant needed to shape the technological world.

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5 Lee, Ibid., 14.
7 E.A.T. News 1, no. 2 (June 1, 1967): 1.
In fact, electronic technology became a significant part of avant-garde artistic practice in the 1960s. Until the mid-1960s, light and kinetic sculptures were the typical forms of combining art and technology, since early twentieth-century avant-gardists worked with mechanical and industrial technology. For instance, Marcel Duchamp presented mechanical metaphors such as *Bicycle Wheel* and *The Bride Stripped by the Bachelors, Even* (a.k.a. *Large Glass*) in the 1910s, and László Moholy-Nagy built *Light-Space Modulator* in the 1920s. The two artists responded to the emergence of photography and film as artistic media, recognizing light as an expression material that would substitute for pigment. Works and writings of these two artists implied that optical and mechanical means would become the main devices for artistic expression. Beyond the mechanical technology, the artists of *9 Evenings* intensively used postindustrial technology, which meant new hardware technologies in communications, data processing, and control and command instrumentation, as well as advanced audio-video equipment. The postindustrial technology was based on electronics, which was different from industrial machine. Participating artists used electronic devices, such as microphones, speakers, amplifiers, sound processing devices, and film and TV projectors, combining them with constructed structures and bodily performances.

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9 Marcel Duchamp, *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 36-38. Duchamp brought the analogy of a film screen in the upper part of *Large Glass*, which expressed the interaction between men and woman as a kind of mechanical system. In *The Green Box*, a collection of his notes for *Large Glass*, Duchamp describes “Top Inscription,” which consists of three square panels within a cloud-shape area in the upper part of *Large Glass*, as what was represented in movement in photographic method.

The E.A.T. members believed an institution could harmonize art and technology. E.A.T. set a precedent for programs and exhibitions including art and technology. Many of following art and technology exhibitions and programs depended on corporate sponsorship. Along with increasing grants from governmental and public foundations, E.A.T. expanded its financial basis to direct support from large corporations. Corporations used art politically in the context of the Vietnam War, in which they supplied systems and information technology for the “automated battlefield.” The corporate ties seriously hurt the reputation of E.A.T. when it planned to build an art and technology pavilion for Expo’70 at Osaka, Japan.¹¹ Clive Barnes, the theater critic for the New York Times criticized Nine Evenings as “rather like an elephant going through two years of gestation and then giving birth to a mouse.”¹² The utopian desire to shape the world with collaboration between art and technology fell into the trap of the mutual exploitation; the donation of money and engineering aid, on one hand, and the use of art to soothe the conscience of management, on the other. E.A.T. members did not fully consider the dual role of art under industrial support. Nonetheless, Nine Evenings demonstrated the emergence of postindustrial art, which departed from the traditional machine art; and anticipated the popularity of electronic media in art.

In addition to direct contact with industrial sectors, artists gained access to the electronic technology and equipment through the new media programs of public television stations such as KQED in San Francisco and WGBH in Boston. In the late


1960s, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation committed to the public television experiment with video technology and the mass communication system, as an artistic medium and for cultural enrichment. The Rockefeller Foundation sponsored the artist residency program, the “Rockefeller Artists-In-Television” at WGBH, to give artists an opportunity to work in “association with television production staffs to explore freely the techniques inherent in the medium.”\(^\text{13}\) The Ford Foundation financially supported the Public Broadcasting Laboratory, to encourage public television stations to “produce superior cultural and public affairs programs for a nationwide audience.”\(^\text{14}\) Artists participating in these programs investigated video and television for potential as artistic media and to assert its relevant and influential role in society. The greatest merit of working at Public television studios was easy access to expensive video equipment. In 1969, the two programs produced and broadcast a television program. David Oppenheim, cultural executive producer of the PBL invited six artists including Nam June Paik, who was the first resident artist for Artists-In-Television, to produce video work to be broadcast through WGBH. This was The Medium is the Medium.

On 23 March 23 1969, WGBH broadcast The Medium is the Medium. This marked a moment when television played a role in burgeoning video art. This program introduced a new way to use television as a creative electronic device and as a showcase of the fledging video art. In addition, this program allowed artists to solve


some difficulties in making video work by providing expensive production cost, complicated new technology, and distribution system of network television.

_The Medium is the Medium_ was a half-hour-long compilation of short video works by Aldo Tambellini, Thomas Tadlock, Allan Kaprow, James Seawright, Otto Piene, and Nam June Paik. Each artist tested video synthesizers and visual techniques in his work. Most of them electronically manipulated and deformed original images by using feedback effects, positive and negative images, overlapping images, and electronic sound. The works presented compositions of electronically manipulated images and sound, and also statements on socio-cultural situations. This is similar to the broadcast composition of television programs, in that a television broadcast also consists of a diversity of categories, such as newscast, educational programs, entertainment programs, and so forth. The collaboration with a television station changed artists’ attitude toward video. Some of the six video works showed cultural and social considerations. As Douglas Davis mentioned, the artists realized the broadcast environment and “changed perceptually and politically.”

Above all, by working contact with a television station, video artists could make the best use of electronic mixing to create video imagery. Most of the works were formal combinations of images and sound. Tadlock produced _Architron_ using the electronic optic machine he invented to create kaleidoscope-like patterns of color and light. These abstract images rotate while a song by the Beatles is played. Seawright used bodily performance of two dancers as the main imagery of his piece, _Capriccio for TV_. Bulent Arel’s electronic music corresponded with the movement of dancers and the positive

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and negative change of colors. Tambellini added a social connotation to his work, *Black* (Figure 4-2). This black-and-white video begins with abstract circular designs, and shifts to street scenes and images of children. Children’s chatter about blackness generates a meaning among black and white images moving with various sounds. The accelerating projection of images and sounds can imply the proliferating images in television culture, on one hand; and the 1960s’ experience of social change, on the other.

The artists also grasped the potential of video as an effective medium for cultural critique. Video can comment on the communication environment dominated by television. Paik’s *Electronic Opera no.1* (Figure 4-3) is composed of dancing bodies in an abstract close-up shot saturated with colors, Richard Nixon and other well-known figures deformed by a magnet, and fluctuating blue-and-green waved circular lines. Paik’s main interest was to experiment with electronic image-processing techniques to create abstract television programs. The voiceover issued commands to the audience: “This is participation TV. Please follow instructions.” Paik’s instructions ensue: “Close your eyes. Open your eyes,” and so forth. The instructions continue at certain intervals. In a sense, this voiceover satirizes a television culture in which the audience is a passive receiver. Or, it simply acknowledges Marshall McLuhan’s distinction of media hot and cold. Television is a cool medium, which is low definition and high in participation or completion by the audience.\(^\text{16}\) Finally, the piece starts over again from the beginning. Then, saying “Turn off your TV set,” Paik tells the audience how to escape from the loop of passive TV-watching. But this is an ironic moment that the audience depends on another command to turn off the TV, not by the act of will.

this arises another task of video artists: to critique the psychological structure of video and to present alternative ways to actively participate in television culture.

Supporting artists to produce video works for television could be an attempt to change the institution of television and hence have a broad cultural impact. For example, Paik’s video demonstrated that video art could enhance television as a tool for cultural diversity and global integration. Video experimentation at public television stations intended to match artists and engineers, to test the potential of television as a medium, and to interest the broader audience into “the creative process behind television broadcasts.” Video art, in its rudimentary phase, was somewhere between communication technology and media culture. Even in the early 1980s, it was said video belonged to the overlapping area of art and information. As Paik said in 1982, “video art is half in the art world and half out.” He diagramed the area of video art as the common area between art and information. In other words, the aesthetic vocabulary of video art came from both the electronic images and what constituted them. Video art would vary based on this condition.

Thus, video art developed according to video’s transformation from part of the television system to a medium for artistic expression. *TV as a Creative Medium* marked the moment that video art entered into a gallery space. This exhibition stemmed from Howard Wise Gallery’s uncommon interest in artistic machines, and from the changing media environment caused by television in the 1960s. The gallery was “a central

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17 The Rockefeller Foundation, “Boston Television Station Opens Experimental Workshop,” quoted in Nadeau, 32.

exhibition space for artists who worked in light, motion and sound” in the early 1960s.\textsuperscript{19} Wise’s interest in new technologies shifted from light and kinetic art to electronic media, in the late 1960s. He supported experimenting with new technologies by artists, whose works were apart from the conventional aesthetic.\textsuperscript{20} As television emerged as the main power to transform the cultural topography, Wise organized an exhibition to address how art had been affected by this all-pervading influence of television. According to his observation, working with television, artists of the TV generation “were fascinated with the results they were able to achieve,” and sensed the potential of television as the medium for their expression.”\textsuperscript{21} By paying artists to complete their projects included in the show, Wise made \textit{TV as a Creative Medium} independent from the industrial sector and from media institutions.\textsuperscript{22} It was the first and prototypical exhibition to forecast video works in the near future.

Ten works by ten artists in the show explored the television apparatus and video recording techniques. In his \textit{Three Experiments with the TV Tube}, Earl Reiback presented a TV tube whose walls are painted with color phosphors; \textit{AC/TV (Audio-Controlled Television)} by Joe Weintraub translates music into a complex moving image on a TV screen; John Seery’s \textit{TV Time Capsule} plays with on and off, or plugging and unplugging television as a relic of this civilization. Among aspects of television, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Marita Sturken, “TV as a Creative Medium: Howard Wise and Video Art,” \textit{Afterimage} 11, no. 10 (May 1984): 5.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Howard Wise, preface to \textit{TV as a Creative Medium} (New York: Howard Wise Gallery, 1969), np.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Wise, \textit{TV as a Creative Medium}, np. Individual artists received the technological help from engineers. For instance, Earl Reiback worked with the cooperation of R.C.A. tube laboratories; Paik was a resident artist for the Rockefeller Artist-in-residency program.
\end{itemize}
closed-circuit structure fascinated artists because it could effectively render video’s functions “a psychological mirror, a social tool, and a communication device.”23 In *Wipe Cycle* (Figure 4-4), Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider used live and delayed feedback, broadcast television, and taped programming. Nine television screens show images of gallery visitors, found footage from commercial televisions, and shots from pre-recorded tapes, which are alternated from one monitor to the next in a rhythmic way. This work is a visual environment generated by television culture, and also an analogy for the process of receiving a cyclic pattern of video information. *Everyman’s Moebius Strip* by Paul Ryan invites the audience to walk into a private room and follow pre-recorded audiotape instructions. Then the audience can watch a videotape of themselves performing these actions.

By bringing television into a gallery space, *TV as a Creative Medium* revealed the broader possibility of video for artistic practice such as video installations and video-involved performance. Marita Sturken said, *Wipe Cycle* was “one of the first video installations to involve the viewer in an active role on the screen.” Paik’s *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (Figure 4-5) was a sculptural piece of two miniature television sets as a bra, and also a live performance of Charlotte Moorman playing a cello, which manipulated the images displayed on the two miniature television screens of her bra. In sum, this exhibition served as a major momentum for the video medium to combine with artistic practice such as painting, sculpture, installations, and performance, as well as with broadcast television. Artists began to experiment with video as an art medium and for social use within the art venue.

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23 Sturken, “TV as a Creative Medium,” 7.
The Kitchen as a Live Audience Testing Laboratory

Closing the gallery at the end of 1970, Wise tried to find other ways to help artists work with electronic media within the New York art scene. In 1971, he established a nonprofit organization, Intermix, which he soon renamed Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), to obtain money for video artists and to help them produce art. His support for video art was based on his awareness of the commercial and destructive use of electronic technology and television as well as his curiosity about new technology.

Wise believed that when television dominated the process of perceiving realities, artists could transform the audience’s perception and understanding of art and technology.24 His commitment to new media, precisely because of its transformative potential motivated him to close his gallery and start EAI. He wanted to help artists “seeking imaginative ways of utilizing modern technology to humanize people.”25 Wise said,

You see, the reason I wanted to move in the direction of video was that I felt it could get a story across without making it propaganda. I thought the Vietnam War was an obscene thing, and you knew damn well when you were watching Nixon on television that he was lying through his teeth. That’s one of the virtues of television. It gets inside the exterior of a person and lets you know what he is really thinking.26

For Wise, it seemed experimentation with video as artistic praxis could demystify the television images and eventually allow for a new ideal communicative environment. Video, in structural terms, exemplifies the ideological system that underlies the television apparatus. Video outside the network television is able to play two different

24 Ibid, 8.
25 Howard Wise’s letter on December 15, 1970 to explain why he closed the gallery, quoted in Ibid.
26 Ibid.
roles: to conduct an aesthetic practice by experimenting with its potential as optical means; and at the same time to criticize mass communication environment and by making room of feedback and participation. This double function of video required the experimental venue to hone its technical tools as well as its aesthetic. The Kitchen was almost the only venue where artists could exhibit their video works directly to audience.

Establishment of The Kitchen was based on cooperation between Wise and the artists’ group, Perception, whose original name and idea Eric Siegel conceived. During the brief period that Wise closed his gallery but still occupied the gallery space, the Perception group was formed. Group members included Steina and Woody Vasulka, Andy Mannik, Frank Gillette, Vince Novak, Eric Siegel, and others. The practical aim of the group was to receive funds mainly from the New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA), with the administrative support of Wise’s EAI for electronic equipment with which they could conduct programs of The Kitchen. They submitted the grant application in June 1971 and received $15,000 to initiate their activities at The Kitchen. Wise and the Perception group shared an optimistic view of electronic media as artistic media. They expected video to comment on television and to broaden the potential of technology by making art. Initially, The Kitchen was established as a kind of affiliate space for Perception. The artists defined it as “a group of video artists, working extensively with abstract qualities inherent in video, often applying sound and video

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synthesizers to the creation of video images."\textsuperscript{28} The group’s artistic goal was primarily examining the properties of video as a medium.

According to the application to NYSCA, the Perception group proposed three media experiments. Project 1 was “to provide a video-equipped location where artist may carry on experiments in the media with or without live audience.” Project 2 was “to provide an electronic-image workshop” for exploring video synthesizers and new electronic instruments. Project 3 was to “offer the facilities of the workshop for the video taping of experimental programs,” involving theater groups, dance companies and individual artists.\textsuperscript{29} The three projects combined new audio-video equipment, a space for performing, and interdisciplinary collaboration, aiming to seek media experience and to extend forms of perception for both artists and audience.

Programs during the Mercer Street period focused on exploring how new technology and electronic media could incorporate the arts. During the 1971-1972 season, video occupied most of The Kitchen’s programs. Wednesday Evening Open Screenings, Weekend Video, and Vasulka Video presented more activities than other public performances, such as dance, music, and theater.\textsuperscript{30} In addition, Perception became a small fraction of the artists who presented in 1972 at The Kitchen, because of the influx of artists who wanted to show their work, with the encouragement of EAI. As Steina Vasulka recalls, “The Kitchen and Perception became two different groups under


\textsuperscript{29} Grant Application of Perception, 1971, Document KBP, The Vasulka Archive.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. According to the interim report submitted to NYSCA for the 1971/72 programs, the ratio of performances conducted as video programs to those as electronic music, cinema, and dance program was 55 to 17 days. In addition, Wednesday Evening Open Screenings gave 23 performances.
the Electronic Intermix’s umbrella." By the 1972-1973 season, The Kitchen became a space prolific in various informal art practices, although it limited the programs to electronic music and video. It maintained the three main areas of activities, and added intermedia programs and seminars on cybernetics and sensory awareness. It functioned as a “clearing house” for video and intermedia programs.

The term “intermedia” implied the significant aspects of video works done at The Kitchen. First, its founders defined intermedia as a combined use of different art forms in their proposal to NYSCA. They specified this term as collaborations between different art forms such as between art and music, art and dance, art and theater, and so forth. The artists used this term at the practical level, to indicate what happened at the venue.

Secondly, one can use the term intermedia to indicate technical aspects of the video medium itself, the aspect that enables video to present audiovisual performance. This quality is based on the physical quality of video as electronic signal and the connection between electronic technology and human sensory system, using the concept of cybernetics. The early video artists who focused on the medium property of video as

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33 Ibid. The document names “The Midnight Opera Company” programs as intermedia experience, as explaining, “The Midnight Opera Company is currently engaged in the following project, ‘The Cosmic Opera’, an intermedia experience. The term 'intermeia' signifies a combined use of different art forms."
electronic medium attempted to use video as a means to complicate human perception. Here I would like to consider two kinds of intermediality of video: audiovisuality of video as electronic medium and collaborative potential of video with other art forms.

The interest in multisensory work and intermedia practices, both of which The Kitchen mainly presented, was related to a utopian desire to expand human perception through media technology to meld man and environment. Many video artists, such as Juan Downey, Gillette, Ryan, and Paik, shared a belief in cybernetic technology to avoid the evil effects of modern industrialization. Downey said, “Cybernetic technology operating in synchrony with our nervous system is the alternative life for disoriented humanity.” Expanding our perception can reshape the relationship among man and space, time, and nature. This belief of the video artists was based on McLuhan’s understanding of media, which prevailed through the 1960s. McLuhan understood that electric technology has extended our central nervous system beyond the limits of both time and space, because various media could extend our senses and our nerves. For him, “the final phase of the extension of man—the technological simulation of consciousness” can be accomplished when “the creative process of knowing” is fulfilled at the level of the whole society. The artists experimented with electronic media in order to seek alternatives to dehumanized technology and alienated life, by using technology for art.

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36 McLuhan, Understanding Media, 19.
In these concerns, The Kitchen’s workshop programs dealt with video image-processing, biofeedback, and three-dimensional studies. Video artists devoted themselves to exploring television and beyond, to create alternatives to standard television. They focused on the phenomenology of electronic media and on the perceptual conditions the new technology formed.

The Kitchen encompassed various art forms that could use the electronic media as a means of expression. Artists began exploring video as an audiovisual medium based on the electronic signal processes. The phenomenology of video intensively relies on the fact that video is an electronic medium. In other words, video depends on the electronic transfer of signals, which allows video to become audiovisual. Because the electronic-signal process creates audio or visual stimuli without tangible material, sound and image are compatible with each other in video.37 This is unlike film, which has separate material supports for image and sound. Light, optical stimuli and sound, sonic stimuli marked physical traces on the film reel. Film is the medium of light. Because it had a tangible entity, postproduction of a film involved working with physical elements, excepting recent digital cinema. In this respect, The Kitchen provided a venue to test and present both the transformative imagery of video and the incorporation of electronic media with various art forms. As artists used electronic video and audio equipment, distinction between art forms blurred.

37 Yvonne Spielmann, Video: The Reflexive Medium (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2008), 1. Spielmann explains that video provides another concept of imagery, what she calls “transformation imagery.” She brings the terms “transformation” to connote flexible, unstable, non-fixed forms of the video imagery. In this book she addresses how the medium specificity of video shifted from the level of its reality as audiovisual electronic media to a reflexive medium in terms of logic and language on which video medium works.
Thus, the artists explored these two levels of intermediality of video at The Kitchen. Audiovisuality inherent in video generated more artistic potential to interact with other art forms and other media. For the first 2 years, as the artists articulated the aesthetic possibility of video, The Kitchen was shifting from an informal “Live Audience Testing laboratory” to a full-time alternative art space. The Kitchen provided opportunities for video artists to use video equipment by demonstrating new hardware and software. At the same time, it opened the space increasingly to various activities, so artists could perform video and relate video to other art forms.38

Moreover, the artists used The Kitchen’s loose organization to present new intermedia practices. The artists who exhibited and performed at The Kitchen were neither selected nor served; their idea of programming was neither to select, nor curate, but “to mediate and accommodate.”39 Consequently, the artists were free from the evaluation of quality of their work. Since Wise’s EAI offered an administrative umbrella regarding funding, they were not hampered by the established ideas art institutions


usually forced. The Vasulkas characterized the early Kitchen as non-structural and anti-
hierarchical:

It was this loose administrative arrangement that let people participate spiritually in the directorship. I think that serious administration brings a total opposite to a dynamically creative performing space like The Kitchen. Anarchy or lack of structure breeds the creative initiative. So if there was any virtue in our arrangement, it was the non-structural, the participation.\textsuperscript{40}

This looseness expanded both the range of programs and its operation days. Initially, The Kitchen was supposed to operate Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights as an electronic image workshop and theater. However, when the Wednesday Evening Videotape show, which was open house screenings for videotape, began in July 1971, varied performances were scheduled and conducted. For instance, the Monday electronic music concert begun in October 1971 soon spilled over to Tuesdays; Thursdays and Fridays were taken up by other various events; Rock concerts were held on Saturdays; and seminars and workshops, on Sundays.\textsuperscript{41} The Kitchen was a complex center for emerging art forms. It served an educational function by providing a variety of information on electronic media and other undefined artistic practices.\textsuperscript{42}

Nonetheless, exploring the specificity of video was the most significant work of The Kitchen. The artists who insisted on video as electronic signals were interested in manipulating electronic imagery to produce visual effects and to critique the institution of television. Including the Perception group, other video artists, such as Stephen Beck,

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\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{42} Furlong, “Notes Toward a History of Image-Processed Video: Steina and Woody Vasulka,” 14.
\end{footnote}
Ed Emshwiller, Paik, Tambellini, the Vasulkas, and Yalkut, who presented work at The Kitchen at the Mercer Street, intensively used video synthesizers and closed-circuit technique. In addition, some of them sampled images from television commercials and broadcast programs. This had the effect of critiquing existing media environments.

The Intermedial Kitchen for Music, Video, and Collaboration

While some of them treated video either as a critical means for recording and commenting on life, or as sculptural means for installations having psychological effect, many early video artists who presented at The Kitchen tended to view video as a new medium to provide multi-sensory experiences with audiovisual imagery. By processing electronic signals, the artists attempted to make the best use of the inherent audiovisual nature of the video medium. Accordingly music, video, and collaboration among them characterized the early Kitchen. Moreover, the location of their physical space, The Mercer Art Center, which was open to radical performing arts and counter to the existing rules, fascinated the artists. This heterogeneity was common in the video medium and the space. At the same time, they still insisted on art’s independent quality from technology. Steina and Woody Vasulka said,

In many ways, we liked the Mercer Arts Center. It was culturally and artistically a polluted place. It could do high art and it could produce average trash. We were interested in certain decadent aspects of America, the phenomena of the time; underground rock and roll, homosexual theater, and the rest of that illegitimate culture. In the same way we were curious about more puritanical concepts of art inspired by McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller. It seemed a strange and united front – against the establishment.  

It was at The Kitchen that the audiovisual quality of video could be examined in the context of counterculture, interacting high and low cultures and specializing in the video medium.

Many video artists dealt with the audiovisuality of video in relation to music. They experimented with its perceptual source, or sound, with “synthesizers or certain structural investigations.” They also attended to a tendency of new music, or “theatrical rejection of established musical performing conventions.” The electronic equipment processing the electronic signal was the generic tool for making an image. This synchronous relationship between electronic sound and image allowed video artists to learn from music how to control electronic waveform and to use it as means to compose video artifacts. Steina Vasulka acknowledged the influence of music in the experimentation with video as a medium:

I mostly learned from music in the sense of how to organize these new patterns. You know, all of these waveform controls and means of composition for our early video artifacts were developed first as audio. They were directly related to the development of early musical instruments. In video, the instruments played similar functions.

The connections among music, visual art, and other performances partly stemmed from the legacy of John Cage. Admittedly Cage’s avant-garde music relying on chance and silence provided an inspiration for radical artistic practice in the mid-1960s. By performing silence, his piano composition, 4’33”, opened the possibility of including in the work the whole performing situations, such as accidental noises from the performer and the audience. Music compositions became an aleatoric process and encountered

44 Ibid.
45 Carlut, “A Conversation between Steina and Woody Vasulka.”
46 Vasulka, Buffalo Heads, 500.
surroundings full of various sensory stimuli, including “curious sounds” from real life. In general, audience in a concert not only listens to sound of music, but also sees musicians playing musical instruments and performing the music. Cage's performance stressed the visual aspect of a concert, by performing silence. This dual quality influenced the early video artists.

For instance, Paik found visual qualities from Cage’s compositions and their instrumentations in theatrical context. Paik’s participation in the Fluxus movement in the early 1960s accompanied his interest in the collapsing the borders of music and performances, and the boundaries between art and life. He presented his compositions through theatrical staging, to combine music and performance. Paik’s work in the electronic music studio during the late 1950s led him to experiment with the television set for his “multi-media composition” in the early 1960s. Thus, his later experimentation with television and development of his video synthesizer were also based on the synchronous relationship between music and visual art, in terms of Fluxus and avant-garde music.

The Kitchen could embrace these situations, with its free atmosphere and its loose organization. Rhys Chatham, the first music director of the Kitchen, argued that

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48 Ibid. Paik met George Maciunas in 1961, and joined the Fluxus movement. Maciunas coined the term and initiated the movement in 1961, and later wrote “Fluxus Manifesto” in 1963. Paik participated in the first Fluxus Festival, the *Fluxus Internationale Neuester Musik*, held in September 1962 in Wiesbaden, Germany. Here he performed *Zen for Head*. This movement was based on the artist community in SoHo. Maciunas opened his cinematheque at 80 Wooster in 1968 and Fluxhouse Coop II for artists. For details for artists community around Fluxhouse, see Roslyn Bernstein and Shael Shapiro, *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo* (Vilnius, Lithuania: The Jonas Mekas Foundation, 2010).

49 Ibid., 30-32.
the space provided an important performance venue for downtown musicians, coming out of Fluxus, John Cage’s music, and minimalist music. The Monday Night Music Concert series was the important program among the multi-sensory practices at The Kitchen. Chatham inaugurated the series in October 1971, with concerts by Jon Gibson, Laurie Spiegel, and Jesse Muller. The Kitchen witnessed contemporary electronic music projects and further multimedia and interdisciplinary practices.

La Monte Young provided his new LP recording concert on December 13, 1971. He presented two works: 23 VIII 64 2:50:45-3:11 AM the Volga delta; and 31 VII 69 10:26-10:49 PM. It is remarkable that the musician just played recorded tapes for the concert, instead of performing live. Operating the electronic equipment replaced performing activity. Chatham said,

It was like this big turntable that they had at home. It wasn’t a gramophone, but it was old. The concert consisted of La Monte took the stylus, put it on the record and we sat back and listened to it. Then he took it off very dramatically and turned the record over and then we listened to Side B. The place was packed and they made their grocery money for that week.

Playing recorded tapes for the audience resembles the way video work is presented to the audience: videotape is played in the deck and images are seen on a monitor. Both


51 Ibid., 11-12; Furlong wrote the first formal concert at The Kitchen was LaMonte Young’s in October, 1971 in “Notes Toward a History of Image-Processed Video: Steina and Woody Vasulka,” 14, but Rhys Chatham, music director of The Kitchen from 1971 to 1973, recalled that Jon Gibson, Serge Tcherepnin, Laurie Spiegel, Jesse Miller, and other people were on the initial series in an interview for The Kitchen Oral History Project in 2009.

52 Both of them were composed and produced at the date and time indicated in the title, in New York and in Munich, respectively.

relied on the “live” playback of a recorded piece. In addition, Young’s music intended to study the basic elements of music: the sound of a music instrument and harmonic frequency systems. The study of sound and frequency has an affinity to experimentation with video, in that both sound and image are electronic signals that could be visualized as waveform on electronic devices.

The two works demonstrate two interlocking legacies of avant-garde music and art: John Cage and Marcel Duchamp. Chatham also attempts to place the new music in the crossroad between music and art by relating avant-garde music to Duchamp. The Volga delta was sound made by scratching with a stick the brim of a four-foot-diameter gong made by Robert Morris. Originally, Morris used this gong in his dance performance War (1963), having Young play it. After the event, he gave the gong to Young. Some aspects of The Volga Delta were associated with Duchamp's work. Young’s expression of “a gong dust” at the same time visualized the sound of the gong and caused a series of associations regarding Duchamp and Morris. The phrase “gong dust” recalls Dust Breeding, a Man Ray photograph of dust collected on the glass surface of cone-shaped sieves, part of Large Glass. As homage to Duchamp’s With Hidden Noise (1916), Morris made Box with the Sound of Its Own Making in 1961, which inspired Cage to visit his studio to listen to this piece.

54 Ibid., 8-9.
Duchamp’s noise from an unknown object, which was hidden inside a ball of string between two brass plates, into sounds from a recorded audiotape fixed within a walnut box. Young’s audio-taped gong drone is also an electronic representation of noise hidden in a musical instrument.

Meanwhile, *31 VII 69 10:26-10:49 PM* extends the status of music as electronic signal. This work consists of sine wave drone and monotonous vocal sounds by Young and Marian Zazeela. It juxtaposed “a predetermined structure of selected intervallic frequency ratios to a constant sine wave—drone frequency.”

Because their voices formed regular intervals sustained for a long time, the work was harmonious in terms of drone, not melody. Young thought “these harmonically related frequencies produce periodic composite sound waveforms.” Young preferred using sine waves because they have only one frequency component and could be tuned by ear and by oscilloscope. Consequently, he used a Moog Synthesizer, a popular audio synthesizer at the time, and sine wave oscillators for his work. Here he treated sound as frequencies and waveforms, less interested in traditional instruments played with a technical mastery than manipulation of electronically generated sound. His attitude to music and sound is analogous to treatment of video image as electronic signals, rather than representation or composition. In this sense, the electronic music program of The

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57 Program guide for Young and Zazeela.
59 The first sound that Young remembers as a strong impression was the sound of wind going through the chinks in the log cabin. For him, the sound was so mysterious and beautiful that it would influenced in his music. See Richard Kostelanetz, “Conversation with La Monte Young,” in *Selected Writings*, 20.
Kitchen offered idea and inspiration for developing the technique of video image manipulation.

Furthermore, the music program extended into multimedia performances, to reveal the inclusiveness of video as a medium. In his electronic music concert on January 6 and 7, 1972, for example, Jon Gibson presented two pieces with the visuals created on television screens by Dimitri Devyatkin. Devyatkin’s video consisted of superimposed abstract patterns, wave motions, and shots of the musicians. Voice/Tape Delay was a record of occasional sounds made by two tape recorders playing various vocal sounds of Gibson himself and playing back the same vocalization a short time later. Tom Johnson, the music critic, wrote his impression of this piece: “the results are often extraordinary to listen to. But it’s sort of like a spirograph drawing.” This tape delay presented extraordinary vocal sounds seemingly made by vibrating and scratching the throat with muscles and air. The sounds involved in two opposite processes: physical involvement to make voice and electronic mechanism to record the voice. Monotonous voice and electronic drone produced a sonic wave, with which the audience could form an imaginary picture of the moving sound.

Untitled Piece for Cymbals, Bells, Drums, Flutes, and Oscillators, a live version of Gibson’s Visitations featuring overlaid percussion, flutes and synthesizer, conveyed the natural image with sound. Gibson described this untitled work as “a work in present time whose concept evolves, in part, out of tapes previously made from natural sources such as oceans, waterfalls, birds, crickets, and frogs, and more recent tapes made by Tom Johnson, “Music,” review of Jon Gibson and Dimitri Devyatkin at The Kitchen, Village Voice, January 13, 1972, available in http://www.vasulka.org/archive/Kitchen/KC/KC004.pdf.  

Ibid.
overdubbing bells, cymbals, flutes, drums, and the like.⁶² This piece was his first “live” performance involving various performers, who had freedom within the given limitations. Gibson intended to achieve “over-all harmonic balance between chance and structural elements.”⁶³

Devyatkin’s video and Gibson’s music shared the electronic basis that constructs audio and visual elements in each work. Gibson’s instruments were tape recorders, oscillators, and amplifiers; Devyatkin used camera, video recorder, and television screens. From Devyatkin’s viewpoint, Gibson’s music compensated for the absence of sound in his video work. Although these two works were independent pieces, they interrelated because Devyatkin’s video projection bridged two different art forms. In effect, the audience experienced an audiovisual work.

Since video is an electronic medium capable of creating both image and sound, it can contain musical elements and images, in one art form. Furthermore, because of its connection to television technology and mass culture, video can critically deal with them as themes. Concerning these aspects, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut presented their video work done since the mid 1960s in Video Film Concert (Figure 4-6), on January 14, 1972.⁶⁴ While Paik experimented with new ways of manipulating the video signal itself, Yalkut filmed the single-sourced video output processed by Paik. These works addressed video’s various aspects that artists had experimented with since its

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⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ This exhibition presented twelve video works: Videotape Study No.3, Boston Symphony Video Variations, Waiting for Commercials, P+A-I (K), Cinema Metaphysique Nos. 1-5, Beatles Electroniques, Electronic Fables, and Electronic Moon No. 2.
rudimentary state in the mid-1960s. The show presented video as a new medium with the potential to combine the television system, the art world, and avant-garde practice. For that reason, the works presented in *Video Film Concert* epitomized two important realms of video experimentation that occurred at The Kitchen in its earliest period: elaborating intermedial quality of video and testing video imaging tools.

The first realm of video experimentation was related to video’s audiovisuality. Paik and Yalkut, who had backgrounds in music and film, respectively, dealt with video as a medium that should be characterized intermedial. They focused on audiovisual experience of their work related to music such as *Electronic Moon No. 2* (1969) and *Boston Symphony Video Variations* (1972). They combined musical sound and moving images in these works. Paik implemented three different tasks: one was to visualize the music; another was to make comments on the music; and the other was to explore the physical capacities of video. These videos presented some electronically-manipulated images resulted from electronic magnetic distortions, the performing scene of the orchestra, and abstract images to describe the music. They were a kind of multi-purpose music video, visualizing the music and at the same time

Meanwhile, Paik and Yalkut collaborated to exploit film, to document the performance of video and to use video to comment on the frame of film. Their

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65 *Video Variations*, which WGBH commissioned as a part of “The WGBH project of New Television,” is a compilation of eight video works based on the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s repertoires. Featuring music of Haydn, Ravel, Schoenberg, Bach, Wagner, and Beethoven, *Video Variations* can be estimated as exploring the concept of “music video.” Paik’s contribution is concerning the third movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4. This piece features abstract patterns, electronically deformed faces, a bust of Beethoven shook and pushed by a hand, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the pianist, and moving rays of light. See the catalogue of New Television Workshop Collection, accessed April 18, 2012, [http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/NTW/FA/TITLES/video341.HTML](http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/NTW/FA/TITLES/video341.HTML).
collaboration is connected to the concept of “expanded cinema,” which Gene Youngblood defines as “a process of becoming” and “the intermedia network of cinema and television.”66 Yalkut’s “videofilms” were the hybrid forms he created by filming and re-editing Paik’s television and video experiments.67 The interfacing of film and video, Cinema Metaphysique Nos. 1-5 (1966-1972) explored the conditions of performance and the filming process by studying motion and stillness, noise and silence, and film frame and video monitor (Figure 4-7). Here, Yalkut’s films re-presented Paik’s videos. In this series of videofilms, film as the re-presenting medium complemented the absence of the recording function in single-output video, while video as the re-presented medium interfered in the frame and the language of film. By using and referring to film, they attempted to find video’s specific character. Cinema Metaphysique No.1 dealt with the concept of scale between the two media, contrasting a small CRT image with life-size film image by projecting the video image on a corner of a full-size film screen; Cinema Metaphysique No.5 addressed the problem of the frame by showing an action taking place on the TV cut-off zone, on the edges of the film frame, which Yalkut called “outside of the Safe Action Area.” 68 Cinema Metaphysique Nos. 2-3 also showed actions taking place in the unsafe area: horizontally or vertically dividing the video screen into two parts and projecting closed-up shots of moving eyes, a hand, and faces in either one or both parts. The bodily movement articulates the video frame by indicating outside of the frame.

67 Spielmann, The Reflexive Medium, 93.
Standing between film and video, Paik and Yalkut intervened into live performance scenes by filming events and inserting films in them. The new direction of the medium of moving picture was characterized as emphasis on process itself and on the projected image. The portable video helped artists intervene in performances and multimedia events. They could record performances occurring on a specific site in real time. Yalkut recorded musical performances by Paik and Moorman, such as 26’1.1499’.

The Kitchen provided a place for mixed-media performances, which exemplified the process of artists intervening in the intermedial field by using video and audio electronic equipment. Mixed-media performances combined visual projections through video and slide, music concerts including instrumental performance and audiotape playing, and dance performances. For instance, Asparagus—In Consequence of Being Short and Red-Headed: A Concert by Jim Burton and Friends on April 29, 1972 consisted of five multimedia programs such as Cartoon, for Amplified Jon Deak, Tape and Other Performers; Violin Beat Freq. for Tape and Violin: Jim Burton on Violin; A Practical Guide to Archery, and Other Conjectures: An Animated Film by Tom Spence; Legend: An Operatic Notion for Quartet, Percussion, and Winds by Bob Stearns; and A Feature for the Beginning of Overshoot, or Music for Diverse Idioms. Musicians, dancers, a filmmaker, and a video artist performed their works. Jim Burton was the main or assistant performer in each work. Tom Johnson characterized this concert as “more related to real life sounds than to musical sound” because the participants used “tactile” sounds, or “scraggy unrefined noises. Burton seemed to be “on the verge of

something”; he treated his concert in an unconventional way by referring to his film score as a “noisetrack” and describing one of his violin compositions as “a straight piece.”71 This is the way Burton brought music to the intermedial field of The Kitchen.

Another multimedia performance, on May 16, 1972, also showed the collaboration of filmmaker and composer. It was Verse: an Event for Slides, Film and Audio Tape. It consisted of a 40-minute black-and-white film, Doors, made by Milton Cohen in 1968, in Italy; color slides of the same source; a 50-minute stereo tape composition by Richard Trythall; a 10-minute prelude of tape music and color slides of the film’s subject. The event proceeded to synchronize visual and aural elements.72 On the one hand, Trythall’s audiotape presented street noises, speech snippets, children singing, and assorted electronic sounds. These sounds functioned as “aural textures and rhythms to complement those of the film.”73 On the other hand, Cohen’s film provided “periodic patterns of visual rhythms and gestures.” This event aimed to give the audience an experience of aural and visual stimuli that assimilated each other to complete a kind of synthetic experience.


73 An excerpt from “‘Doors’ Opens the Mind to Sights and Sounds,” review of Richard Trythall’s Verse, Buffalo Evening News, March 6, 1972, quoted in the online review of composition of Richard Trythall, accessed September 18, 2012, http://www.richardtrythall.com/5.html. It says, “Mr. Trythall’s tape presented aural textures and rhythms to complement those of the film, using as his building blocks street noises, speech snippets, children singing, and assorted electronic sounds...a viable and atmospheric bit of musical theater...
The experiments with synthetic perception that intermedial and mixed-media performances generate were related to one of the main goals of the Perception group. On Sundays during the first season, they held seminars on perception and cybernetics, and workshops on video equipment and bio-feedback. The drew an analogy between human perceptual channels and audiovisual electronic equipment. Some performances dealt with the problem of perception in the electronic environment. A collaborative performance by Devyatkin and Chatham, *Perceptual Hypothesis*—*Space ↔ Time* concerned the process of perceiving the visuals shown through raster on video monitors and mixed sounds arranged by the electronic synthesizer.

In this project, Devyatkin paralleled the video signal scanned on the television tube with the metrical pattern and the rhythmic elements in poetry. He used the term, “scansion,” derived from poetry analysis, to explain the human perception of constant sensory input from visuals and audio. The concept of scansion can expand the rhythm and metrical pattern in poetry to the acoustic and musical level. 74 A television camera and tube operate on the principle of scansion: “The field is scanned 30 times a second, with the glowing of the phosphorescent screen fooling the human eye into seeing a whole picture.” 75 Although the video monitor projected a series of intermittent visual signals at a regular rate, human perception received them as a continuous flow of images.


In a similar way, Chatham played five tapes in sequence or in counterpoint, to formulate sonic flows as music. He arranged a new electronic music composition out of non-western music, using five tapes made on the Buchla Modula Electronic Music Synthesizer. The five tapes contained electronically generated hum sounds such as 60-cycle drone, high frequency sine wave, and so on. An audio mix of the five tapes was made during the concert, using a predetermined score and patching system. Electronic equipment with the possibility of realizing audiovisuality completed this performance. Here, video and audio sources were information modulated into electronic signals. These signals engage in both the dimensions of time and space. They are either displayed on the screen, or composed as a flowing architectonic algorithm. Decisive moments of perception determine the formal characteristics of these electronic pieces because the audience perceives differences through scanning, as Devyatkin puts it, to pick out “the new or significant information from the vast display of redundant, unchanging information.” The property of electronic signal made the artists and the musician work outside the convention of each art form by using the algorithmic process.

**Image-Processed Video**

In this context, The Kitchen was a showcase for constructing and testing video-imaging tools. The Kitchen intensively presents image-processed video work using raster manipulation devices, colorizers and mixers, and synthesizers. Paik’s *Video Tape Study No.3* (1967-1969) and *Electronic Fables* (1972) demonstrate early video image-processing technique before the invention of video synthesizers. *Video Tape Study No. 3* presents images deformed by his raster manipulating device, the Wobbulator, which

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76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
manipulates the electronic beam within the monitor. *Electronic Fables* consists of “the gyrating kinetics of electronic video manipulation of the raster.” These works experimented with electronic image manipulation before the Paik/Abe Synthesizer (Figure 4-8) was invented. Around 1970 and 1971, Eric Siegel, Stephen Beck, and Dan Sandin developed video synthesizers as image-creating tools without image sources from outside. Strictly speaking, the Paik/Abe Synthesizer was a mixer-colorizer designed to manipulate a representational camera image.

In a sense, the development of video synthesizers revealed the desire of the early video artists to create non-representational forms by collaborating electronic technology. Paik likened video to painting: “As collage technique replaced oil paint, the cathode ray tube will replace the canvas.” Beck said, “The whole idea of the synthesizer as I conceive it is that of an electronic sculpting device.” In addition to the general interest in exploring video as electronic medium, they also experimented with video as a medium to substitute traditional art media, such as painting and sculpture. In this respect, the early video artists followed the same process as modern painting, in addressing its own aesthetic possibilities. They attempted to invent the video’s unique way of making imagery and forms by utilizing its own mechanism of manipulating them, without interpolation of imagery sources from outside.

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78 Yalkut, *Video Art: An Anthology*, 147.


Some artists, such as Bill and Louise Etra, experimented with video feedback, which is a video phenomenon that happens when a video camera points at its playback video monitor. As the image from the camera runs through the recording system to the video playback monitor, delay of the video signals creates a conflation of delayed images. Adjustment of the zoom lens, a slight change of the iris of the camera, and position of the camera affect the pattern of feedback imagery. This results from a reflexive transformation of the closed-circuit television. The camera was an eye to record inputs and to watch outputs. As both the object and the audience are absent, the output imagery becomes the object of the camera while the camera occupies the position of audience. This reflexive structure between camera and monitor is a unique composition of the video medium. In technical terms, this structure causes an early video imaging technique to create video feedback. In conceptual terms, the closed-circuit structure gives video the possibility of becoming a mirror. Because this self-reflecting structure lessens the difference between object and subject, the video medium functioned as a new way to address the problem of the subject at the level of identity formation, and also the interrelationship between time and space.

The Kitchen’s propensity to the medium itself and its physical capacities was obvious in the First Annual International Computer Arts Festival, during the first two weeks of April 1973. It presented computer films, videotapes, and computer-music concerts. Most of works were created by using video and audio synthesizers. This festival was similar to normal programs of The Kitchen, in that the components were image-processed video, electronic music, and mixed-media performances. Bill Etra and Steven Rutt briefly demonstrated a new video synthesizer built around an analogue
computer, to manipulate an image; Devyatkin presented a series of color alterations and shape distortions of a videotape of Indian Music; and Ed Emshwiller had a videotape, *Scape-mates* (Figure 4-9), incorporating image-processing techniques and computer distortion and animation. Among others, Emshwiller exemplified the interrelationship of video and computer in the development of image-processing technique. After moving to SoHo and transforming into an independent art organization, The Kitchen would continued to host the Computer Arts Festival until 1975, covering image-processed video; while conceptual video practice occupied the main theme of video art of the new Kitchen.

During the Mercer Street period, The Kitchen presented more technical experiments with video than interpretative explorations on conceptual aspects of video. The early video artists were committed to examining the technical capacities of video as an image-producing and image-processing tool that would replace traditional art media in the intermedial condition. Shridhar Bapat and Steina Vasulka noted this trend in an interview in 1973:

> One of the major points that comes up with our emphasis on processed imagery, image-oriented video, is the fact that this is a form of video which can be performed. We actually perform, in many cases, instead of just

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82 Jonas Mekas, “Movie Journal,” *Village Voice*, July, 6, 1972. Emshwiller’s *Computer Graphics I*, which had shown in the first Video Festival, demonstrated interplays between electronic apparatuses. Using two computers, he creates two different imageries, or landscape-like abstract shapes for the background and variations on a figure and a drawing for the foreground. The controlled drawings and colors move constantly in change. Mekas praised Emshwiller for the simplicity in visual compositions. Mekas contrasted this simple video with other abstract video works, most of which were too many different forms, movements, and techniques the artist knows.
presenting tapes. We are actually a performance space, and video becomes an instrument, in the same way that a musician performs.  

Bapat defined The Kitchen as “a performance space,” allowing to musical performance. By paralleling video equipment with musical instrument, Bapat viewed the role of video artists as improving video’s capacity as a performing tool. By contrast, Vasulka focused on video’s art-producing function as an image-manipulating tool:

The people who have found a home in The Kitchen, are the image-oriented, the electronic image people. They’ve become our associates: Bill Etra and Walter Wright, or Nam June Paik, who is not an associate, but there is hardly a week that he does not show up. Those people have found The Kitchen a very ideal space, whereas people who deal with video as social or political impact have not made much use of it. It is not anybody’s fault, it is just how it developed; The Kitchen was just as open to them as anybody else. There is also another group of video artists who have not used The Kitchen at all, and those are the so-called conceptualists.

Vasulka showed that The Kitchen was a venue for video artists using video equipment to create and manipulate electronic images. Artistic concerns about video’s psychological and discursive capacities seemed secondary to its image-processing function, even though The Kitchen provided a multi-media and interdisciplinary environment.

The Kitchen, during its first and second seasons, was a place in-between a laboratory and a theater, rather than a gallery. Since it provided the space and the video/audio equipment free for artists, The Kitchen became the ideal place for mixed-media performances. In addition, its openness encouraged artists to bring diverse media for intermedial combinations, and to generate compatible concepts and principles among media. The absence of curatorial intervention in what artists talked and showed

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83 Yalkut, “The Kitchen: An Image and Sound Laboratory.”
84 Ibid.
encouraged artists to generate a new language of video. Working in a combination of laboratory and theater, the artists were able to deal with video as both technology and performance. Here, the utopian desire to coordinate technology with art resulted in the fusion of formalist modernism’s abstraction and avant-garde’s breaking down of the partition between art and life. The main activity here was to delve into video as electronic signal to use it as a means of artistic expression.

**Kitchen Video Festivals: Video Expanding the Boundaries**

At *Open Circuits: An International Conference on the Future of Television*, held in January 1974, Robert Pincus-Witten expressed his frustration with the early video artists’ assumption. He pointed out that the video artists relied on contradictory bases: the futurity of “tech-art” and the timelessness of painting. According to Pincus-Witten, the myth of tech-art was perpetuated in futurist group, Moholy-Nagy, and early technology-centered video artists. The early video artists believed in “the utopian myth” of future art that expecting the master works to be produce, they rationalized video art, and also linked to abstract imagery, “the outmoded clichés of Modernist Pictorialism,” although video has been constantly engaging in the narrative content.85 His criticism addressed the contradiction of video artists focusing on the video image-process. Using video synthesizers to produce electronic images without image sources made it impossible for the artists to avoid the figurative imagery inherent in the television culture. As Furlong points out, Pincus-Witten understood that the image-processing video artists pursued the video medium’s inherent properties based on the convention

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of the modernist painting.\textsuperscript{86} McLuhan’s famous phrase “The medium is the message” contrasts to Clement Greenberg’s articulation of the concept of medium specificity. McLuhan’s phrase transcends the Greenbergian concept of medium, in that it allows one to consider the medium beyond the concept of purity. The medium affects what is contained and how it is conveyed and received. For instance, video shares its genealogy with television, which is involved in electronic technology and contemporary mass culture. In fact, video artists initiated new creative experiments, which Moholy-Nagy called production.

Moholy-Nagy defines production as “productive creativity,” correlating the functional apparatus to show the new vision to the production of new, unknown relationships, while he puts reproduction as its opposite notion by defining it as “repetition of existing relationships” and what must “be considered at best only a matter of virtuosity.” For him, the artist’s most important task is to expand the apparatus (means) for purposes of production for creative purposes. Something productive is engaged in the expansion of the functional apparatus, through producing “new relationships between the known and the as yet unknown.”\textsuperscript{87} This is where Pincus-Witten criticizes the early video art “defined as a distinct species—technology, kineticism, recording, and utopianism.”\textsuperscript{88} The affinity to television enables video to function as a medium for production and reproduction, and presentation and

\textsuperscript{86} Furlong, “Note Towards a History of Image-Processed Video: Eric Siegel, Stephen Beck, Dan Sandin, Steve Rutt, Bill and Louise Etra,” 35. The term, image-processed video, designates video work that is made through video image processing tools with or without outside image sources.

\textsuperscript{87} Moholy-Nagy, \textit{Paintings, Photography, Film}, 30.

\textsuperscript{88} Pincus-Witten, “Panel Remarks,” 70.
representation. But what is the expansion of the apparatus? If one presuppose that it means not only the expansion of the physical capacities, but also the creation of new, unknown relationships, it is possible to expand the potential of a medium in relation to other media and different art forms, as well as new human intervention. This is also what Moholy-Nagy wanted to address.

At this moment, video can remove the stigma of “the myth of futurity,” based the mere application of new technology. When artists brought their video experiments from television studios and media laboratories into the art world, video also transformed from mere electronic technology to an artistic medium for creative production. The image-processed video produced its own art form based on the medium’s inherent properties, electronic signals with the circuitry structure. Video intervenes in various artistic contexts, interacts with other media activities, and engages in socio-cultural scenes. In this connection, The Kitchen functioned as an open space for artists to expand the video apparatus, including physical support, structural basis, and conventions, as an art medium. The Kitchen’s video festivals demonstrated how video artists expanded video by grafting it with other art forms.

*The Kitchen Video Festival*, held twice during the Mercer Street period in June 1972 and May 1973, showcased recent video experimentation. It witnessed the explosion of artistic expression by means of video art.89 Two festivals gradually included the transition of video art from its exploitation of the traditional concept of art such as painting and sculpture and from its intervention in new contemporary art forms such as

89 David L. Shirey, “Video Art Turns to Abstract Imagery,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1972, 6. David Shirey, the critic for New York Times, also estimated the first festival as “an opportunity for the public to become better acquainted with this electronic form of expression and to observe the different directions it has taken.”
performance, to the exploration of its recording function. The first year’s shows mainly consisted of live video performance and videotape presentation. When The Kitchen called for submissions for the first video festival, it specified qualifications for work to be submitted: “it’s time to present a festival of video art dealing with specifically the forms that arise from the uniquely electronic nature of video, i.e., video as a medium in and of itself.” This statement implied that the first festival primarily aimed to show the video medium as electronic signal.

One major theme of the first Video Festival of 1972 was the image-processed video. Most video artists attempted to define the medium specificity of video by creating electronic imagery, which corresponded with sound. On June 13, 1972, for instance, Beck presented Conception, a montage of images and sounds; and Illuminated Music, a live video music performance. Conception opens with a red bowl filled with water and then shows dynamic spirals and floral shapes in brilliant colors. The shapes move in and out of space on the screens, accompanied by various sound compositions such as gurgling water, a crying baby, and shattering glass. In this work, Beck referred to origins and archetypes, by using shapes suggesting a womb, or a double-helix DNA module. In terms of video processing technique, these shapes result from the manipulation of a standard sine wave.

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Regarding the audience’s perception, the artist considers the process of signification. He is interested in both production and reception at both levels: the artist’s technique and the viewer’s mind’s eye. As he puts it,

Personally I have been interested in the symbolic, ideographic, and nonobjective modes of images, those which originate internally within the mind’s eye. Affected by images of color and movement, I was lead to invent the Direct Video Synthesizer instrument. Conceiving of it as a compositional instrument rather than a distortion device, I incorporated a theory of visual “ingredients” of color, form, motion, and texture into electronic circuit modules which generate these building-block elements on a television display. The images that appear are due to the interplay of electronic vibrations, established by the artist, which create them.92

For him, the visuals of video art are parallel to deformation and abstraction in painting, in that the former is also a composition of formal elements. What differentiates video from painting is temporality and transformativity. In the process of time, electronic imagery shifts into different colors and forms. As Spielmann points out, this flexibility of the video medium stems from “the process of simultaneous production (construction) and reproduction (reconstruction) of electronic pictoriality in media technology.”93 This condition lets artists use video to improvise visual compositions and variations, live. As the visuals were able to accompany the audios, video artists combined image and music in their works. Most of them produced a kind of proto-music videos. Beck’s Illuminated Music (Figure 4-10) was a live video performance, in which he controlled onsite the visual output, whirling dots and arabesques, with his Direct Video Synthesizer, while music was also improvised.94

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93 Spielmann, The Reflexive Medium, 4.
Indeed, video artists dealt with video as electronic painting and sculpture. On June 6, 1972, Ben Tatti, an emerging video artist at the time, projected two videotapes on nine monitors arranged in an L-shape (Figure 4-11). One was “an electronic abstraction, with very minimal and controlled,” accompanied by sound of distorted voices and music images. The other dealt with “themes and variations on the image of hand.”95 Two different images were displayed alternately on the monitors. Jonas Mekas criticized Tatti’s work: “the pretentious multiple arrangement of the nine monitors” destroyed the simple forms of the tape, the real beauty of his work. For Mekas, this disastrous multiple projection contradicted Tatti’s statement, “I use the medium for the sake of the medium.” 96 Here Mekas seemed to understand “the medium for the sake of the medium” as “video for the sake of video, the electronic imagery,” which should not be disturbed by other formal elements. However, when Tatti approached video as an art medium, he thought of it as compatible to traditional materials for producing a work of art. He used three kinds of methodology: “electronic imagery,” by which he meant producing abstract forms with an audio-video synthesizer; “drawing and painting,” which was converting black and white artwork to color and vice versa with the use of a mixer and colorizer; and “video sculpture,” which was projecting video onto constructed transparent sculpture.97 Although his videotape was primarily experimentation with electronic imagery, or electronic painting, at the moment of video projection, these pictorial works transformed into sculptural work because of the accidental L-shaped arrangement of the nine monitors.

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
As video performance was emerging as an important form of video art at that time, The Kitchen also began to encompass this. Unlike playing of complete videotapes or improvising video, video performance involved the artist’s body by using video apparatuses. Paik first performed *TV Bed* and *TV Penis* at The Kitchen on June 29, in collaboration with cellist Moorman and actor Stuart Craig Wood (Figure 4-12). This series of performances was a fusion of video, music, and sculpture. Musical instruments, such as cello and piano, were sound sources and theatrical props to create interactions among performers, audience, and each performance. Sounds from the musical instruments announced the existence of object and subject, while the videos became the environments for the actions. In addition to video, the human body also functioned as a means to combine the different art forms, music, performance, and sculpture. Here Paik kept in mind McLuhan’s definition of media as extension of human body, that is, the extension of human perceptual organs by adding their supplements. He also dealt with sexual allusions suggested by the bed of televisions, which could be turned on with electricity, a form of energy. His performances demonstrated the future of video as an art medium. Beyond pursuing its specificity in physical properties, artists would focus on the conceptual structure and language of video, and its socio-cultural potential.

Thus, the video medium was likely to extend into incorporation between video and other art forms, even though the main interest of the early video artists was image-processing techniques. On the occasion of the first *Video Festival* at The Kitchen, Woody Vasulka explained the tendency to techniques and the absence of video aesthetics. Because video art was still in the rudimentary stage, “no useful language about video had yet been developed”; and “video artists were still grappling with
technical terminology such as ‘texturizing,’ ‘colorizing’ and ‘scintillation’.” This explanation emphasized one position of video artists, which focused on the video’s technical performance.

Nonetheless, video artists had room for other experimental practice at the levels of conceptual structure and aesthetic language, and its sociopolitical impact because video at that time was not “trapped in rigid rules.” Woody Vasulka stated The Kitchen’s view on video as “video is an art unto itself, with its own reality, visual language and its own conception of time and space.” This view could be interpreted in broader context of “reality,” “language,” and “conception of time and space.” Video’s reality, its language, its conception of time and space were not limited to the physical properties of the medium itself. Examining video as an art form, video artists could not avoid referring to other media and other art forms. Some video works shown in the festival dealt with these broader contexts of video.

Video artists consulted television system from which video emerged. At his show, Computer Kine, on June 24, Stand VanDerBeek presented two video works: Violence Sonata (Figure 4-13) and Newsreel of Dreams. They were supposed to be projected onto multiple monitors or screens. Violence Sonata was originally a live television performance, composed of videotape on monitors, live action on a TV theater stage, and live audience and phone-in-audience. Transmitted in January 12, 1970 on two different channels, to be watched on two television sets, this program was “a whirling dizzying montage of multiple images, disconnected dialogue, discordant sounds, and

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98 Shirey, “Video Art Turns to Abstract Imagery.”
99 Ibid.
other devices range from slapstick to anguish.\textsuperscript{100} At The Kitchen, which differed from the actual television broadcast, two videos were projected in two separate screens. The simultaneous projections concerned the relationship between the exhibition space and the installed videos, and the correspondence among video images more than television broadcast.

\textit{Newsreel of Dreams} consisted of two parts. According to VanDerBeek, originally this work had eight parts, to be projected simultaneously on eight screens. These two video works demonstrated his virtuosity in new video techniques, and also his multilateral interests in socio-political agenda at that time. Because of that, Mekas complained that VanDerBeek mixed up his works with too many things in terms of techniques and statements.\textsuperscript{101} Instead of creating or manipulating electronic images, he uses news footage as the visual element to produce the discursive level of the work, as well as a collage of projected images. From another perspective, VanDerBeek’s maximalism could be interpreted as optimal representation of video’s transformative pictoriality and its critical functions. For video is a medium in the intermedia and mixed-media context; in art historical context, it has a connection to the 1960s’ and 1970s’ avant-garde practice such as Fluxus; and it is closely related to mass culture and the television system.

At a functional level, the video medium is supposed to record realities. Alternative video makers worked in the same vein, departing from the realm of video art. Shigeko


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Kubota attempted to understand the video medium in terms of documentary film. Her *Live and Videotape Concert* with the titles of *Videotape 1, 2: Cage-Tudor-Duchamp, Europe on half-inch a Day* (Figure 4-14), on June 30, demonstrated a reality of video in the relationship between art and life. This work was a video diary of her personal travel to Europe. Without refined techniques to create electronic imagery, she casually recorded cultural scenes and subcultures of the European cities she encountered through her voyage. This work presents another realm of video’s expression beyond creation of abstract imagery and its function as documentary journalism.

Kubota fused everyday life, media, and art by means of a traveler’s video, to transform a traditional cultural expedition, the *Grand Tour* into contemporary cultural tourism. This work consists of straight tapes with no artistic touches, showing a street beggar on an Amsterdam street, a sex cabaret in Paris, a gay theater performance in Brussels, a moving street shot on the Champs Elysees, a body performance with a dead animal, and strolling at the Duchamp grave yard. The gaze of the portable video camera, which was then an advanced tool to view an object, distorts contemporary cultural tourism into a colonist expedition to the uncivilized world. For instance, what Kubota saw in theaters were much closer to so-called primitive scenes, showing sexual performances and brutal sacrifice rituals conducted by naked performers. This is a nuanced reversal of the colonial view of the non-Western world. In this vein, Kubota called her traveler’s video practice “the tribal memory of the nomadic Asians.”

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102 To identify the specific location of each shot, I refer to the online catalogue of Electronic Arts Intermix, accessed April 23, 2012, [http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=3339](http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=3339).

The artist expanded video into the field of documentation and personal expression by treating the camera as her body and the lens as her eyes. The camera moves and sways according to the movement of her body; the gaze of the camera corresponds to that of the artist. The artist conveys her personal interest and feeling for the site by substituting her body and eye. Here, objective documentation transforms into personal expression. *Cage-Tudor-Duchamp*, the culmination of this video dairy, represents Kubota’s personal feeling of visiting Marcel Duchamp’s grave in Paris. The camera strolls around the graveyard of the Duchamp family, and closely shoots the inscriptions on Marcel Duchamp’s gravestone, as if the camera was trying to memorize his name and the words, “C’est toujours les autres qui meurent.” She pays homage to Duchamp, the pioneer of anti-art practice and the source of inspiration for artists who attempt to play with the institution of art.

The *Second Annual Video Festival*, held in May 1973, showed the broader potential of video in the cultural and political context and in connection to public television stations, although most artists exhibited video works based on video synthesizers and other image-processing techniques. However, public television stations such as WGBH-TV in Boston, The Television Lab at WNET in New York, and The National Center for Experiments in Television in San Francisco participated in this event. Collaboration between video artists and television stations meant the public television stations functioned as a technical support of video art, and also that the video medium was considered, in a broader perspective, as a part of television culture. Thus, The Kitchen could accommodate the two different realms, avant-garde art and mass
media, thanks to its ambiguous identity as an experimental laboratory for electronic media and an alternative space for new art forms.

Indeed, *The Second Annual Video Festival* marked the extension of video art. The subtitle of the festival, “video, videa, videat” indicated the extension of the range of video arts The Kitchen covered.\(^{104}\) “Video” means video as the medium itself, which early video artists had experimented with; “videa” is a combination of “video” and “ideas,” suggesting the conceptual aspects of video; and “videat” is possibly the fusion of “video” and “ideate,” meaning video’s discursive function. As the festival aimed to explore video as an art form, some significant artists addressed video’s in-between quality, or video’s intermedial and interdisciplinary character and its location between art and mass culture.

*Global Groove* (Figure 4-15) exemplified this trend. Here, Paik treated television and video as a medium to combine mass culture and avant-garde art, and also a realization of the McLuhanian global village based on the extension of media. He first presented this new video, at the time, a work in progress, on May 26, 1973 at The Kitchen. This work was structurally similar to *A Tribute to John Cage*, which is a fusion of Cage’s street piano performance and footage from old video works by video artists, Japanese and American television programs and commercials, and was produced on the occasion of Cage’s sixtieth birthday in 1972. This video begins with Russell

Connor’s voiceover, “This is a glimpse of a new world when you will be able to switch on every TV channel in the world and TV guides will be as thick as the Manhattan telephone book.”\footnote{Decker-Phillips, \textit{Paik Video}, 156.} \textit{Global Groove} consists of contributions by Paik’s friends, avant-garde artists, and excerpts from mass media and local cultures found the world over. It contains sections of Allen Ginsberg, Cage, Paik and Moorman, and other artists, and as well as clips of Japanese and Korean dancers followed by a Navajo Indian woman singing and drumming. It also shows a Japanese television commercial for Pepsi-Cola. This video is a kind of cultural kaleidoscope of the whole world. In this sense, the video presents a utopian vision of media: video reconciles art with mass culture, and also leads people to encounter multifarious cultural content from all over the world. This is the realization of the global culture through video; the alternative to commercial television network.

This idea is based on Paik’s prior essay, “Global Groove and Video Common Market” written in February 1970. Paik thought of video as a communication medium, and of the video common market as an alternative to the “nationalistic” video culture in America, referring to the European free trade zone after 1957. He critiqued the biased television representation of other cultural regions as contradictory to the hope for a Global Village and world peace. That bias caused “failures in communication and understanding” as seen in the example of American failures in the Vietnam War. According to him, there were two needs for global communication. One was to assemble cultural content from every nation; the other was to disseminate them freely to the world. In the case of America, he found a possibility of producing diverse cultural
content using the American public television system. Regarding its free circulation to the world, he proposed the concept of a “Video Common Market.”\textsuperscript{106} In effect, Paik proposed changes of both video content and its circulation structure. \textit{Global Groove} tried to change video content by making a package of various cultural contents, covering avant-garde art and music to folk music and dance, to television commercials around the world. Here, Paik’s interest begins to shift from technical experimentation with the video medium itself to composition of video contents. Between form and discourse, video functions as both artistic medium and communication medium. As video artists started to pay attention to this dual character of video, The Kitchen came to allot more room for documentary video work and conceptual video work than before.

The Kitchen gradually removed the disconnection between two different video arts, gallery-oriented video and laboratory-oriented video, by its intermedial programs, which positioned video in the middle of the artistic arena departing from the industrial laboratory. Video transformed from a new technology to an art medium/form. The literal collapse of the Central Broadway Hotel in August 1973, where The Kitchen was located, offered a chance for The Kitchen to move its location and identity from experimental spot in the Mercer Art Center to a new art space in SoHo.\textsuperscript{107} This incident coincided with

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a personnel change. Steina and Woody Vasulka moved to Buffalo, New York, in fall 1973, exhausted from serving the experimental video artists and losing interest in running the space. The “new Kitchen” moved to a large loft space in SoHo. The move from the off-off-Broadway scene to the SoHo art scene forecast the full-scale incorporation of The Kitchen into a typical alternative art scene, departing from its laboratory-like character.

The Kitchen Moves to SoHo: Video in the Alternative Space

Moved into Wooster Street, The Kitchen left the umbrella of EAI to become an independent nonprofit cultural corporation in 1974, legally registered as “Haleakala, Inc.,” after a mountain in the island of Maui, Hawaii, where Robert Stearns, new executive director, had spent a summer vacation. Although The Kitchen still leaned toward videotape and had a dozen monitors, several large speakers, sound-effect equipment and cameras, it extended its space to a variety of artists who had not exhibited their work at the old Kitchen, such as conceptual video artists and performance artists. The fact that the editing equipment from the Perception group was transferred to EAI’s Editing/Post-Production facility suggests that The Kitchen became less interested in experimentation with electronic image-processing techniques.

Stearns aimed to establish The Kitchen as an exhibition space where artists could enjoy freedom to control their projects and at the same time interact with the space. His concept of the space approximated the artist-run gallery. He said, “It is not theater and it is not entertainment. It functions like a gallery. The composer is as much


an artist as a sculptor or painter. He is told, 'here is the space,' and he has to suit his work to it.” 109 After the Vasulkas left The Kitchen, Stearns worked with Shridhar Bapat and Jim Burton. By January 1974, he assigned artists such as Carlota Schoolmen and Jim Burton as directors of video and music, respectively. The curators selected artists' proposals, but did not intervene in the artists' work. They were also artists who played with exhibition projects, as Stearns recalled: “I wanted to present a package of ideas. The curators all had mad, wonderful ideas. We were kind of silly in those days, just friends doing projects.” 110 Informality was the strength of this space that brought radical practice to the audience.

Although The Kitchen maintained an informal atmosphere, it gradually transformed into a more administered organization. In November 1973, a couple of months after move into SoHo, The Kitchen presented Video Anthology Series, which reviewed the earlier experimental video and its growth. This series consisted of three independent exhibitions including the Vasulkas, Yalkut, and Paik. This anthology series was like a summary of an era of The Kitchen. That era featured video as an electronic art medium to create “generated and processed electronic imagery” and to explore the “audio/video interface.” 111 On the one hand, The Kitchen began to view video art in terms of its history, composed of accumulated knowledge on the video medium; on the


other hand, it continued to participate in new directions of video art that were privileged in the art world.

There were two moments around The Kitchen’s transformation from an informal experimental laboratory-like space to a loose art organization. One was “Open Circuit: An International Conference on the Future of Television,” which was organized by Howard Wise and held at the Museum of Modern Art in January 1974. The Conference brought together curators, artists, and critics, to share ideas and models of production, distribution, and exhibition of video art in the television culture. This conference summarized the history of television and video technology, and reviewed their relation to the artistic practice as well as to the politics in communication environments. The other was the emergence of video art that dealt with the diverse meanings of video’s reflexivity. According to Spielmann, the reflexive process in video is realized in three forms of video praxis such as documentary direction for media criticism, experimentation with image-processing techniques, and experimental practice in art galleries.¹¹² This categorization is valid in addressing the reflexivity of video, because each of them provides a specific reflexive aspect of video. A documentary was intended to reflect on the representation of reality through mass media, especially television; the image-processed video aimed to explore video as a medium of electronic signals; and video performances and installations at art galleries were committed to the language of video and its psychological structure. In these terms, The Kitchen embraced programs to invoke video’s reflexive aspects: documentaries, video performance, and conceptual practice, as well as image-processed video.

¹¹² Spielmann, The Reflexive Medium, 17.
The Kitchen diversified video programs by encompassing documentaries alternative to television networks and to conceptual video practices that mostly happened in galleries. These two practices were closely related to each other in the context of critical postmodernist art, whose main goal was to criticize the representations provided by visual culture and to produce socio-political discourses on current agenda. Documentaries commented the practical agenda of life, which commercial television missed; and conceptual video dealt with the structural issue of television’s communication and representation system. The Kitchen started to present broadcast documentary works produced by video communities. For instance, it presented *Cuba the People, Part I and II* and *It’s a Living: Chicago 1976* in June 1976. These video documentaries were produced for broadcasting through local cable television. Downtown Community Television Center in New York produced *Cuba the People* to provide less biased information about the life of the Cuban people. This video focuses on ordinary life and casual street scenes of Cuba, instead of documenting political incidents and sites. Videopolis produced six programs in collaboration with independent video makers under the title, *It’s a Living: Chicago 1976* to show “what people do and how they feel about it.”\(^\text{113}\) This video also documents the specific aspects of life, making a living and their feeling about it. These two videos were based on the expectation of grass-root democracy that true representation of people’s life can lead to awareness of their reality.

The Kitchen’s video programs were mainly inclined to artistic experimentation in the context of contemporary art, which was experiencing the emergence of new art

forms, such as installation and performance. Simultaneously, The Kitchen continued to encourage artists to pursue the intermediality of video by making music, video, and performance interact together. Since early 1975, The Kitchen generally divided practices performed into two sections of the space: exhibitions and videotapes on the Broome Street section, and concerts and performances on the Wooster Street section. Video installation and performance-related video became the kernel of video works shown at The Kitchen. This trend was similar to that of the mainstream art world.

By contrast, at the Second International Computer Art Festival in 1974, the video artists who had been devoted to electronic image-processing showed their new works.114 This festival consisted of four parts, video, film, music, and graphics sculpture, produced primarily by means of computer or electronic equipment. By classifying video works that emphasized technical virtuosity on the electronic media as computer art, this festival functioned to divide video art into two different areas: technical computer art and aesthetic video art. This festival presented the former. The latter was privileged at the mainstream art world because it presented video work incorporated with performance art, conceptual art, and installation art.

After moving to SoHo, The Kitchen focused on performance art, which precipitated the performative process by means of video. Not only did artists present their work of installation and performance, but also staged themselves as performing themselves. Video intervenes in the performing situation as a mirror, an observing eye, or an environment. Placed between the performer and the audience, it involves the

114 The Kitchen, 2nd International Computer Art Festival: June 1 – 15, 1974, New York City (New York: The Kitchen, 1974), np. In the video session of the festival were video artists who had frequently worked and presented at the “old Kitchen” such as Devyatkin, Etra, Kubota, Paik, and VanDerBeek.
performance in different levels of statements and different spatial characters in terms of openness and privacy. Emphasis on performance art was distinct from the old Kitchen, where video performances were mostly live machine demonstrations of video image-processing or collaboration with a contemporary music performance. Here, performance art suggested its meanings as visual art. It was a new genre of art involving bodily practices that engage in time and space, those that differ from the traditional art practices, and those that are not dance or theater. Performance artists showed performative approaches to their subject with video installation.\textsuperscript{115} Joan Jonas was the first performance artist to perform her work at The Kitchen. She performed \textit{Funnel} in January 1974.

\textit{Funnel} (Figure 4-16) was a fusion of installation, closed-circuit video projection, and performance. For this performance, she constructed two paper walls in the shape of a funnel, whose wide part confronts the audience. Inside of the space two white silk curtains hang from two different wooden bars, horizontally dividing the funnel-shaped space into three areas. As the curtains fall, the receding spaces and objects are revealed one after another. The foreground area has a video camera, a video monitor, a 3-foot-long paper cone, and a child’s desk; the middle area has several smaller paper cones; and the rear area has a 7-foot metal hoop hung from the ceiling. Jonas first performs in the foreground. At the desk, she holds up a white rabbit to examine, and then a white silk square to show a drawing of a cone. After a while, she disappears behind the curtains, appears again in a red silk veil, and does a slow shape-changing

movement, and then picks a white satin square painted with the image of a blue rabbit. During her performance, she makes various sounds by spinning disks, playing various sound sources, and singing and speaking. The monitor shows what the camera saw: details of the performer and props.\(^{116}\)

*Funnel* brought performance art to The Kitchen. This new art form had not been presented at The Kitchen, before. Jonas performed a series of actions, movements, and communications within a performance space she specifically designed. Her performance was an attempt to find and show her language, spoken in space. Video amplified her performance by zooming in specific movements and details of presented items. Video was a substitute for her signature prop, a mirror, which was a means to examine the interactions of body, gaze, and space. The video camera and the monitor presented a so-called objective view of the subject, the space, and the performance. The camera’s gaze is more objective in this work than in her first video performance in 1972, *Organic Honey’s Visual Telepathy*. Here Jonas treats a live camera and monitor not only as a mirror to see her body playing with female identity, but also as a manipulating device to transform images, space and time. After Jonas’s ritualized performance, The Kitchen continued to present more performances such as *Juxtaposed, Contained, Revealed* performed by Barbara Dielly and Tina Girouard in November 1974, with other various artists.

The Kitchen encompassed sound installation and performance as well as music concert. This kind of installation was related to the radical practice of the Fluxus artists, who attempted to combine art and life by introducing visual and aural elements from

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everyday life. Without instrumental performance to give visual stimuli to the audience, recorded music and electronic music maintained audiovisuality, based on the visual quality of sound itself and on the assistance of visual devices. Sometimes video could inspire artists by catalyzing interdisciplinary practice, partly because video was the privileged medium for constructing installations for interplaying among image, sound, and space.

When a musical piece is composed as collections of sounds from nature, it simultaneously evokes visual images of the sound sources, which might be objects, livings things, or places. For example, when Anna Lockwood presented her sound installation, *Play the Ganges Backward One More Time, Sam* at The Kitchen in March 1974, she defined this work as a river environment. This definition alluded to the synthetic experience of rivers. Each day the audience listened to the sound of a different river, in “a cool, darkened and cushioned space.” When the sound source was free of intentional artificial arrangement, the audience became absorbed in the imaginary space the river sounds created. Each day, the whole room was transformed into a specific riverbank. What invoked the energy of sound in this exhibition was a chanting performance, *Malaman*, which Lockwood performed every night, using various ancient words for sound. Her river collection was an installation piece, not so much because the work needed a physical environment for the audience to listen to the sound, as because the sounds completed the environment constructed in the space.

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Electronic music and recorded music lack the source of visual association except for the music sound, unlike music performed live in a concert, which accompanies performing situation on top of the visual association of music sound. Without visible performing situation, electronic and recorded music often use video to compensate the absence of visual elements. Instead of visualizing electronic signals for specific sounds, video footage combined with music can complete recorded music and electronic music, which lack visual aspects in the performing process. Phil Niblock’s *Sur: the Movement of People Working* is a wondrous ensemble of music and image. Multi-layered drones of clarinet, cello, and bassoon correspond to rhythmical, repetitive movement of human bodies, specifically, manual laborers. The visual accompaniment to Niblock’s live music performance renders the simple tones of three instruments as a meditative picture of continuous human labor. The rhythm of gestures makes the drone sound fluctuate. Conversely, the sound gives spatial extension to the two-dimensional video images, because the sound spreads through the moving images to reach the audience. The sound connects the video to the audience in real time and actual space. Since sound generates an imaginary space in which human perception and imagination can dwell, music programs The Kitchen continued to present encouraged visual art to incorporate the aural element.

Beyond its audiovisuality, artists used video’s physical and virtual spatiality to construct their installation work. A video set materially occupies the space, and the video’s audiovisual imagery generates virtual spatiality. In February 1976, Vito Acconci constructed an installation representing a place of process that reflects the history of the SoHo area. He called this work *Space Opera* (Figure 4-17). It consisted of three
installations that represented a space in process. At the entrance room was “Overture,” installed with rows of folding chairs, a light behind them, and four audio speakers. Acconci’s voice and song came out of the speakers. The second installation was “Scene” in the large room, which the artist treated as a setting-in-process. Three pieces of blue papers were stretched diagonally across the room for the viewer to walk in. The last piece was “Act,” installed at the end of the large space, around the corner; and composed of five monitors, set on black pedestals arranged in a circle. Three monitors showed Acconci approaching the viewer in a static camera; the fourth monitor showed objects ready to be captured by a mobile camera; and the fifth monitor showed a still landscape.\footnote{The Kitchen, \textit{The Kitchen Center for Video and Music 75-76} (New York: Haleakala, Inc.,1976), 12.}

Acconci attempted to build “places for drama,” a space transforming from a material space to a cultural, historical space. The space was physically defined by props, such as chairs, floor papers, and video sets, and also was virtually characterized by light, sound, movement, and video images. This work was an implication of the history of SoHo. The Kitchen’s new location was changing from an urban dilapidation to a dynamic cultural venue. The district was becoming a new social and cultural space, from evacuated factory buildings to a new population influx for illegal living. Artists were clandestinely transforming SoHo from a dilapidated industrial area into a new community, at once residential and commercial. As this area was in the process of change; so was The Kitchen.

Thus, The Kitchen transformed into a new artistic space in which mixed-media and interdisciplinary projects would flourish. In this context, video installation was a
significant part of interdisciplinary practice. *Spaceman* (Figure 4-18), a collaborative work by sculptor Ralph Hilton and stage director Robert Wilson, was an example of interdisciplinary practice among theater, art, and literature. It consisted of video installation, stage props, and live performance in two spaces: the anteroom and the inner room.  

The anteroom featured an aqua satin anteater lying on the floor; a framed page of *The Village Voice* with the headline, “Loch Ness Monster Strikes It Rich;” and a television set wrapped in plastic. The monster was saying, “There… there is…there are…,” pointing to the newspaper with its flipper.  

The inner room occupied the center of the space. It was a large, plastic enclosure resembling a strange aquarium for displaying humans. This main structure was a 12-foot x 3 ½-foot x 65-foot translucent, plastic tunnel. Inside were four more Loch Ness Monsters, snouts together, in conversation. Small video monitors were placed above them. There was a desert with cactus; and a heavy, middle-aged woman with a fishing rod. Suspended above her was a man in a silver lamé space suit. Next were two abutting banks of video monitors. Between them was standing a figure in white cloth like an immobile statue. At the end, Christopher Knowles sat at a table and types his monologue and poems. What he punches was relayed onto a large monitor outside the enclosure. Eight different sets of color videotapes presented portraits, still-lifes, and landscapes on the installed video monitors. The two repeated images were a

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119 Ibid., 26.  
figure, seen from the waist down, lying flat on a board; and a burly woman wrapped in a white shawl, at a pay telephone booth.\textsuperscript{121}

This was Wilson’s first play using video. The work combined Wilson’s idea of the future of man and ways of seeing from different distances. The former was inspired by Wilson’s observation of six patients artificially kept alive relying on the life-support system; the latter was based on three traditional categories of painting, portrait, still-life, and landscape. Wilson thought of the three painting categories in terms of distance in the space, as well as the subject matter.\textsuperscript{122} The video projections functioned as the world seen by present and future man who lives on media technology as an extension of being human. Wilson brightly illuminated the side of the room where the staff operated the video control. If this was also part of the play and the play was on man as master of space, here he suggests video as a new way to see and to organize space.

**Conceptualizing the Medium of Video**

In March, 1975, the conceptual artists, Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula presented their video works. They used video as a means to convey their ideas and statements by exploring the realities one can encounter in current society through video, rather than treating video as a medium itself. Rosler presented two videotapes: *A Budding Gourmet* and *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (Figure 4-19). She described these videotapes as “work about consuming habits that includes not only video tapes but

\textsuperscript{121} Wooster, Ibid.

performance works, dialogues, and serial postcard works.”

In these videos, Rosler tried to characterize women’s housework and home video making as conventionalized patterns. She follows these patterns by showing efforts to be a gourmet by reading magazines on restaurants and kitchen appliances in *A Budding Gourmet*; and by juxtaposing the names of cooking utensils and demonstrating them in *Semiotics of The Kitchen*. These videos provide ironic compositions between signifier and signified regarding dietary life. Violent demonstration of the cooking utensils, as well as mismatching the names and gestures, distorts our habitual view of the women’s work of cooking. Presenting the various materials needed to be a gourmet reveals a finer life style, as a problem of class and politics. Rosler explains this habituation as what is “presented in its personal and political aspects, as itself and as a metaphor, as an internalized value and as a colonizing strategy.”

These two practices ironize habitual behaviors and repetitive patterns in everyday life. They put the female labor and space in the foreground, and at the same time brutalize them. In this way, she distorts the established representation of feminine qualities.

At the same exhibition, Sekula presented a videotape produced in 1974: *Talk Given by Mr. Fred Lux at the Lux Clock Manufacturing Company Plant in Lebanon, Tennessee, on Wednesday, September 15, 1954*. As part of series of works dealing with American economic life, this video is composed of visual texts such as videos and photographs. They show the imaginary lives of American working people and their

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124 Ibid.
experience of labor unions. This work is part documentary and part fiction. Sekula criticizes the capitalist system. He uses video in the attitude of a social critic, especially who critically represents realities of the late capitalist society by focusing on its concrete phenomena regarding labor unions. Departing from the whole series, in which each episode collides with the others, this single video demonstrates how video creates “a rhetorical artifact, a reconstructed moment” from the whole history of the class.

As if giving way to Rosler and Sekula, The Kitchen revealed its changed position, from a laboratory-like space whose artists, committed to video’s technical capacities as electronic device, appeared more in Radical Software to an alternative art space whose artists, more interested in aesthetic and conceptual practice in the art scene, wanted to appear in Artforum. The change of The Kitchen verified the fact that video art pursued something beyond technical mastery in generating and manipulating electronic images. Video could not transform into a powerful artistic medium until artists studied its concepts and principles to develop their own aesthetics. One of these efforts was to engage video in criticizing the process of discourse production based on the model of one-way communication of television. Conceptual artists used video as a way to break

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127 Furlong, “Notes towards a History of Image-Processed Video: Eric Siegel, Stephen Beck, Dan Sandin, Steve Rutt, Bill and Louise Etra,” 35. Furlong defined the character of the artists who worked with The Kitchen, distinguished from the artists who produced video works for gallery exhibitions, by comparing each of two parties to two magazines then dealing with new media technology and new trends of art, Radical Software and Artforum, respectively. In 1970 Steina Vasulka had already acknowledged that video experiments at The Kitchen also differed from “the community access-type video,” even though they all had been using the same tools.
the closed television circuitry to present realities and people apart from conventionalized forms and contents.

In addition to video performance, video installation, and critical video tapes, The Kitchen provided conceptual approaches to the video medium. Their focus was the structure of video. The closed-circuit system of video was closely related to the physically reflexive property of video, such as video feedback. In closed-circuit installations, instead of the camera viewing the monitor projecting its own imagery, the viewer watches his/her images taken by the camera and projected on the screen. The closed-circuit video installations gave artists and audience a moment to reflect on the epistemological structure of the media environment, as well as the human mind.

Peter Campus stressed the structural aspect of the experience of time and space in video installation. Campus, one of early presenting artists in The Kitchen, constructed Shadow Projection (Figure 4-20), a closed-circuit video installation, in May 1974. This was after he exhibited it at the Everson Museum of Art in March and April 1974. The work has five parts: on one side is a spotlight; in front of it is a video camera; opposite the light, about 10 feet way, is a video projector, which directs to and cables with the camera; in the middle of the light and the projector is a translucent screen; and the viewer is supposed to stand between the camera and the screen, with the camera at his/her back. Because of the strong spotlight, a shadow appears on the viewer. Simultaneously, the video camera is “seeing” the viewer’s back and projecting it on the screen over the shadow. The viewer encounters two different reflections of their superimposing each other: shadow and projected video image. Both are given to the viewer as one thing. Whenever he/she tries to separate one from the other by moving
his/her body, he/she only loses both of them. The viewer is not able to see the front of his/her body, but can only see his/her back.

Here Campus addresses the closed-circuit system of video in terms of perceptual process, and also reflects this perception at the psychological level. The viewer is confused with the distinction between reality and illusion. In terms of media representation, there is the same confusion. Information provided by television news is likely to deceive the audience, because it disguises the gap between reality and illusion by presupposing that video can catch a reality and to transfer its imagery in real time. His closed-circuit installations generally provide a simple media environment for the audience to participate in, and to realize the deceptive nature of video. The epistemological ground regarding our experience of time and space and our recognition of the human subject is weak and deceivable. The viewer only able to see his/her shadow and rear view, he connected to the human reality that one is not able to see him/herself as others do.

The closed-circuit system of video became the technical basis for an aesthetic concept of the video medium. Krauss defines the medium of video as “narcissism.” Here she expands the concept of medium from physical to psychological, by emphasizing the concept of the medium as what is involved in communication. What she considers most seriously is that the medium of video does not rely on “objective, material factors,” but rather on “a set of physical mechanisms,” that “comprises the television medium.” This

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apparatus promotes a condition of auto-reflection based on its real-time feedback.\textsuperscript{129} Krauss differentiates “auto-reflection” from “reflexiveness.” The latter is closely related to the medium-specific modernist art, while the former is related to the absolute feedback of the closed-circuit system. Reflexiveness, as a mode of contemporary art, is the process of analysis “doubling back to locate the object” in the dual relationships between object and picture, and between subject and painting. Auto-reflection, whose inherent movement is fusion, is “a process of bracketing out the object,” or the video equipment, by removing the difference between object and picture. Electronic equipment and its capabilities are demoted to mere appurtenance, while the specific psychological condition, narcissism, is the real medium of video.\textsuperscript{130}

This shifting definition of the video medium was the reason video works shown at The Kitchen changed from those that paid attention to the object, a physical medium in relation to video, to those that concentrated on the subject, a psychological entity in relation to video. Many artists play with this narcissistic condition of video in epistemological or psychological terms: either they conduct a critical analysis of video’s psychology, or they provide variations of the narcissistic condition of video. The Kitchen provided a site for installations and videotapes that dealt with these aesthetic aspects, caused by the effect of mirror-reflection or of real-time feedback. Video with this structure leads the viewer to a psychological or meditative condition, by reflecting the real onto the screen, an imaginary surface.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 56-58.
Bill Viola exhibited the installation piece, *He Weeps for You* (Figure 4-21), in January 1977, after exhibiting it at *Documenta 6* in Kassel in 1976. This work addressed the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm; and the message of Christian religious writing through a drop of water, and its sound, and the video image.¹³¹ This work used the narcissistic structure of video by removing the distance between a reality and its image, and by conveying audiovisual images of the reality. This work consisted of two parts. One part was water dropping onto the surface of a drum with a microphone. The water leaks from a small valve onto a copper pipe running down from the ceiling, in a large, darkened space. The other was a video projector showing the swelling drop of water on a screen in the back of the space. The projector was connected to a color video camera taking extreme close-up shots of the water.¹³² The dark space was filled with the loud resonant “boom” sound. The sound was too loud for the real size of the dropping water, but corresponded to the extreme close-up magnification of the swelling water. The magnified water drops contained reflections of the surroundings. It was as if the video showed another world one could not normally see. Here, video created a philosophical and religious space out of amplified sound and magnified image.

Nancy Holt’s *Revolve* also creates a metaphysical site using video’s psychology. She brought this videotape to The Kitchen in December 1977, right after showing it in the *Young American Filmmakers’ Series*, held at the Whitney Museum of American Art. The videotape is an interview with her friend, Dennis Wheeler, who was dying of

¹³² Ibid., 28-29.
leukemia, recording a meditative moment, speaking about dying and death. *Revolve* approaches the narcissism of video from a more meditative perspective. It is a visual memorial for a person, and also a record of the presence of death in life. As Carrie Rickey, a film critic, described this work, "The three-point perspective was designed to give the illusion of infinity. Holt’s three-camera perspective grips the observer with the reality of the finiteness of death. [...] The editing process is pendulous, dialectical—like Wheeler living on the borrowed time of chemotherapy, swinging from remission to illness." Since the swinging picture verifies the existence of the camera in actual time and space, the viewer is placed in the position of seemingly objective observer. In contrast, Wheeler stays almost still, while he speaks to the artist, who is out of the frame. Because he hides his anxiety about his illness and expected death, his stillness makes the viewer believe he is strong and calm. Although viewers see and hear Wheeler from the viewpoint of the camera, they come to transfer themselves to the speaker, because the three-point perspective has the effect of bringing the viewers to the front of a three-sided mirror. It is as if, concentrating on Wheeler’s speaking, the viewers looked in a mirror, reflecting themselves onto the image. This empathic process conflicts with the cool nature of video’s low definition condition, which leads the viewers to keep alert and high level of engagement for interpretation. Nonetheless, empathy enables the identification of self with its mirror-image. Here psychology defeats technology.

Thus, The Kitchen came to accommodate opposite attitudes to the psychological structure of video. Many artists attempt to criticize and attack video’s narcissism with

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their videotapes and installations. Some artists use video as a communication means to lead the performer and the viewer to a reflective and meditative condition. This was a remarkable change from when The Kitchen was first established. While the old Kitchen provided physical facilities and information for the electronic image processing, the new Kitchen dealt with video in terms of the more-expanded notion of medium.

This exemplifies the process whereby video art breaks down medium specificity, which was the backbone of the late modernist paradigm. As Krauss points out, a medium consists of a distinct technical support and a set of conventions, both of which enable artists to sustain artistic practice by assuming that the medium itself, as their subject, produces a specific experience. Video consists of its technical apparatus (camera, transmitting device, and projection device) and its language for composing images. Video art conducts technical manipulation of the electronic signal and/or critical engagement in its physical structure and culture.\(^{134}\) In the post-medium condition, medium’s support is “the compound idea of the ‘apparatus.’” By apparatus, she means that the definition of medium can be expanded from technical support and a set of conventions; to that which encompasses the context of experience and more. The expanded notion of medium stems from the medium’s aggregate condition.\(^{135}\)

The Kitchen provided a space for artists to generate “the post-medium condition” of video. It encouraged artists to proceed from experimenting with physical properties to investigating the psychological structure of video, and to inventing the new language of

\(^{134}\) For discussion on video work of conceptual concerns about the video medium in relation to other media such as television, photo, computer, see Spielmann, *The Reflexive Medium*, 137-224.

\(^{135}\) Rosalind Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition” (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 24-32,
video art. The Kitchen’s openness that made it possible stemmed from its ambiguous identity, between artists’ community and art institution.

**The Kitchen, a Community and Institution**

From the beginning, The Kitchen provided a gathering place for artists who worked with electronic media and unknown art forms. It also served as a laboratory for experimenting with intermedia practice. In the kernel of these activities was video, born from a communication technology and located between technology and art, between art and culture. Most attention was paid to the physical media of video and its capacities for artistic production. After moving to Wooster Street, The Kitchen, treating video as its central element, broadened its mission “to provide a sympathetic environment, an adaptive space, technical resources and a knowledgeable audience for contemporary work in video, intermedia, music and dance.”

By presenting a broader range of artists dealing with video as a conceptual tool or as an environment, The Kitchen gradually assimilated into the atmosphere of the SoHo art world. Around 1973 in SoHo, alternative art spaces started to burgeon as exhibition spaces for emerging artists and unknown art forms the mainstream art world was apprehensive about exhibiting. Since most of these alternative spaces were casual and loosely organized, artists usually used them as physical bases to meet other artists and hang out all day. The Kitchen became one of these hangouts, made by the fusion of artistic utopia and electronic technology.

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There was an event that demonstrated one identity of The Kitchen as a space for the artists’ community. It was a large-scale artists’ hangout the night of November 30, 1974. Jean Dupuy organized a soiree, *Soup and Tart* (Figure 4-22), composed of a home-made dinner and 2-minute performances by 38 artists. Artists presented various performances: Jon Gibson played the saxophone and Phillip Glass presented an impromptu vocalization. Dupuy showed a videotape of making and eating apple pie with the videotape played in reverse to the narration. Jonas performed the bird in veil, her signature costume. Gordon Matta-Clark brought a house-shaped cake to serve the audience. Yvonne Rainer read part of a book on communication technology and led a discussion with the audience. Each performance was full of wit and humor, to make the audience laugh and sometimes engage in the performance. This looked like a pleasant town meeting of the local artists’ community.

The form of this event and the relationship between artist and audience resembled a communal collective. Although Dupuy prepared this event as his artistic practice, it was not a formal presentation of works of art, but rather a social gathering of local artists. They share an attitude to art, and also a sphere of life and a lifestyle. The host artist, Dupuy played the role of organizer of an artists’ gathering rather than an exhibition. For this kind of community gathering, the place is crucial as the impetus of collective activities, just as the analyst’s couch makes the patient feel comfortable to speak out his/her story in his/her own language without any interruption. The Kitchen functioned as a comfortable place where artists presented and performed their work, while Dupuy composed a unique social bond between artists and audience to precipitate direct communication between them. Because artwork mediated their
meeting, the artistic language merged into language of everyday life. This was the effect of the unique social bond constructed during the event.

The Kitchen has maintained its loose organizational character, even though it began to be run as a cultural organization, no more an artists’ group. The soiree, *Soup & Tart* paved the way for overcoming the discontinuity between the old Kitchen and the new Kitchen. The old one was characterized as an artist forum on the process of accumulating knowledge about the physical medium of video; whereas the new one was an alternative space for artists to express their desires to formulate new languages. Because of the artistic concerns of its community, as Stearns described, The Kitchen established its character as an art space that “eluded, perhaps studiously avoided, definition.”

This implies utopian condition, if we define utopia as liberation from any kinds of restrictions. Here we can conclude that the artists’ utopia is not based on the orderly arrangement of elements, rather on the chaotic spread of desires. That concerns how to set free, rather than how to organize well. *Soup & Tart* shows how to create a utopian moment within the art institution.

As ambition grew to expand the organization, rather than the artistic radicalism, however, The Kitchen became a multidisciplinary institution offering well-organized programs. This was ironic, given its initial radical atmosphere in the 1960s. In fact, Stearns, as the new director of The Kitchen, wanted to overcome the limitations of the 1960s’ antiestablishment attitude by making it an arts organization halfway between self-organized and institutional structure. He tried to make The Kitchen a reservoir of experimental ideas and at the same time a field for the artists’ curatorship.

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137 Ibid.
As a result, The Kitchen began to transform into a multipurpose art space. As its catalogue described, “The Kitchen exhibits art like a gallery, presents performance like a theater, offers music like a concert hall, collects art like a museum, and could broadcast like a radio or television station.” 138 This also resulted from the diversity of artists who worked and showed at the Kitchen. It involved formalizing the aesthetics of new media and new art forms. This goal was put at its introduction to the public, “The Kitchen continues to act as a membrane through which the creativity of the experimental artist reaches the mainstream of aesthetic idea in record time.” 139 Evidence of this was that The Kitchen increasingly re-presented works already exhibited or performed at other galleries and museums. Taking examples from above, Viola, Campus, Jonas, and other artists re-presented their works after exhibiting at other places. Well-known artists such as Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, Lawrence Weiner, and Michael Snow introduced their new works to the public, using video. The combination of new and established artists helped generate the aesthetic of emerging art forms including video, installation, and performance. In terms of electronic media art, thus, one can summarize the history of The Kitchen as a history of the experimental aesthetic ideas regarding the intermediality of video.

In this context, John Sanborn planned an event to exploit the hidden expectation of the art world to find a genealogy of video from the anti-art tradition that Duchamp had initiated. Sanborn made an imaginative videotape of Duchamp in 1976. This was based on a vain wish: “I wanted Marcel Duchamp to have made videos, and be counted amongst the first video artists in the world. This of course never happened, although he

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138 Ancona, “Strange Brew,” 44.
139 LAICA, The New Arts Space, 97.
lived long enough to overlap the introduction of the SONY porta-pak." On March 31, 1977, he presented the videotapes at The Kitchen with the title, *The Last Videotapes of Marcel Duchamp* (Figure 4-23).

Seemingly, a video document of Duchamp’s daily life, it actually is an elaborate performance piece masquerading Duchamp as a video artist. Sanborn produced the two videotapes as a subtle project to construct a fake genealogy of video art. One tape shows Duchamp’s Greenwich Village neighborhood, posters of wanted criminals on a bulletin board, and a chess café Duchamp might have regularly gone to. The other tape gives supporting evidence for the legitimacy of the tapes. The evidence is composed of Russell Connor’s comments on Duchamp’s prophetic genius in heralding the new medium of video, and footage of his interview with Duchamp in 1964; and video segments from Hannah Wilke’s performance at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and from Shigeko Kubota’s TV Lab’s VTR Series, *Video Gallery*. Furthermore, Sanborn connects the Duchampian concept of “ready-made,” which deals with found objects and chance, to the development of video as an art form. The show was successful at the box office and received an excited reception. Tickets were sold out, with the line around the block being turned away. As Viola secretly recorded how the audience responded, they reverently sat and watched the tapes, whispering to each other that the tapes were legitimate. Glowing reviews appeared in the papers.

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The event was received in an ironic way. When the art world misunderstood the fake tapes as legitimate, it extolled them as a rare material in the history of art. Once someone found out it was a hoax and the real intent was clear, the art world treated the tapes and the event as a ridiculous joke. This changing reception demonstrated the desire to establish affiliation with the master, and also the image of The Kitchen across the art world. In response, Sanborn said, “But that’s the spirit of The Kitchen.” What he calls ‘the spirit of The Kitchen’ indicates resistance to the institutionalization and canonization of art. Although he intended to connect video to Duchamp, the master of anti-art, he ultimately ridiculed himself by constructing and deconstructing the fantasy of having a master. However, this frustration did not burden him because Duchamp himself mocked the institution of art and would not have wanted to be the master of a specific art form. It seemed for Sanborn that the way an artist makes Duchamp his master was to share his idea. In the context of the late 1970s, when galleries and museums began to accommodate video art, Sanborn twisted the process of the art world accepting the new art form as an aesthetic practice.

In sum, The Kitchen was part artists’ community open to any of artists’ experimentation and part art institution formulating unknown artistic practice into a specific art form. The Kitchen functioned as a hub for artists working under the shifting circumstances, from medium-specific to post-medium in the early and mid 1970s. The name, “The Kitchen” was related to a metaphor of fusion: it was a place for cooking, which links to the process of mixing and transformation of ingredients. The Kitchen was

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143 Ibid.
a “kitchen” where artists tested their new recipes for electronic media art, especially video art, in the relation to other emerging art forms.
CHAPTER 5
ARTISTS SPACE: CANONIZING POSTMODERN AESTHETIC

Artists Space was established in 1972, against the background of loosening medium specificity, after the postminimal involvement of literal objects and the postmodern cross of different media. At the time, artists worked in various sites outside the gallery space to transgress the boundaries of art delineated by the Greenbergian formalism. As ephemeral, performative, and site-specific work was moving from the marginal art scene to the mainstream, traditional art institutions increasingly appeared insufficient as venues for the new art. Artists Space was conceived as a new alternative space that shared the characteristics of both the artist-run alternative space and the mainstream museum.

Artists Space was a new art institution to supplement the modernist museum-gallery system, in order to encompass the new artists’ practice beyond modernist norms. If the notion of the institution is defined as the established that is universal, monolithic, stable, unified, and dominant; and functioning as the power structure, the establishment of art, when the first alternative spaces came to being, was the modernist art system. This system consisted of the principle of self-criticism, a medium-specific notion of art, and modernist art museums.¹ What was urgent in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a new alternative space that could embrace undefined practices and emerging artists, outside the modernist art system. Artists Space encompassed heterogeneous practices and hybrids of different art forms and media, based on its

¹ Institutional critique, a new mode of art initiated in the late 1960s, has dealt with the problems of the existing frame delineated by the Modernist norms and the museum system. For artists’ reactions to the problems of the institution of art, see Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, ed., Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009).
unclassified selection process. Because existing artist-run alternative spaces were too accidental to meet demands, the new alternative space should ensure both plurality and selectivity in organizing exhibitions.

This chapter examines Artists Space, an institution that emerged in response to challenges and opportunities in the art landscape of New York in the 1970s. Since New York emerged as an international art center after the big hit of Abstract Expressionism, autonomy of art, based on medium specificity and particularly focused on the Modernist painting, has been a dominant artistic discourse. The art of the seventies actively critiqued the tenants of Greenbergian modernism and sought to place sensorial and psychological experience at the center of their artistic practice. The turn away from art made for the museum or commercial gallery and towards a practice that could encompass a fusion of art with life was made possible in part because of the transformation of the fabric of downtown New York in the late sixties and early seventies. Activism in the 1960s encouraged artists to resist against established art institutions, represented by the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and promoted the establishment of many alternative spaces to meet the demand of ethic-specific communities and artists. Artists Space was established to support artistic production and exhibition on a more general level, with the state government’s financial support.

In the 1970s, Artists Space gradually but systematically transformed into an established alternative space, in three phases. 3 Shows, the artists’ choice exhibition program for emerging artists, ran from 1973 to February 1976. From January 1976, Artists Space concentrated on film and performance as new prevailing art forms. Finally,
beginning of fall 1977, Artists Space organized critical exhibitions to theorize new trends at that time. This process spanned from the first directorship of Trudie Grace (1972 to 1975) to the next director, Helene Winer (1975 to 1980). As Winer established more organized programs, Artists Space transited from artist-centered to the curator-led organization. Organizing exhibitions increasingly involved knowledge to incorporate emerging artists and new art form into the art world. Here knowledge means the function of the curator; whether relying on his or her theoretic perspective or social connections, the curator plays a crucial role in organizing an exhibition, which is a chain of artistic signifiers. This raises a question: what knowledge did the exhibitions constitute and strengthen at Artists Space? To answer this, I analyze the significant exhibitions and artistic events and elaborate Artists Space as a postmodern institution for discourse production.

As this chapter will argue, Artists Space sought to generate self-consciously postmodern discourse about art and did so through a series of solo shows, film and performance series, and guest curators’ shows from the 1973-1974 season to the 1977-1978. 3 Shows and PersonA performance series from 1973 to 1975, the first season of Artists Film Series and Performance Series in 1976, and the Pictures exhibition in 1977 demonstrate key shifts in the theorization of postmodern artistic strategies and artistic modes. These exhibitions encompassed installation and performance pieces in order to foreground and embrace the language and temporality of the theatricality Michael Fried criticized in “Art and Objecthood.” 2 The Pictures exhibition was emblematic, in that it

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2 Craig Owens theoretically articulated allegory as a new rhetorical strategy of postmodern art, drawing on the work of Paul de Man and Walter Benjamin. He dealt with the unreadability, ambiguity, the shift to a discursive mode as allegorical symptoms
generated the first literature on the changing trend of the medium of picture. This show accompanied contemporaneous literatures on the postmodern practice and led subsequent theoretical praxis to establish the postmodern aesthetic in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Before discussing artistic practices at Artists Space, I analyze its organizational characters that differed from other artist-run alternative spaces and mainstream museums. Artists Space functioned as a frame containing what artists and curators produced and selected. Its founding process anticipated the changing art politics between artist and curator, which affects the organizational process of exhibitions and their contents.

**Governmental Funding and A New Mature Alternative Space**

Artists Space was opened in 1973 as an affiliated exhibition space for the Committee for Visual Arts, Inc., a service and arts organization initiated as a pilot project funded through the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) in 1972. At that time, NYSCA’s Visual Arts Program, whose director was Lucy Kostelanetz, incorporated and operated Architecture and Environmental Arts, Museum Aid, and Visual Arts Services. The mission of Visual Arts Services, formerly called Community Projects in the Visual Arts, was to encourage a new audience for contemporary art by offering education programs and by supporting professional artists through grants and access to facilities.
Although Visual Arts Services included various programs, it received a relatively small budget compared to Museum Aid.\(^3\) This was because state legislation mandated that only not-for-profit organizations and public service programs could get funds. To find a way to help visual artists, who usually worked individually without forming organizations, receive funds, Grace, director of the Visual Arts Projects Program, and Irving Sandler, consultant to the Program, developed plans, through artists’ meetings to collect the opinions of artists working in different disciplines, in spring 1972. Discussions at the meetings indicated the need for a gallery space to support individual artists’ ongoing exhibition projects.\(^4\) With an initial budget of $100,000, all of which came from NYSCA, Sandler formed the Committee for the Visual Arts with Jerome Hausman and David Ecker, in 1972. The Committee was supposed to run the Artists Lecture Program, the Emergency Materials Fund, and the Independent Exhibitions Program as well as Artists Space. In October 1973, when Trudie Grace became the first director of the Committee, Artists Space opened at an old loft at 155 Wooster Street, under a strong backing from the Visual Arts Projects funding panel, composed of administrators, critics, and artists.\(^5\) Although Artists Space was part of the Committee’s schemes to material support individual artists, it maintained the experimental and communal aspects of artist-run alternative spaces.

\(^3\) In the 1973-74 fiscal year, for example, a budget of $2,878,557 was allotted to Museum Aid out of the Visual Arts Program’s total annual budget of approximately $3,900,000 whereas Visual Arts Services received only $684,823. See New State Council on the Arts, *New State Council on the Arts Annual Report 1973-74* (New York: New York State Council on the Arts, 1974), 36, 38, 40, 59.


\(^5\) Ibid., 21.
Artists Space was relatively independent from both the direct control of NYSCA and the conventions of the art world’s selection process. Since there was no assurance or stipulation of future budget, the Committee searched for other fund-raising sources, which made Artists Space independent from NYSCA and develop into an artist-initiative alternative space during the 1970s. Grace recalled that it took approximately three years for Artists Space not to be viewed as an arm of the Council.6 Grace and Sandler expanded fund-raising sources to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and other public and private foundations. Conversely, governmental support for Artists Space increased annually through the 1970s, from approximately $32,000 in the 1973-1974 season, to about $150,000 in the 1978-1979 season.7 Grace and Sandler were particularly invested in insuring that Artists Space was as “open and clean as possible” because they thought the existing arts organizations were “locked up and controlled by critics, curators, and dealers.”8 First, they selected artists in New York as three of the nine board members, to maintain the power of artists in decision-making. Second, they conceived a new selection system based on artists’ involvement, to insure the openness of the space by ensuring that “no person or group could dominate the gallery.”9 Artists Space became an independent space where artists provided exhibition opportunities for unknown artists and gave exposure to art that commercial galleries hesitated to endorse.

6 Ibid.
8 Grace and Sandler, “Interview,” 21.
9 Ibid., 22.
Consequently, Artists Space was open to experimental artistic practice. Departing from established criteria and the dominant discourse on art, it took part in what alternative spaces were committed to, which art critic, John Perreault defined as “what used to be called the avant-garde: work too far out, too controversial, too experimental, or too ‘unsalable’ for the commercial galleries.” Once artists were chosen, Artists Space guaranteed they could decide on their own exhibition without any outside control of works exhibited or installation methods. This freedom allowed artists the mainstream did not yet market, and also the periphery of the art world to enter the public sphere. Artists Space was another structure allowing artists to produce their own discourse by allowing artists to choose the artists who would exhibit. This alternative character was enhanced by opening its space for artistic events in evenings.

However, Artists Space was not wholly autonomous. It did seek to foster experimental new work but had substantial governmental support. Furthermore, its promotion of experimental art served market interests. As Perrault argued:

And yet these spaces are not really alternatives to the gallery system after all. The[y] provide in-town “out-of-town” try-outs. They feed the gallery system with new artists. A smart dealer doesn’t have to gamble on backing a new artist, doesn’t have to provide the initial financial and emotional support, doesn’t have to fret over possible critical response. It isn’t heroic, or event much fun, but try keeping an eye on the alternative spaces a dealer can scoop up pretested products.

12 Initially Artists Space was conceived because money was available, whereas early alternative spaces such 112 Greene Street and The Kitchen started for avant-gardist purport rather than managerial consideration of the governmental fund. See Phil Patton, “Other Voices, Other Rooms: The Rise of the Alternative Spaces,” Art in America 21(July-August 1977): 86.
In a sense, Artists Space anticipated the future of the early alternative spaces. The late 1970s also witnessed the prevalence of market-oriented tendencies in the early alternative spaces. Between the avant-garde art scene and the art market, Artists Space functioned as supporter of emerging artists and new art forms and as a reservoir of promising artists for the art market. As it accepted anti-commodity art, such as performance, video, and artist’s films, it also prepared a basis for the art world to recognize that these art forms would be aesthetic and salable. This was the niche within the existing gallery system that alternative spaces that began to be institutionalized in the mid-1970s, including Artists Space, found themselves in.

Just as the relationship of Artists Space to the art market was ambivalent, so was its relationship to the government. Artists Space maneuvered the state government’s policy of art support into the experimental atmosphere of the New York downtown art scene in the 1970s. The fact that Artists Space was founded as part of NYSCA’s Visual Arts Program implies that, initially, Artists Space began to realize the state government’s policy on equal opportunity in the cultural field. However, Artists Space marked the NYSCA’s distinct approach to art support from the prevailing art support programs providing grants for individual artists and art institutions. Because these beneficiaries should meet the criteria given, funds were unevenly distributed. Although The NEA continued to expand its range, few grants were awarded to artists working

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14 Brian Wallis, “Public Funding and Alternative Spaces,” in *Alternative Art New York: 1965 – 1985*, ed. Julie Ault (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 175-77. Wallis uses Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, which indicates a new, “pastoral” form of power based on self-regulation and concerns the specific function of institutions affiliated to the authority of the state or federal governments, to address the power of NEA on the art world wielded by reconstituting alternative spaces as nonprofit organizations to qualify for its grants.
with conceptual, performance, or video art until the late 1970s, when the art world started to accommodate them.\textsuperscript{15} The NYSCA recognized “the disproportionate amount of funds going in other directions, such as to ‘major institutions,’ ‘major exhibitions,’ and countless art workshops for children,” rather than to visual artists.\textsuperscript{16} To give marginalized artists an exhibition space operated by the artists’ own decision, Artists Space was open, which was a more direct and practical method to respond to the social context of the time. For the state government, Artists Space was a way to provide equal opportunity for artists who did not satisfy the conventional criteria of the mainstream art world.

Artists Space also anticipated the institutionalization of both alternative spaces and radical practices in the early 1970s. Artists Space demonstrated a way to accommodate radical art practice outside the mainstreams. The NEA reconstituted alternative spaces as nonprofit organizations qualified for governmental grants. The NYSAC tried one more method to establish an alternative space and to intervene in the new art scene: Artists Space is an example of this. In addition to having a systematic process to introduce emerging artists, Artists Space accommodated performance art and video and artists’ films into well-categorized programs.

Above all, Artists Space gave artists a unique institutional environment in which they could loosen up to freely experiment with art. Edit deAk, the part-time curator of Artists Space from 1974 to 1975, said,


\textsuperscript{16} Trudie Grace, “Artists Space,” \textit{Art Journal} 34, no. 4 (Summer 1975): 323.
Artists Space was not like *Art-Rite* (published 1972-79, editors Walter Robinson and Edit deAk), which came from the people, establish our own voice, our own style and category. Artists Space was something grown-ups and institutions like NYSCA dreamed up...I was a golden find because I was the real kid giving the sauce, the juice of the real art mode of the time, to an institution that was organized from above. I did everything from being the cleaning lady to making it possible for artists to breathe the air there because they had many rules and regulations. I would kid the artists who walked in. I told them we had so many rules, forget it. Nothing you want to do applies. Then I would teach them how to rephrase it according to our codes between the door and the supposed desk.\(^{17}\)

Here deAk contrasted Artists Space with *Art-Rite*, emphasizing Artists Space’s inherent nature as a disciplined institution, which she suggested when she called Artists Space “something grown-ups and institutions like NYSCA dreamed up.” Artists Space could be an open space despite its bureaucratic background, because de Ak played the intermediate role between artists and exhibition procedures. There was no full-time curator in Artists Space from 1973 to 1975, during the directorship of Grace. The only curator was de Ak, who communicated with artists and organized evening events and exhibitions. Lack of a professional curator transformed Artists Space into a truly alternative space, by relieving artists from discomfort and nervousness about rules and regulations. This mature looseness enabled artists to bring up vigorous practices and diverse artistic languages during the 1970s.

From 1973 to 1975, Artists Space relied on artists’ decisions, in organizing exhibitions that introduced emerging artists to the art world. *3 Shows* inaugurated the first season of Artists Space in October 1973, and continued until February 1976. It was a monthly showcase of three emerging artists not affiliation with any commercial or cooperative galleries. Three well-established artists selected three artists each. Sandler

\(^{17}\) Edit deAk, “Edit deAk,” in Gould, *5000 Artists*, 37.
drew up a list of the first group of 21 well-known artists who would select young artists. The 21 artists were Richard Nonas, Lucas Samaras, Nancy Graves, Ronald Bladen, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Peter Agostin, Edwin Ruda, Michael Heizer, Vito Acconci, Richard Serra, Jane Kaufman, Dorthea Rockburne, Jackie Winsor, Romare Bearden, Philip Pearlstein, Donald Judd, Chuck Close, Peter Campus, Dan Flavin, and Jack Youngerman. This list covered seven months of one-person-show triads. The selection process for 3 Shows became more democratic, over time. Selectors for the 1974-1975 season and the 1975-1976 season were chosen through mail responses of about 420 New York-based artists. This process reflected the aim of artists controlling everything that happened with exhibitions and events.

In 1974, Artists Space also formed a directory of emerging artists, Unaffiliated Artists File, to organize slide screenings and the subsequent artists’ juried group shows. Unaffiliated artists living throughout New York State were invited to submit three slides of their works, and “all of these artists were asked to function as a jury of the whole.”

In May 1974, the last month of the first season, a group show was held, composed of 12 artists selected out of 149 artists who had responded to a call for slides, by vote of 130 artists attending at the viewing of their own work. This was in contrasted by another successful alternative art organization, the Institute for Art and Urban Resource, which established its spaces, the Clock Tower Gallery and P.S.1, after having used available places in the city. Its founder, Alanna Heiss organized and controlled exhibitions using her ability as director and curator. As Sandler said, Artists Space tried to be as

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democratic as possible for its ambitions were to “get their artists accepted in the art world” and “the possibility of creating an alternative art world.”

**The Diverse 1970s at Artists Space**

Its loosely organized curatorial process enabled Artists Space to encompass new art forms and interdisciplinary activities. From February 1974 through May 1975, Artists Space organized a series of practices called Evening Events, which featured a range of activities; encompassing everything from literary readings, to dance performance, to artistic performance. The *Artists as Filmmakers Series* and *PersonA* performance series were the prototypes for programs after 1975. Participating artists included almost-established and emerging artists who dealt with experimental practices. These two programs were the beginning of institutionalizing performance, film, and video tape, which were the representative art forms of non-object and ephemeral art.

In the early seventies, Artists Space was a casual space where artists could socialize, and over the course of the decade, became ever more identifiable as an important artistic incubator. To artists newly entering the New York art world, Artists Space seemed like an artists’ commune. As Laurie Anderson recalls,

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20 Evening Events at Artists Space, Feb., 1974 through May, 1975, Box 1973-1976, Artists Space Archive, New York. To specify the contents of Evening Events, it included performance art, dance performances, and music concerts, video and multimedia performances, poetry and literary readings, panel discussions, conversation with an artist, and lectures. Some were conceived of and organized by Artists Space itself; some, by artists who need a showcase for their work. Due to budget restrictions, Artists Space did not support the publicity of the artists’ showcases, but its staff assisted with many details of production.

21 *Artists as Filmmakers Series* was organized as an ad hoc program for Artists Space by Alida Walsh, a filmmaker and sculptor and held three times in February and November of 1974 and March of 1975; *PersonA* was a series of performances on the theme of autobiography held in April of 1974.
Places like Artists Space are for young artists starting art, clumping together, and doing stuff together. Most young artists are dependent on banding together. The physical base for us then was right around Food restaurant, the Kitchen, Artists Space, and the Paula Cooper Gallery.22

The atmosphere had an effect on artists who expanded their artistic language by combining art and life. This effect was seen in two events: Marathon Reading of Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans*, presented by Alison Knowles, Anna Lockwood, and Jean Rigg from noon of the last day of 1974 through the late afternoon of new year’s day 1975; and *United Graffiti Artists* in September 1975, one of the first gallery presentations of graffiti before its time.23 Celebrating the 100th year since the birth of Gertrude Stein, thirty artists read her work while other artists listened to them. They spent all over the night on the floor of Artists Space. The space was open all night under the sovereignty of the artists. Grace remembered the artists’ occupation of the space,

Sometimes we weren’t even present at the evening event, if we felt that we could trust the person organizing the program. One night, for instance, John Cage and a large diverse group read from Gertrude Stein’s writings through the night. I came back the next morning, and to my surprise some of the readers were still in the gallery, sitting on mattresses scattered all over the gallery floor.24

Meanwhile, *United Graffiti Artists* expanded the range of art medium and artist’s community. The show consisted of graffiti written by young Puerto Rican graffiti artists from the street and the subway. It was an unusual exhibition, in that their graffiti were

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24 Grace and Sandler, “Interview,” 23.
executed on canvases.\textsuperscript{25} The artists cared about the fact that their work was exhibited in the gallery space, which meant an entrance to the art world and recognition of their work as works of art.\textsuperscript{26} During the exhibition, the young artists lived at the house of curator deAk. Exhibiting graffiti in more organized exhibition space rather than their original dilapidated sites, the graffiti production process and the installation scene suggested lifestyles of two local communities based on urban dilapidation: the artist community in SoHo and the lower-class community of the Lower East Side. This was an odd fusion of art and subculture, made possible by the openness of Artists Space. 

In the late 1970s, Artists Space became a more institutionalized gallery when curators, instead of artists, came to select and organize shows under the directorship of Helene Winer. Winer served as the gallery director of Montgomery Art Center at Pomona College in California and succeeded Grace. Winer collaborated with the program directors and curators she hired, such as Paul McMahon during the 1975-1976 and 1976-1977 seasons; and Ragland Watkins and Susan Wyatt from the 1977-1978 season through 1980. After Artists Space moved to 105 Hudson Street in January 1977, it relied on the disciplined process of exhibition organization and direction. First, it continued programs from previous seasons, with the curatorial engagement. The director and curators organized the emerging artists’ group shows, selecting artists who would be exhibited from the Unaffiliated Artists File, to ensure consistency in the exhibitions. The \textit{Artists Film Series} and \textit{Performance Series} continued and became regular programs for video and performance artists who needed a showcase. During the

\textsuperscript{25} Amy Goldin, “United Graffiti Artists 1975 at Artists Space,” review, \textit{Art in America} 63 (November-December, 1975): 101-102. Goldin interpreted this as the transformation of graffiti into gallery productions and as a standard overstatement of artistic individuality.

\textsuperscript{26} Walter Robinson, “Walter Robinson,” in Gould and Smith, \textit{5000 Artists}, 41.
1976-1977 season, sporadic performances and multimedia projects were programmed in the name of *Evening Event*. Second, Artists Space introduced a new program to encourage experimental artists to work on their projects. A separate gallery, *Room 207*, was made available to artists who submitted proposals to conduct their individual projects, which included installations, film and video works, and performances. This space ran from 1977 through the 1978-1979 season. Curators reviewed and selected the applications.

The curators were people Winer found “actively involved with artists and new work to organize the exhibitions or the staff together would come up with ideas,”⁹²⁷ such as Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo, and Charlie Clough. They worked with four or five artists, invited to the selection committee to view slides and visit artists’ studios. A version of the selection committee recommended artists inside and outside the groups, for a couple of rounds of shows. However, the selection process was not structural, but casual, because the curators were also artists and Artists Space allowed them “the luxury of programming a lot of exhibitions and events without worrying about the long-term commitment that a commercial gallery has.”⁹²⁸

Based on its curator-centered decision process, Artists Space came to offer well-directed exhibitions in terms of consistency. The exhibitions gave the art world a critical summary of recent and current artistic practices. The curators selected artists and works of specific thematic or media coherence. The *Pictures* exhibition, organized by Crimp in 1977, was a crucial exhibition to review image production during the 1970s as

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²⁸ Ibid., 57.
the extension of picture, in terms of media and signification process. I discuss this exhibition later. *Audio Works*, held in 1978, was the first group exhibition in New York that presented sound pieces by artists. This exhibition intended to “reflect the general direction toward broadening the concept of what constitutes viable art media and also diminishing the validity of the once clear distinctions between visual art and areas of poetry, music, storytelling and theatre.” It presented sound pieces by 80 artists on records, cassettes, reels, installations, and performances. The curators established sound as an art medium and enclosed what is more than physical into the boundary of art through this exhibition. Winer said, “While the common factor in the art in this exhibition is the use of sound, the diversity indicates that the basis for its use is more the product of the artist’s other or general concerns than it is the product of the medium itself.” This show foregrounded the intermediality of each medium and highlighted discursive aspects of sound work. Because sound created a sense of space and a communication situation, it can be an effective medium to cross various art forms and media and beyond.

Furthermore, Artists Space introduced interdisciplinary perspectives to the organization of an exhibition by inviting artists who worked in broader spheres including architecture and cultural, socio-political agenda. *Architectural manifestoes* held in April 1978 presented drawings and installations by architect Bernard Tschumi. He explored varied aspects of architectural and urban space, emphasizing “the spatial as well as

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narrative aspects of architecture.” Presenting architectural work, Artists Space accepted the architectural discourse with visual art, which revealed expansion of conceptual boundaries of environmental installations and earthworks into the actual space of life. In 1979, Art from the British Left presented a decidedly politicized artistic project to New York artistic community. It demonstrated the more-expanded perspective of art, in relation to sociopolitical context. Lucy Lippard served as the guest curator and used this exhibition as the basis to organize Political Art Documentation and Distribution (PAD/D) in 1980, the first progressive artists’ resources and networking organization for socially engaged art in the United States and in the international bounds. These two exhibitions were prototypes for the politically and socially engaged exhibitions that would be held throughout the late 1980s, such as Min Joong Art: A New Cultural Movement from Korea, Cultural Politics Between the First and Third Worlds, and Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing.

Ultimately, Artists Space was a venue for artists and curators to formulate discourses of the postmodernist art. The curatorial direction strengthened the function of discourse production through the communication structure and the social bonds within Artists Space. Distancing itself from its initial discourse structure, in which artists were the agents of discursive practices, the curators became the agent to activate artists and their production, as a way to constitute knowledge of current art. The curators provided

a venue for artists who questioned the established norm, and also allowed them to reveal the other side of the human mind and life. In this way, diverse exhibitions anticipated the postmodern tendency of disconnected artistic practices and artists who worked with mixed resources and in more complex contexts. Artists Space played a crucial role in establishing many artists' careers, and also incorporating “pluralism” of the seventies into the history of art, in the name of postmodernism. In the process of formalizing postmodernism, the term, pluralism was frequently adopted to indicate the diversity of artistic practice. But the concept of pluralism was controversial because it had a political implication to block a critical engagement in the situation.

Hal Foster defines pluralism as impotence of art in antagonism and “the death of all such formulations” as style, criticism, and period. He condemns the pluralism of art in the 1970s because the concept relies on freedom of choice as the ideological basis of the free market, and on artistic conventionality as a motive of regressive art. This forms the neoconservative side of postmodern art. On the other side was critical postmodernism. Foster brings up the concept of poststructural postmodernism to emphasize the critical and deconstructive practices among the so-called pluralist tendencies of 1970s art. A diversity of artworks and activities at Artists Space did not simply reflect the pluralist tendency at the time. They were the exploding critique of the existing art media and art forms, and the experimental stance to the new ones.

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35 Ibid., 19, 23, 32.

36 Hal Foster, “(Post)Modern Polemics,” in Ibid., 121-136. This essay was originally published in New German Critique 33 (autumn 1984): 67-78.
The series of 3 Shows exposed heterogeneous artworks within an exhibition space. The discontinuity among individual exhibitions was an idiosyncrasy of Artists Space. This discontinuity was the result of presenting a multiplicity of on-going art, or a result of the short-term memory of art in milieu and in process, apart from the long-term memory of art history. Whereas long-term memory is centralized, short-term memory is “always under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity.” They are not “two temporal modes of apprehending the same thing, but concerning different concepts of reading or rereading the given text.” Each 3 Shows was a short-term memory of current artistic practices that happened during that time. This was because artists themselves simply chose the emerging artists at the time, without consideration of one directional multiplicity. Because an artist could choose or be chosen only once, even though there was some connection among selecting and selected artists, no specific person or group could dominate the exhibition. Works exhibited in 3 Shows’s ranged from paintings, to sculptures, to spatial and conceptual installations, to performance and text pieces, and to films; without any privileged medium or movement.

Winer was skeptical about the efficiency of the artists’ own choice:

I thought what was going on wasn’t very successful and that there were problems with the exhibition process of showing unknown artists selected by well-known artists. The intention was good, but the result was inconsistent and suffered from a lack of continuity. The result was still that only a limited number of artists had exhibitions, and then only those with a connection to an established artist who might choose them. The nepotistic aspect of some of the shows didn’t mean the artists didn’t deserve the

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37 Gilles Deleuze and Flix Guattari, “Introduction: Rhizome,” in A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 16. I refer to the analogies of “short-term memory” and “long-term memory” provided by Deleuze and Guattari when they explain the characteristics of the rhizome, which is a concept that they develop to indicate a system of the multiple, or the real break with dualism.
exhibition, just that there was no connection between the three artists who exhibited together each month and an audience.\textsuperscript{38}

What Winer considered more problematic was the lack of coherence among three exhibitions set up at the same time. This inconsistency created inefficiency and reduced competitiveness of Artists Space as an exhibition space. Her perspective implies that each exhibition should be an enunciation to present a meaning, rather than a real-time projection of disparate desires for making art. The 3 Shows exhibits were composed without any hint of similarity among the three artists, although the relationships among the selecting artists, who were connected as contemporaneously established artists, could generate some connection among selected artists. The grouping of three artists was more like a contingent selection of three different artists.

By contrast, 10 Artists/Artists Space and Sixth Anniversary Exhibition, the first two retrospective exhibitions dealing with the short history of Artists Space, held in 1979, resemble long-term memory of the mid-1970s. These exhibitions presented 10 artists selected among those who had their first New York one-person shows at Artists Space during its earliest period from 1973 to 1975.\textsuperscript{39} The 10 Artists/Artists Space exhibition was temporally distant from the events, the series of 3 Show, and kept a retrospective attitude to them. As a twin exhibition, which matched Sixth Anniversary Exhibition, it simultaneously summarized an era of Artists Space, which would survive a

\textsuperscript{38} Winer, “Interview,” 52.

\textsuperscript{39} 10 Artists/Artists Space was held at the Neuberger Museum of the State University of New York at Purchase, New York in 1979, in conjunction with Sixth Anniversary Exhibition held at Artists Space in the same year. Winer, the executive Director of Artists Space was the guest curator for 10 Artists/Artists Space and selected the 10 artists with Sandler, who were one of the founders and the first board president of the space. They selected Laurie Anderson, Jon Borofsky, Scott Burton, Lois Lane, Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt, Ree Morton, Judy Pfaff, Barbara Schwartz, Charles Simonds, and John Torreano.
successful alternative space, and sketched “the most visible currents of the art of the late seventies.”

These shows acknowledged that, throughout the 1970s, Artists Space generated a moment to arrange discontinuous practices under a theme, and located emerging artists within the art world. In the exhibition catalogue for 10 Artists/Artists Space, Winer defined the seventies as a period characterized by “its lack of coherence,” which forced her and Sandler to show the very arbitrariness of the selection principle. She argued that the coherence of art of the 1970s laid in the concepts conveyed through the obvious diversity of styles and media, which was distinct from the 1960s when art had sought its coherence in the programmatic aesthetics of movements, the formal attributes of style, or the specific characteristics of mediums. Although she did not specify the artistic coherence of art of the 1970s in her writing, it is obvious that Artists Space formulated a new artistic discourse of art in the 1970s by presenting a diversity of exhibitions, events, and programs. The inconsistency should not be solely ascribed to the selection process involving three different artists for each 3 Shows. When Winer and Sandler drew up independent lists of 10 artists each, they both picked up the same nine names from the whole series of 3 Shows. This means they shared a critical view of new artists and emerging artistic trends in the 1970s. Nonetheless, 10 Artists/Artists Space still reflected diversity and discontinuity from one exhibition to the next. This discontinuity may have been an overall trend of 1970s art. Accordingly, the show

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presented the 10 artists as archetypical postmodern practitioners, who dealt mainly with the reemergence of content in works of art, interdisciplinary perspective on the subject, and the concept of allegory as the prevailing mode of artistic language.

3 Shows Series: Toward the Theatrical Condition

The first 3 Shows opened in October 1973. As the inaugural exhibition of Artists Space, this exhibition consisted of different art forms representing contemporaneous art practice. The three artists selected were J.B. Cobb (by Richard Nonas), Martha Edelheit (by Lucas Samaras), and Ree Morton (by Nancy Graves). The three artists dealt with multiple art forms: from painting, to installation art, to video. They expanded the apparatus of a specific medium into a more sophisticated support for artistic practice, in reference to analogous media. As a result, they generated new linguistic structure. To experience those works of art is not simply to encounter the work in neutral space, but rather to read a text that contains multiple layers of signifier and signified.

3 Shows constituted Artists Space in the 1970s or the 1970s at Artists Space, based on the centered concept of postmodern hybridity and narrativity. What I attempt to reconstruct from selective 3 Shows is a story about the rudimentary stage of forming postmodern aesthetic, which critics and art historians would formalize as the concept of allegory in a decade. Ree Morton, Jonathan Borofsky, and Scott Burton, who also took part in 10 Artists/Artists Space, are crucial to address the early stage of postmodern art language and aesthetics. Most artists at the show dealt with figuration and signification, as well as materialism in specific cultural contexts. Their works deployed various categories of narratives, such as mythology, dream, memory, desires, and imagination. They operated between literal and figural, abstraction and figuration, metaphor and metonymy, and integration and divergence, to induce the viewer to participate in the
interpretation process, with shifting perspectives. Those three addressed this narrativity with delicate nuance, by configuring it into different levels.

The Friedian theatricality offered a conceptual scheme to examine the rudimentary phase of postmodern aesthetic. Michael Fried brought this concept to address artwork after modernist painting and sculpture; 43 artistic practice and critical praxis to overcome the self-critical modernist art usually began by revisiting Fried's theatricality. 44 He used the concept of theatricality to identify the sensibility of literalist art, that is, minimal art and to distinguish art from non-art in the artistic context of the late 1960s. Theatricality becomes an inclusive concept when Fried conlates terms such as literalist art, anthropomorphism, presence, non-art, objecthood, theater, subject, experience, pneumatic structure, duration; all of which oppose the shape and formal syntax of modernist painting and sculpture. He quotes Tony Smith's description of a car ride at night on the New Jersey Turnpike as an example of the experience of theatricality. Then he contrasts the theatricality of objecthood and the imperative of modernist painting:

Smith's account of his experience on the turnpike bears witness to theater’s profound hostility to the arts and discloses, precisely in the absence of the object and in what takes its place, what might be called the theatricality of objecthood. By the same token, however, the imperative that modernist painting defeat or suspend its objecthood is at bottom the imperative that it defeat or suspend theater. And that means that there is a war going on between theater and modernist painting, between the theatrical and the pictorial is not basically a matter of program and ideology but of experience, conviction, sensibility. (For example, it was a particular experience that


44 For example, Scott Burton accounted his performance and furniture pieces by using such term as literalist theater; Douglas Crimp began his essay, “Pictures” in 1979 by mentioning Fried’s theatricality.

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engendered Smith’s conviction that painting – that the arts as such – were finished.)

This account shows much room for artists who abandon the modernist concept of art by opening up with the concept of theater. Fried emphasizes the absence of the object and the art, which exists and takes its place autonomously, in the Smith’s experience. Theatricality is a condition to create durational experience of a place and a given situation, which encompass the subject-object relationship. This relationship, causing a war between theater and modernist painting, is what Fried calls “a matter of program and ideology.” By its commitment to relationship, theater becomes an endless field to examine art media and to create a situation involving the artist and the viewer, because theater designates a relative complement to modernist art.

The series 3 Shows provided a rough summary of postmodern exploration of art media and cultural conditions since the mainstream art world accommodated minimalism, postminimalism, and conceptual art in the late 1960s. The artists worked in the transformative context, from phenomenology to semiotics, and from self-existence to theatrical presence. In particular, they involved viewers in the temporal mode and the signification process.

Morton, Borofsky, and Burton demonstrated different kinds of theatricality by each addressing painting, sculpture, and performance in a single work. Their common strategy was to form a hybrid of different art media and among different art forms.

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45 Fried, Art and Objecthood, 160.

46 This institutionalization of new art emerged in the 1960s can be witnessed in some significant exhibitions such as Primary Structure at the Jewish Museum, Eccentric Abstraction at the Fischbach Gallery in New York in 1966, and Information at MoMA in 1970, and in critical writings on them such as Judd’s “Specific Objects” in 1965, Lippard’s “Eccentric Abstraction” in 1966 and “The Dematerialization of Art” in 1968, Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” in 1967, and Kosuth’s “Art After Philosophy” in 1969.
Morton made a hybrid of drawing, sculpture, and installation, with touch of literary work; Borofsky combined his personal history with installations and drawing; and Burton juxtaposed furniture and theatrical setting in performance. In their works, painting and sculpture were deployed in the theatrical situation. They were supposed to be pictorial in their opticality, and meaningful as a formal syntax in the modernist context. Instead, paintings reached actual space because the artists combined them with sculpture, and transmuted them into installation art. Installation pieces fused with ethnographic and cultural narratives, which were touched with memory, dream, and imagination. Here, viewers became divorced from the formalist aesthetic that championed the immediacy of a work of art. They partook in the continuous process of dialectical senses.

Morton’s installation, *Souvenir Piece* (Figure 5-1), suggests a hybrid of art forms: fusing drawing, sculpture, and installation. Lippard described her work as “a curious area between painting and sculpture, between welcoming ‘environment’ and a closed pictorial space.”47 This work consists of three independent installations made of materials found during a summer vacation. One is composed of standing log posts of different lengths within a paneled space, in front of a wall with three windows, with four logs vertically sawn in half lying on a green platform outside the section. Another is a white-painted standing log, fenced in small wooden slabs. The other is a combination of the wall section and the floor section. The installation unfolds interactions between pictorial and sculptural, the work and the space, and nature and culture, as well as interacting among each of the pieces. The wall-floor section created an interaction

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among six drawings on the wall and an installation with a green table containing small sculptural elements. The drawings suggest the sculptural elements on the table.

The whole installation produces a story. The pieces of wood and stone exude the illusion of some imaginary space and stories of a savage life. The work referenced Morton’s personal memories of a summer in Newfoundland. Morton made a three-dimensional mnemonic and imaginary text composed of materials from that experience.48 The two levels of narrativity gain the peculiar ambiance of meditative Surrealist literature. Morton was impressed by Raymond Roussel’s Impressions of Africa and T.S. Eliot’s Four Quartets.49 These literary texts share images of time that halts, drifts, and intersects. Places and objects correspond to time in the various modes. These are the images experienced on the subconscious and unconscious levels, in memories, dreams, and imaginations.

Here Morton presented postminimalist sculpture on a new level, involved in literary sources and ecological backgrounds. This meant a revival of painting and sculpture at the level of narrative making and storytelling. Her work escapes from the

48 Lippard, “Ree Morton,” 50. Lippard describes these Surrealist aspects as “a Magrittean contrast between careful arrangement and natural materials, outdoors and indoors, was intensified by the diffused, artificial ‘daylight’ and the black shuttered windows that pushed one back into the room.” Thus, each installation is associated to the specific time and place by presenting real or imaginary topographies for places that provided forms and materials for this work. For details about Morton’s work, see Ree Morton: Works 1971-1977, ed. Sabine Folie (Verlag Fur moderne Kunst Nurnberg, 2009). Susan Neubauer suggests that Morton’s work is connected to the existential space, which she defines as conflicting with the gallery space and the everyday life in “Place Reproduced: Ree Morton’s Installation in Space and Image”; and Sabine Folie points out that Morton uses mnemonic technique like the mapping of external impression and mental map to translate her experience into abstract and performative set-ups in “Ree Morton’s Topographies of Memory.”

sculptural language of the 1960s, a literalist approach to form and material. Morton’s installation pieces differ from Donald Judd’s “specific objects” and from Lippard’s “eccentric abstraction.” The former indicated the three-dimensional works of Minimalism and the latter, postminimalism. These two concepts share the priority of literal aspects of material and form over their metaphorical aspects. While minimalism resorts to specificity of materials, postminimalism relies on imagination from the eccentric idiom in the same way conveyed by abstract painting.\(^5\) Second, these two concepts rely on phenomenological experience. Specific objects presuppose the encounter of the audience; and eccentric abstraction is associated with bodily form and affect.\(^5\) Interest in phenomenology lingered in Morton’s work, because the viewer is supposed to experience the work in actual space, rather than standing in detached neutral space. Nonetheless this spatial character sways between real and imaginary, because the viewer encounters works of both literalness and narrativity, which convey meanings and stories from their specificity and contexts.

Borofsky also produced new installations that bear narratives and led to metaphorical levels. He was selected by Sol LeWitt for 3 Shows, and first presented his conceptual work, *Counting (from 1 to infinity)* in November 1973 (Figure 5-2). This work is a stack of papers that Borofsky has counted over two million over the past four years. Although its appearance resembles a minimalist cube or the conceptual art of pile of documents, this is not a neutral work, but rather the materialization of the obsessive or meditative activity of an individual. For Borofsky, the act of counting is a meditative

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process; it frees him from suffering, and portrays the continuum of life. When he started this work, he believed he would come to know himself and the universe through the act of counting. But the lesson came when he was counting in the middle of daily routines or perfect silence with the goal and himself forgotten. After interviewing Borofsky, Lippard described his work as “a clear symbol of compressed energy, time, and obsession.” In effect, the counting is an accumulation of activities for healing the anxiety of life itself. Each layer of the paper stack is a record of that moment.

Borofsky staged his life as a pile of numbered papers, which was not an object, but became a text. The counting is a significant part of his work whose main subjects are time and the artist himself. He was preoccupied with the subject of time, in working as an artist. His Thought Book, written from 1967 to 1970, shows his early thought, “As an artist, my goal is to present [...] illustrations of my thoughts regarding the meaning of time.” Instead of indicating a specific date, he put on each of his drawings a specific number from his numerical counting at that moment. The inscribed number represents the invisible state of mind through repetition and its meditative effect, juxtaposed to the images that symbolize important aspects of life. The counting activity is a way to express his mind conscious, subconscious, and unconscious.

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53 Ibid.
Fish on the Ceiling at 2,601,702 (Figure 5-3), installed at 10 Artists/Artists Space, reveals Borofsky’s private symbolism and synthetic process. A fish with a red ruby for its eye is a symbol that comes to him in a dream. The red ruby symbolizes his heart, or the heart of humanity. The fish drawn in this exhibition had a light bulb in its eye, instead of a ruby. From the ceiling, the fish looked down at the viewers with its heart, as if it was a visualization of one’s unconscious or a materialization of the human mind. By drawing the large fish on the ceiling, Borofsky could successfully construct the imaginative space of his dream. The fish was quietly swimming into the room, like a persistent thought sliding into the conscious mind. The fusion of drawing and installation enhanced the spectacular presentation of a dream-like image. Thus, his installations, which were the final form of his process, synthesize drawings, sculptures, and the exhibition space. Each work constitutes a corpus of his stories about himself and humanity. Both are so ambivalent that one cannot help being trapped in the uncertainty. The uncertainty needs time to contemplate and interpret.

Unfolding a narrative based on dreams and imagination, Fish on the Ceiling at 2,601,702 acknowledges the formal hybrid of installation and painting. Borofsky explains his conception of installations: “For me, to be in a space for three weeks and deal with that space is like making a painting. My work is concerned with the three-dimensional interior structure, and I try to make people aware of the space they’re in, in a holistic way.” Here he explained both formal and semantic considerations. First, he understood the installation work as the expansion of painting into the actual space. The way he constructed the installation work was not based on the composition of spatial

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structure, but on the projection of images he imagined or dreamed. Second, he conceived of the installation work as a text on which the stories about his mind, humanity, human life, the universe, and the connections among them are written. Projecting painting into actual space is a literal way to transform a tableau into a theatrical condition, which is the postmodern hybridity of picture and theater.

Burton provided a more obvious orientation of theatricality. Chosen by Claes Oldenburg, he presented two chair pieces, *Bronze Chair (Street Furniture)* (Figure 5-4) and *Pastoral Chair Tableau* (Figure 5-5) in December 1975. *Bronze Chair* is a bronze cast of an armchair, whose initial utilitarian function was removed by the casting process. At first, Burton presented this piece as a found object, arranging it in his furniture tableaux in 1970 and 1971; and then conceived the idea of casting it bronze in 1975. This work is theatrical because it provides the setting and object the viewer can intervene in. Placed outside the building, this work was mistaken for a discarded chair on the street, but the fact that it was too heavy to throw away verified its identity as a work of art.

In a sense, this piece was an urban version of Burton’s early furniture landscape, in which he viewed a chair as anthropomorphic. This idea was related to childhood experience. His fascination with furniture was an expression of longing for an ideal family life. What he intended by putting furniture outside was not to produce a new picturesque, but to present “the notion of furniture as psyche, or furniture as surrogate

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people.” Bronze Chair incarnated the irony created by the crash between art and life and between viewer and object. This irony extended Burton’s furniture sculpture, into installations, performances, and later into public sculptures. He conceived of sculpture as non-utilitarian furniture and sculpture as theater, that is, performance, both of which suggested the “theatrical” by staging the object and performer.

Contrary to the metaphoric theater of Bronze Chair, Burton literally put chairs in a theatrical setting in Pastoral Chair Tableau. This work consisted of six chairs set on a strip of green paper grass, against a sky-blue curtain. Burton arranged the chairs in a row by grouping them into three: two chairs on the left had the mass-produced, flared-leg look of the 1950s; one in the middle was chromed and tubular in the manner of the 1940s; and the last three on the right were in a generalized utilitarian style. Viewers can read from the work Burton’s interest in “the persistent meanings of surviving popular style” and “the psychological implications of these seating patterns” that each group of chairs provides. Viewers can also find “a theatrically appropriate atmosphere” for the juxtapositions of the chairs and the stage.

This theatrical atmosphere injects another set of conventions into the work, and also makes a connection with the “tableau” of the performers. By juxtaposing the category of sculpture and the medium of theater, Burton generates an expectation for performers’ engagement in the chairs. But nothing happens. This work is just given as a

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set that waits for someone to act, or something to happen. In sum, *Pastoral Chair Tableau* presents a theatrical setting. It consists of stable objects that wait for performance, which would generate a situational relationship with the viewer.

Burton’s furniture tableaux are engaged performance. In 1972, at the Whitney Museum, he presented *Group Behavior Tableaux*, a performance piece with actors who alternately entered, sat on a chair, or remained standing. About this piece, Burton said, “Theme is psychology but not of “characters”— specific fictional individuals. Not drama. A sequence of moving tableaux vivants; performed sculpture.” After the exhibition at Artists Space, he staged *Pair Behavior Tableaux*, an installation and performance piece, at the Guggenheim Museum, in 1976. Here he put two wooden, institutional-looking chairs at the right and left ends of the stage. In the middle of the two chairs was a wooden bench. Two performers of the same height, in same short platform shoes move slowly and formally between the chairs, in an unvarying rhythm. The audience views the playing area from a distance of about 50 feet. Contemporaneous review characterized this piece as a study of both the variety of the body’s behavior and the physical distance between the performer and the audience in a theatrical performance. The latter concerns the formal dimension that ensures the “art frame.” The former concerns the series of repetitions and variations in physical movement.⁶²

*PersonA* Performance Series: Theater and Language

Artists Space provided programs for performance and artists’ films to support the new aesthetic mode of the 1970s. If 3 *Shows* demonstrated the primitive stage of the

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postmodern aesthetic, featuring hybrids and narratives, performance series 
incorporated theater, language, and temporality into a work. Artists’ films created 
allegorical temporality. I interpret two performances that Burton and Laurie Anderson 
performed in PersonA performance series. My goal is to relate each performance to the 
theatrical aesthetic. In April 1974, deAk organized PersonA, a video and performance 
series. This event preceded the regular Artists Film Series and Performance Series of 
Artists Space of the 1970s. As a preliminary program to the following regular series, 
PersonA presented emerging inter-reference among performance, picture, and 
language. The twelve artists presented a series of performances on the theme of 
autobiography, made in such forms as performance, film and videotape, poetry reading, 
is show, audio performance, multi-media performance, and distribution of written 
texts. Burton staged himself in the sculptural and theatrical setting; Anderson, who 
performed on the same day as Burton, used language to perform a temporal sliding 
between signifiers.

The reason Burton dealt with performance as the new mode of art was that 
performance rejected modernist formalism:

Performance art, by flouting self-definition and favoring elements shared 
with other arts, rejects purity and, by implication, rejects the ideology of the 
autonomy of the artwork and the self-sufficiency of the artist. Counter to this 
valuation of the artist’s sheer individual will, which usually manifests itself 
stylistically in formalist abstraction, are more recent manifestations both in 
the art of painting (of a return to realist styles, to shared conceptions of the 
nature of appearances) and in three-dimensional art (of a direct 
acknowledgement of the existing situation in real time and real space which 
is shared by the work of art and the viewer.)

In general, aesthetic pursuit of theatricality was understood as defiance against modernism. The durational experience and the presupposed audience featured theatricality as the degenerated condition of art. Since Fried used the term to criticize minimal sculpture, theatricality has been frequently brought up to indicate the temporal and interventional conditions of postmodern aesthetic practices. *3 Shows* provided a variety of these practices in three ways. Painting and sculpture were deconstructed into installation and environmental work. Performances demonstrated temporality and theatricality in actual time and space. Artists’ film and photography substituted for painting, as new media of picture including temporal dimension.

Burton performed *Performance Portrait of the Artist with Cothurni and Ithyphallus* on April 25, 1974 (Figure 5-6). This performance was the converse of his furniture tableaux, in that it foregrounds the artist as the performer. Burton performed himself, unlike his furniture behavior tableaux, in which his “actors,” or his “sculpture” performed. He stood for a while on a high pedestal in long hair, overalls, platform heels, and a dildo. He presented himself as a live sculpture on the pedestal and performing the priapic artist as a satyr.64 Here the performance turns into an odd hybrid between sculpture and theater.

Simultaneously, this performance evokes another hybridity. His appearance confuses the gender of the performed character because of his long hair and ithyphallic appearance. This sexual hybridity has a genealogy from Marcel Duchamp, who provided the *Large Glass* as the male-female subsumption and continued to disguise sexuality in his works such as *L.H.O.O.Q.* and *Rose Sélavy*. In the recent context,

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64 Pincus-Witten, “Scott Burton,” 179.
Burton’s performance was part of a series of artists self-portrayals such as Lynda Benglis’ nude-with-dildo advertisement in the November 1974 issue of *Artforum*; Robert Morris’s master and slave poster for his show of April 1974 at the Leo Castelli and Sonnabend Galleries; and Vito Acconci’s performance, *Conversion*, in 1971.65

In terms of the notion of art, the androgynous character implies the nature of the theatrical condition, which Fried called the “corrupted and perverted” from painting and sculpture, or impure art.66 Burton’s *Cothurni and Ithyphallus* performance fit into the context of the postminimal eruption of theatricality. Burton himself acknowledged theater as the new aesthetic mode of doing art, instead of offering the viewer fictive time and place. Indeed, the concept of sculpture and theater were not separate for him, but were incorporated in the form of performance. He called performance “literalist theater,” executed in a public situation that involved actual time and space.67 The self-portraying performance dissociates himself from himself. Burton used a “schizophrenic” way to make the discrepancy between the phenomenological experience and the signification process.68 This was a new type of grammar in art since minimalism, which involves fragmentation and dissonance in temporality and association.

In her *PersonA* performance, *As:If* (Figure 5-7), Anderson dealt with a dialectical process between the literal presentation and the metaphorical meanings. She sat on a bench in a white robe, wearing skates whose blades stuck in ice blocks with a pair of

65 Ibid., 180-81.
67 Burton, “Literalist Theater (1970),” in *Writings*, 218. For instance, his public nudity piece for *Street Works IV* and its companion piece, *Dream* are among them. He also defines these works of theater as “a combination of literalism and Surrealism” in that he uses his own physical process and the unconscious as a source of creating his art.
68 Ibid., 220-21.
bronze shoes in front of her, alternately playing her violin and relaying personal stories, with slides of the Midwestern landscape, and word sets shown on the screen behind her. Her costume and the stage setting were personal symbols, recalling specific moments of her life. The bronzed baby shoes were her mother’s; the white robe was a reminder of her baptism in childhood; and the skates stuck in ice blocks were the symbols of her Midwestern background and her grandmother’s death.69

These symbols generated a series of associations from her personal life. Her speaking functioned as a catalyst to cause the association process to bring up pieces of memories from the exterior of the performance itself. It began by presenting symbols and ultimately unpacked the symbols into particles of specific memories. The memories synthesized into the symbols, transmuted into the memories, internalized into the fragmented signifiers; and vice versa. The signification structure involved the duration of time, because of its tendency toward narrative.

In terms of linguistic sign, Anderson’s performance demonstrated the dislocation of meanings caused by the mutual intervention of signifiers. For this, she used a slide projection of sets of two words, and speech out-of-synch with the pre-recorded voice. Juxtaposition of two words on the screen stems from her personal experience that her soft and mumbling voice in conversation caused multiple definitions between listener and speaker (her).70 She thought the literal juxtaposition of signifiers could cause the mismatch between the signifier and the signified:

70 RoseLee Goldberg, Laurie Anderson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), 48. This is based on an anecdote about her school year when she broke her back and wore a back brace for a year and a half.
Often, that’s enough to hold something together visually for me. I was very interested in comparisons, so the grammatical structure was the colon in between As:If. A lot of the language stuff in my work was a play on words; they were reason rhymes. There was one piece in which all the words had to do with words and things related to water.\textsuperscript{71}

Accordingly, the audience should constitute the meaning by referring back to the previous word sets and her story mentioned previously. While she spoke, sets of words were projected on the screen: “roof:roof; hood:hood; wash:wash […] similar: same; mean:say; word:water […] splish:splash; ling:lang […] sink: synch; door:door; here: hear; drowned:sound; hymn: hum; grimmer: grammer; here: hear […].”\textsuperscript{72} These sets of words show phonic similarity, synonymic affinity, or sameness. Some share meaning, while some share pronunciation or rhyme. The paired words repetitively intervene in each other. Each of them comes to be confined to the set, and then expands to its reference to the adjacent sets. Some of the sets reveal their meanings by virtue of their paradigmatic connection; whereas some would be ignored because of their irrelevance to the connection. In the end, the words constitute a narrative concentrating on water, the specific motif posited by the artist. The motif of water is related to Bobby Darin’s hit “Splish Splash,” which Anderson thought of to relieve her nervousness, during the public speech after her baptism in childhood.\textsuperscript{73}

In As:If, Anderson also used the temporal lag that de-centers the process of signification. She speaks out-of-synch with the pre-recorded voice. The following sentences about simultaneity are spoken out of synch:

\textsuperscript{72} Anderson, \textit{Stories}, 29, 32.
\textsuperscript{73} Goldberg, \textit{Laurie Anderson}, 48.
We talked about simultaneity. He said, now think about what you’re saying and just say it. But I always seemed to be a little in front of or behind the words. It was hard to synchronize. Words would surface, the flow would go on, then other words would surface. My violin teacher told me the same thing. Concentrate on the sound, hear it, play it, all at once.\textsuperscript{74}

This mismatch makes echoes of the sentences. Signification is delayed. Ultimately the spoken words come to be materialized by emptying them of meaning. Here Anderson talked about the difficulty of synchronizing what one thinks and what one speaks. This is also related to the memory of her speech after the baptism. She was so nervous in front of the whole congregation that she tried to follow her grandmother’s cure for stage fright: to “think of something else while you talk.” However, it did not work for her. Her speech “became more and more disjointed, garbled, more and more like speaking in tongues.”\textsuperscript{75} The break between her speech and thought made her spoken words into material sounds, signifier without signified. This sliding of signifiers in \textit{As:If} dramatizes the temporal gap between thought and enunciation.

Anderson has confronted the difficulty of simultaneity in communication caused by dislocation of signs. \textit{Around the O-Range/A-Round the Orange— A Study in Blind Belief}\textsuperscript{76} juxtaposed unframed panels featuring handwritten statements with black-and-white photographs. Since the texts do not exactly describe the images, there is a slight discrepancy between them.\textsuperscript{77} Anderson wrote on the panel in the end, “It is an attempt

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} This work was shown in Anderson’s first show in New York, \textit{Systems}, which was part of \textit{3 Shows} held at Artists Space in January 1974, chosen by Vito Acconci.
to grasp the orange. It is logical failure. It is a way of going from 'I've got to see it to believe it' to 'I've got to believe it to see it.' Perception can be falsified, because it relies on a mental combining of memories that can be faulty.

*Numbers Runners*, a modified phone booth installed at Neuberger Museum for *10 Artists/Artists Space*, repeated the dislocation of signifiers. When viewers spoke into the telephone, they heard their own words played back after a one-minute delay. The relay of the fragmented signifiers allowed a different syntax to intervene the syntagmatic axis of the speech. This new syntax depended on the paradigmatic axis in the relationship between them. The intervention of the anterior words caused paradigmatic associations to fill up the semantic gap between the signifiers, and also to recall the previously spoken phrases. Thus, Anderson's performance highlighted the materialized sign and the effect of going back to the anterior sign.

Anteriority is a feature of the allegorical sign that refers to another sign preceding it. Literary studies and criticism in the 1960s paved way for the prolific allegorical structure of art in the 1970s. Paul de Man was the leading critic to rethink the traditional thought of allegory as a rhetorical term inferior to symbol. In the late 1970s and 1980s, postmodernists turned to him to address the new artistic practices and their new aesthetic mode. In his “The Rhetoric of Temporality” published in 1969, de Man dealt with three significant rhetorical terms engaged in temporality: symbol, allegory, and irony. He traced the changing conception of allegory and symbol to the history of

Information, however, only illustrates the text and for the most part seems unnecessary—a mere device to give the gallery goer something to look at. David Shapiro viewed this work as dealing with the “kinetics of perception” through demonstrating how “visual narrative” is rescued by “systems of perceptual belief.”

romanticism in European literature. He noted the passage of romanticism toward “the simultaneous presence of both metaphorical modes,” which creates “the tension between the allegorical language and the symbolic language.”79 The postmodernists’ preference for allegory can be ascribed to de Man who gave allegory a status equal to that of symbol. His argument neutralized Fried’s attack against minimal sculpture because Fried’s disapproval of minimalism was based on symbol’s long-standing favor compared to allegory in modernist art. His concept of “presentness” as the condition of artwork corresponds to the symbol: theatricality and durational experience of minimal sculpture correspond to allegory. Here theatricality can become both the remedy for exhausted formalism and the dismantling of medium specificity.

The world of allegory is grounded in the relationships between signs, not the relationship between sign and meaning. As the allegorical sign refers to another sign preceding it, time is the original constitutive category. The durational character of allegory differs from symbol’s simultaneity. The symbolic image coincides with substance. De Man explains that meaning, in allegory, consists only in repetition; and its temporal structure is characterized as “the spreading out along the axis of an imaginary time.” This durational character contrasts to the simultaneity of symbol, and also to the temporal structure of irony, as a reverse in a single moment.80

Artists Space served as a venue for artists to build a world of allegory in artistic territory. Opening up the theatrical condition, 3 Shows provided the allegorical world at the level of spatial installation, creating a literary dimension. The PersonA performance


80 Ibid., p. 225.
series literally brought together theater, body, and language. Furthermore, the *Artists Film Series* proceeded to fragmented mobile imagery; while *Performance Series*, to its melancholic situation.

**Artists Film Series and Performance Series: A New Syntax of Temporality**

In 1976, Artists Space inaugurated *Artists Film Series* and *Performance Series*, as its regular events. *Artists Film Series* continued from January through May, followed by *Performance Series* in October. They were distinct from *3 Shows*. The latter mostly explored formal hybrids and containing narratives; the former directly involved the temporal structures in artistic language. The new aesthetic mode in performance and film shifted from fragmented linguistic sign to multi-layered allegorical structure, at the levels of single work and individual artist’s corpus.

Dan Graham, Jack Goldstein, and Acconci featured the first month of *Artists Film Series*, in January 1976. They represented the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s. Opposed to the medium of cinema, they illustrated three different approaches to film as an art medium. As predecessor of filmic practitioners in the context of art, Graham and Acconci dealt with film in phenomenological and conceptual terms. In his 1960s work, Graham explored the problem of visual perception through the moving eyes of camera. This concerned conflicts between the camera’s representation and the viewer’s presence. In his *My Word* (1974), Acconci attempted to provide two spaces that a silent film constructed: the physical space, and the mental space by means of alternating images and captions. As the younger generation, Goldstein began working with film in connection with his previous performance in 1971. Then he shifted to making a short film as a flashing picture. Here he attempted to make the short film a trace that only
remained in memory, because it appeared and instantly disappeared. Goldstein’s exhibition was a crucial moment initiating the theorization of the postmodern picture. Goldstein’s short films demonstrated the allegorical structure. The second artist of *Artists Film Series*, Goldstein first presented his seven short films in 1975: *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, The Knife, The Chair, Butterflies, Shane, White Dove*, and *A Ballet Shoe* (Figure 5-8). All of these films opened with preset situations, without a continuous narrative, as if the subject in each situation were waiting for anything to happen. A psychological elevation from expectation, to anticipation, and to settlement through stasis and repetition, constitute time in each film. The temporal modes in his short films were divided into three categories.

First, repetition and continuation mark the films. For instance, *Shane* and *MGM* show a German shepherd barking and the MGM lion roaring repeatedly. *Shane* consists of four shots joined by three lap dissolves, in which each bark varies shot by shot. This variety enhances the viewers’ expectation on subsequent barks. By contrast, *MGM* is a loop of identical shots through the films. The viewers’ expectations are never satisfied, because no change happens after each shot. Instead the repetitive rhythms become familiar. Differing from these repetitive moves, *A Ballet Shoe* and *White Dove* present a small event. *A Ballet Shoe* features untying the bow of a ballet shoe on pointe; and *White Dove*, forming a triangle over a bird with two hands. Each film ends with the two hands and the bird disappearing out of the frame, respectively. To spare the continuous mode, there are preparatory moments to these endings: descent from pointe and touch of the two hands’ tips.
Repetition and continuation can be translated into linguistic structures and temporality. Douglas Crimp characterizes this aspect of Goldstein’s films as paradigmatic and fragmented. Paradigmatic relations unite “images in a mnemonic series,” while “the impression of a completed action combines with a structure of repetition” in the fragmented images. Relying on his analysis, these films demonstrate the contradictory structure of time as accumulation and as flow of every ticking second. *Shane* and *MGM* seem to show detached fragments from certain temporal sequences. These repetitive fragments allow viewers to imagine another image that would be contiguous based on association. *A Ballet Shoe* and *White Dove*, however, suggest syntagmatic structure, because they present events as contiguous elements to complete a narrative. But they are so short for filmic sequences that they look detached from a narrative and still need the paradigmatic axis of association.

Second, Goldstein sutures an ironic moment with the subsequent or preceding duration of events in his films. In *The Chair*, *Butterflies*, and *The Knife*, time abruptly begins to flow from a static condition. There, placed in advance, are an empty chair in the middle of a dimly-lit stage; a hand with its palm facing the camera, with five paper butterflies attached on each tip of the fingers and thumb; and a sliver knife, horizontally lying on a blue surface. Soon something happens in each scene: colored feathers fall down on the chair and floor; the fingers and the thumb wave slightly back and forth; color lights alternately streams through the knife, from its handle to the tip. Each event functions as an ironic moment, because its occurrence breaks up the film into two

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opposite conditions, static picture and mobile film. They appear as still-life paintings for the first fifteen or twenty seconds before movement intervenes. Repetition marks the flow of time in *The Knife*. The light on the knife repeats traveling the same span of time, restarting from the zero point with a new color. *The Chair* provides the continuous rhythm of flowing time with falling feathers, in a diversity of colors and intervals. In *Butterflies*, the subtle movement of the fingers, which appears, but instantly disappears, reveals the temporal mode in-between instantaneous and durational. Thus, the temporality of Goldstein’s films is allegorical, in that they involve a process inevitably connected to paradigmatic axis of signifiers and continuation of an imaginary time.

In “Controlling Pictures,” Crimp reiterates his argument in two essays, “Pictures” written in 1977 and 1979, by pointing out that Goldstein’s mid-1970s films are moving pictures, distinct from conceptual films and filmed documentation of performances that prevailed at that time.\(^8^3\) Goldstein considered “a definite point” in a film, a temporally critical point in which the viewer stands on the threshold of both boredom and concentration: “That’s where duration becomes importance. I want the image to become a memory of that object. I want to turn a thought into something tangible—an object—and then back to a thought. I’m interested in making verbs into nouns, making everything into a noun.”\(^8^4\) That he attempted to gain control of the object means his films demonstrate the turns of “picture” as a mnemonic process with the object, that is, “to picture, a picture, to picture.” Crimp explains this process, “The thought was made


into an image and then that image is withdrawn, left only in the mind’s eye.” The movement, which appears and instantly disappears, leaves the viewer only its memory.85

Third, the allegorical structure can be found in Goldstein’s corpus. Goldstein revisited previous art forms to work with a new medium and experiment with a new aesthetic mode. Shepherd Steiner explains this allegorical mode:

The pattern’s simultaneous ability to look backward and gesture forward goes to the core of Goldstein’s notion of allegory, contrary to what many post-modern authors, including Douglas Crimp, Craig Owens, and Hal Foster, have argued or implicitly suppose in their argument. In a sense, the developmental trajectory of Goldstein’s work form minimalist sculpture to performance art, film, sound art, painting, and text-based works is nothing other than a series of unfulfilled conversions, each with its own built-in imperative to set out hotfoot in search of the new.86

This statement implies that experimental practice with a new art medium/form involves a retrospect on the earlier conversion from one medium/form to another. Every artist’s new work contains the substance of the earlier forms and media in germinal form.

In a similar way, performance in the late 1970s looked back to previous art forms. Moreover, it was crossing the borders of art and culture. Performance Series positioned performance as the transitional field, where the conversion from the 1960s to the 1970s happened. Reviewing performance programs of the 1976 October season at P.S.1 and Artists Space, RoseLee Goldberg pointed out that performance was in the mood of melancholia. Performance was at the peak but stagnancy at the time. She connected this melancholic condition to the current status of performance: it was “accepted as a

fully-grown medium, an art form which is the specialty of particular artists working almost exclusively in that field.”

The work was to meet increasing expectations for performance as an art medium and the changed situation that required performance to include art politics that pressed the artists to the point of frustration. Consequently, the artists tried to relieve their frustration by consulting other art forms and media. The allegorical structure of performance was generated as a result. Performances by Robin Winters and by Michael Smith, both of which were performed in the late 1970s, were exemplary cases for showing the allegorical retrospection and reference.

Before *Performance Series*, the two-person exhibition, *Barbara Bloom, David Salle*, inaugurated the 1976-1977 season by creating an imaginary space in which art and life coexisted. Bloom presented her first hybrid work of exhibition, performance, and installation (Figure 5-9). She constructed a boardroom set with a photograph of three girls on the wall, and invited the viewers to play a detective game with cards. Bloom defines this game as “a collective trying to figure something out, and in so doing they get a picture of some place.”

Although the relationship between the information on the cards and the objects, and the interaction among the participants are important for this work, her ultimate intention was to provide an image of the space where the viewers resided and interacted, rather than to set up an environment for specific activities. While a performance work generally provides the image of a theater, her installation constructed the spatial image of a forum. Here the boundary between everyday life and art was at stake, as she sought to make work situated “between performance-Fluxus-

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In a sense, she combined performance and installation by looking back at Fluxus’ idea of art and life. The following performance series were also engaged in crossing of different art forms to deal with the new art medium/form.

Robin Winters’s *Wait* (Figure 5-10), performed on October 22, took a direct look back at minimalism and conceptual work. As the setting of his performance, he constructed a literal but surrealist stage, by using objects such as a spinning umbrella, a revolving door, a chair, a table, an oversize plywood box with Plexiglas inside, and a ladder. The plywood box referred to Donald Judd’s minimalist work, and Plexiglas was Judd’s favorite material. Judd used plywood in his first specific objects exhibited in his 1963 solo show; Plexiglas was also his favored material as an industrial product, as well as galvanized iron. The pinstripe suit Winters wore during the performance showed the iconic pattern of Frank Stella’s black stripe painting, an early minimalist piece. On the wall were letters saying, “Relax, go anywhere you want, but go.” These words were a conceptual means to generate some conflict with what Winters performed. Winters characterized his performance as “totally transitional, like any art,” “Any piece of art is a sort of homage to other art and a critique at the same time.”

The other issue Winters dealt with was art politics, especially the relationship between performer and audience. For this, he deliberately created a situation to stimulate the audience. First, he locked the gallery door, making the audience wait in the hallway for about 30 minutes. Next, he confused the audience with the set and the performance. When they entered the room, he lay asleep on the table with the lights dim and water being poured into the box. In the background was the sound of the ocean.

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89 Ibid.
with a narrator giving relaxation lessons. In the middle of this meditative ambiance, suddenly he got up, walked to the box, climbed the ladder, and entered the tank filled with ice-cold water. He tried to immerse himself in the water and talk about relaxing. But his attempt to relax the audience was futile, because he himself was not relaxed, with his teeth chattering in the cold water. Ultimately, he frustrated the audience with the fragments scattered on the scene and the dislocation of his relaxation lesson.

Ultimately, mutual understanding between performer and audience seemed impossible. Winters admitted it was “probably a bit confusing towards the end.” His use of the word, “immerse” illustrated this frustrating condition, “the ‘immersion’ in water came about initially from the idea of immersion therapy, but ended up being about the difficulties of being immersed in an audience.”\textsuperscript{91} In a sense, this performance intended to reveal the inevitable distance between performer and audience, the distance presupposed as art by its limitation. Because there are too many signs, their communication ended up confusing. Winters’s performance might aim to escape the melancholic condition by adding more signifiers from the artistic context.

By contrast, Michael Smith deliberately exposed the allegorical structure of performance by imitating tourism and show business. His performance on October 20 consisted of three individual pieces: \textit{Busman’s Holiday Retreat Revue}, \textit{Minimal Message Movement and/or Minimal Movement Message}, and \textit{Baby IKKI} (Figure 5-11). The \textit{Busman} was a satirical story of a travel agent, made as a song and dance routine. It showed the narrative structure of a pilgrimage, but was full of ridiculous elements, such as word plays with puns and rhymes, humorous reference to the clichés of travel

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
advertisement, funny adventures. Combining traditional literary genre with kitschy
tourism, Smith mocked the artist's performance.

*Minimal Message Movement* was also a satire dealing with minimal dance and
minimalism. This piece was inspired by a magazine photo of Trisha Brown's work on the
roofs in New York. But he jumbled together minimal dance and entertaining game show.
He performed a pedestrian walk around the room, played with a couch and a chair lying
in the room, played games with the audience, and asked and answered symbolic
questions. Since he asked the audience to imagine two other invisible dancers who
would dance with him, his performance turned into an imaginary synchronized dance.
Ironically, the typical outfit of the minimal dancer he wore made the performance much
funnier, by reminding the audience of the discrepancy between sign and meaning. This
white outfit was the signifier of sleek minimal aesthetic with frivolous pop sensibility
added.

Smith strengthened the bridging of art world with show business by following the
customs of performing arts and television shows: giving an encore and rerunning a
popular program. To please the audience,92 he played *Baby IKKI* as a medley encore.
This was a rerun of Smith's previous performance, first performed in May 1975. Most of
all, this rerun shared with show business its purpose of entertaining the audience. At the
end of the performance, he hummed, “There's no business like show business…,,”
dressed in black pants, rolled up to the knees, and a cream-colored, over-large tuxedo.
This was an odd revival of Andy Warhol's idea of art, “Business art.” While Warhol

literally used show business by appropriating its images and its production system, Smith figuratively used it as a rhetorical device to be inserted into his performance.

On the other side of this melancholia of performance art was new pictures emerging from representation systems in culture. Goldstein’s short films anticipated the emergence of performing images by the language fragmented from film, photography, theater, painting, literature, and popular culture. This is a fusion of conceptual attitude and pop sensitivity, and the tradition of picture. The group of artists committed to this subject had some connection with Winer’s Artists Space, artists from the CalArts and Buffalo, and Hallwalls, an alternative space in New Jersey. Since 1976 Winer and her team tried to find coherence in the inconsistent shows inside and the pluralist art scene outside. The _Pictures_ exhibition showcased this new tendency and became the moment to theorize the seemingly different imagery from postmodern pictures.

**Pictures: Formalization of Postmodern Aesthetic**

Artists Space’s 1977-1978 season began with a group exhibition, _Pictures_, organized by the guest curator, Douglas Crimp. It exhibited works by Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, and Philip Smith. This show first offered an important new development of art, accompanied by Crimp’s thorough discussion.93 In a sense this exhibition functioned as visual material for the analytic essay, drawing a consistent picture of current artistic practices in the 1970s. Crimp wrote in the introductory part of the catalogue,

> A renewed impulse to make pictures of recognizable things characterizes a wide range of contemporary art, constituting a line of continuity drawn through its much touted pluralism. The extensive use of those media that

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have the power of replicating the world around us—photography, film, video—is but one of its manifestoes. In addition, the realm of the imagination has reappeared to displace the analytic and perceptual modes of our recent past.  

Here Crimp reveals the function of this exhibition as the production of discourse that would challenge the pluralist view of the 1970s art. To make some filiation with the art of the past decade, he concatenates new artistic practices in the recent past with the main theme of the exhibition, or the concept of “pictures.”

First, he contextualized the exhibition by converting the conception of “illusionism from a representation of something absent to the condition of our apprehension of what is present, and the psychologization of the image.” For this, he named Robert Wilson, Sol LeWitt, Joel Shapiro, and Joan Jonas as precedent examples of new kinds of representation. The artists dealt with representation in terms of imagination, perception, memory, theater, and performance. From these artists, Crimp sought a transforming mode of representation, in which the crux was no longer a relationship to reality, but how the object was represented in relation to other signifiers. Accordingly, he rethought the structure of signification, not depending on what is represented.

Subsequently, in analyzing works in the catalogue, Crimp used concepts borrowed from the structuralist literary theory and psychoanalysis. What defined the five artists’ works was the structure of signification. By repetitively using such words as association, imagination, and narrative, he emphasized the linguistic dimension of signification, and also the unassociated pictures as signifiers. He saw signification creating a narrative, if not an obvious meaning, by the imagination operating based on

94 Crimp, Pictures, 3.
95 Ibid., 5.
“the correlation of one signifier and another.” His analysis focused on the lack of contextual clues in Goldstein’s *Two Fencers* and *The Pull*, which lead to paradigmatic relations: on the operation of imagination triggered by juxtaposition of fragmented images in Troy Brauntuch’s 1, 2, 3, Sherrie Levine’s *Sons and Lovers* and Philip Smith’s *Bring*; on the ambiguous caption in Brauntuch’s *Golden Distance*, which transforms the image into a fetish; and on an isolated picture image derived from a movie in Robert Longo’s three-dimensional relief (Figure 5-12). All of them request the viewer to fill the gap between the given fragmented elements, to constitute a narrative, in the absence of a specific narrative. The operation of imagination on paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations is the crux of the new mode of representation.

Furthermore, Crimp connected these relations to dream, memory, fantasy, and fetish, which have psychoanalytic suggestions. Although these terms look elusive in describing the new mode of representation, they share the structure of signification based on imagination and association, extending through the vertical axis of metaphors and the horizontal axis of metonymy. Goldstein’s *The Pull* provides “psychological resonance” because of its neutralized and distanced image, which resembles that of dream. Since dream images are fragmented and have neither logical nor temporal narrative, they in themselves are metaphors for the constitution of paradigmatic relations. On the contrary, Crimp points out that the interpretation of Brauntuch’s *Bring* resembles that of dream, in that both are analogous to “the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script.” Viewers try to solve a picture puzzle in front of the assembly of

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96 Ibid., 16.
97 Ibid., 10.
98 Ibid., 20.
silhouettes of Bring. But differing from Crimp’s analysis of this work’s resemblance to
dream, the process of interpretation is based on the metonymic relations between the
images that are given in a single picture plane. The images in the vicinity play a crucial
role in making a narrative here. Temporality in dream is characterized as paradigmatic
rather than syntagmatic, in that time does not flow from past, to present, to future; they
exist at the same time. The concept of pictography implies spatial relations among the
signifiers that spread without syntagmatic structures.

Crimp thought the opaque signification in Brauntuch’s Golden Distance and in
Levine’s Snapshots of Shoes from Shoe Sale led to frustration of desire and generation
of a narrative, respectively. The woman image in Golden Distance appears as a fetish,
which is the result of the accompanying ambiguous caption, “Whispers around a
woman.” The caption neither states the meaning of the image, nor adds new meanings
to it. Rather it transforms the head of a woman seen from behind to the object of desire.

But the desire is always frustrated and the image remains forever at a
distance.\textsuperscript{99} In this analysis, frustration of desire parallels that of signification; just as one
signifier slips into another, the object of desire is never reached. A fetish is not so much
the real object of desire as a substitute for desire. The fulfillment of desire is always
delayed. Fantasy also implies a similar temporal mode. Crimp sees the shoes in
Levine’s photos as “synecdochic characters,” that take part in stories invented to
constitute a meaning.\textsuperscript{100}

Crimp pays attention to the mechanism of fantasy and childhood game. For him,
the mechanism is the operation of imagination to correlate one signifier to another, to
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 16.
\end{flushleft}
create a narrative. In psychoanalytic terms, fantasy is a device to alleviate the frustration caused by failure to obtain the object of desire. In a sense, fantasy resembles fetish: both involve frustration of desire related to signification, even though they bear different rhetorical structures, metonymy and synecdoche, respectively.

Although Crimp does not directly mention the concept of temporality, the whole essay reveals the temporal mode involved in the works through their linguistic structure and psychoanalytic device. The images fragmented or detached from original sources are engaged in temporality, which stems from constant delay. To describe this process, Crimp uses broad terms related to signification and psychoanalytic suggestions, to address desire for and process of constituting a narrative based on imagination and association. In a sense, Crimp’s essay and exhibition explain new artwork based on the poststructuralist principle that meaning and desire are always delayed.

The art public and the art world attended to the exhibition because of the prominent artists and their work and the exhibition catalogue. The catalogue formulated a new mode of representation in the postmodern context. The exhibition itself resembled a normal painting exhibition without imposing installations or a sensational declaration. Most of the work occupied the walls as if they were presentation materials. As a review observed, the viewer could see “specimens out of many possibilities.”

Although these works were selected as most representative to explain a new mode of picture, the catalogue made a clear voice that the exhibition. Reviews of the show reiterated Crimp’s argument in the catalogue, acknowledging Crimp as the first to

\[101\] Ibid.

provide a telescopic perspective on contemporary art practice, positing new art as part of tradition.\textsuperscript{103}

However, by adding their interpretation to the exhibition title “Pictures,” some reviews extended the meaning of the new representation from which Crimp read with the structuralist concept of language. First, William Zimmer focused on the cinematic nature of the work exhibited: “Pictures sometimes mean movies, as in moving pictures, and often what we get is like a frame from a larger whole. Movies, whether they are experimental or Hollywood, are the inspiration for much of this art.”\textsuperscript{104} Second, Thomas Lawson emphasized that the five artists departed from formalist modernism by referring to film and television to stretch to the other modernist tradition inherited from Symbolism and Surrealism, in which psychology was a crucial part of work.\textsuperscript{105} Third, Peter Frank pointed out the critical aspect of the show, contrasting to the yearning for a return to representation: “The art in Pictures examines modes of depiction that are socially and esthetically more probing and skeptical than any more traditional, self-motivated form of figuration could be.”\textsuperscript{106} Although they provided only brief comments on the significance of the exhibition, these three reviews anticipated discourses regarding postmodern art. They implied that film emerged as the postmodern medium; postmodernism was the


\textsuperscript{104} Zimmer, “Pictures and Statements.”

\textsuperscript{105} Lawson, “Pictures at Artists Space.”

\textsuperscript{106} Frank, “Pictures and Meaning.”
other side of modernism; and the deconstruction of postmodernism differed from the self-criticism of modernism.

Thus, the *Pictures* exhibition exemplifies how Artists Space professionalized the production of discursive frameworks through curatorial activity. The exhibition travelled to the Midwest and the West including the Allen Art Museum (Oberlin, Ohio), the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, and the University of Colorado Museum (Boulder, Colorado) to spread the conception of postmodernism. After the New York exhibition closed, with the travelling show just ahead, it was promoted as an exhibition to present new artworks within the postmodern context, which departed from the modernist tradition of commitment to medium specificity:

> Within the general context of what has become known as “Post-Modernism,” these artists reject the notion that art is predicated on an investigation of the medium as such. For these artists the medium functions in direct relationship to the presentation of the image. Because the image itself is of primary importance, the means of its presentation is chosen for its transparency and efficiency. As a result, the artists work in a variety of mediums and shift with ease from one to another.\(^\text{107}\)

This press release reiterated the interpretation of the exhibition from a linguistic perspective, stressing the loosening relationship of image, object, and medium. It is noted that the “found” images used in those works are detached from their original contexts, each image exists as a literal and material fragment without any relational composition, like minimal sculpture. Being “removed from a context of normal association,” they function as signifiers, materials for an autonomous structure of signification, which Crimp called the paradigmatic structure. Thus, the exhibition presented an interpretation about images of new picture as part of linguistic system.

\(^{107}\) Press release, Travelling Exhibition - Sponsor, National Distillers and Brewers, Corp., undated, Box 1977-78, Artists Space Archive, New York.
Crimp’s structural approach to the new mode of picture was the counterpart of another linguistic view on art in the 1970s that focused on materiality and literalness of sculptural works and installations. Rosalind Krauss characterized 1970s’ art as indexical signs in “Notes on Index: Seventies Art in America.” This essay was published in two parts in 1977 after the exhibition, Rooms, was held at P.S. 1 in June 1976.\footnote{Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on Index: Seventies Art in America,” October 3 (Spring 1977): 68-81; “Notes on Index: Seventies Art in America, Part 2,” October 4 (Autumn 1977): 58-67.} While Crimp focused on the signification structure of the work in Pictures, which led him to compare it to film, Krauss articulated physical condition of artwork and its location as indexical sign in Rooms. First, the artists made a physical connection to the building’s physical presence. Here the work is the indexical sign always indicating the physical presence and the material condition of the referent. Second, there is temporal distance between the work and the referent, a distance that evokes memory embedded in the physical referent. The physical traces provided by the work remind the viewer of what was there. Here, the past is superimposed on the present.

Pictures and Rooms supplement each other by mutually compensating the lack in them: articulation of signification and materiality, respectively. So do Crimp’s and Krauss’s essays. On the level of signification, while the works in Pictures involved association and imagination to create a literary narrative, those in Rooms were experienced in the raw without signification. By using succession with the spatial context, each work in Rooms becomes a part of the narrative the building’s space unfolds.\footnote{Ibid., 67.} On the level of temporality, while Pictures invoked the temporal mode caused by the linguistic structure and psychoanalytic effects of the work, Rooms
presented a new category of space-time, what Roland Barthes calls “spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority.” Facing “the being-there,” the viewer perceives “the having-been-there.”

\[110\] This ironic eruption of the past on the present surface contrasts with the flow of time through the literary narrative in *Pictures*. Despite the slight difference in their temporal modes, Krauss and Crimp posit the spatial sequence of works in *Rooms* and the temporal sequence of works in *Pictures* as allegorical: both constantly refer to other signs, to constitute meaning. This support on literalness, narrativity, and temporality implies an anti-Friedian perspective to postmodern art.

In “Pictures,” his rewritten essay published in 1979, Crimp clarified his interpretation, postmodernism as anti-Friedian modernism. However, he had not directly use such terms as theater and theatricality in his initial essay for the catalogue. Craig Owens, who had connection with Crimp, showed the possibility of combining Fried’s theatricality and the structural perspective of postmodernism. His review on Robert Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach* addressed modern theater and its relation to language. He dealt with the nonverbal and poetic mode of Wilson’s theater, especially the unity of its changing images, in terms of poetic language, metaphor, and the function of myth. Importantly, his essay revealed that the other side of modernism’s medium specificity by analyzing Wilson’s work with the structuralist conception of language as form and metaphor.\[111\] The modern theater pursued to separate performer from text and to

\[110\] Ibid., 65.

\[111\] Craig Owens, “*Einstein on the Beach*: The Primacy of Metaphor,” *October* 4 (Autumn 1977): 21-32. In the theoretical discussion, Owens starts with Saussure’s concept of language as a form, not as substance to continue to bring up Louis Hjelmslev’s developed discussion that language is an unformed mass of physical or psychical data, which has two planes of expression and content. Language as a form leads to analysis of the structure of language such as Roman Jakobson’s notion of metaphor as the
present a spectacle without relying on speech. This resulted in the formation of inconstant sequences of repetitive images, which evokes the audience to constitute a new semantic relationship based on equivalence and similarity. In sum, the other side of modernist medium specificity is the creation of narrative.

In *Einstein on the Beach*, Wilson used visual means to create a semantic dimension, by arranging scenes “as a sequence of cinematic stills” and making them resist falling into any meaningful linear sequence.\textsuperscript{112} Owens defines this organization as compared with dreams and poetic texts. This is the critical point where he brings up the primary concept of his analysis: Jakobson’s notion of metaphor, which as “the fundamental structure of all poetic texts,” works based on material or sensory features of language. In a sense, *Einstein on the Beach* was an attempt to reach a pure state of theater, a state comparable to primitive language. Since primitive language is the precedent state of abstract, verbal language, it holds purely material and sensory natures, which require the inductive process for reception.\textsuperscript{113} Here a temporality arises from the inductive process. When artwork reaches the state of language or material, it immediately engages in the process of creating a narrative, or metaphoric structure. Crimp analyzed the five artists in the *Pictures* catalogue based on the concept of metaphor, even though he used the term, paradigmatic relation, instead of metaphor, and included psychoanalytic implications.

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 24.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 31.
Crimp transformed Fried’s concept of theatricality into the manipulation of cinematic temporality in the rewritten “Pictures,” including Cindy Sherman’s film still series (Figure 5-13), instead of Philip Smith’s puzzle-like pictures. He began his essay by revisiting Fried’s “Art and Objecthood,” with headed by Laurie Anderson’s statement: “Art and illusion, illusion and art. You are really here or is it only art? Am I really here or is it only art?” Here presence and representation is put as the crucial difference between reality and art: presence engages in the condition of theater, preoccupied with the confrontation of viewer and duration of experience. In this concern, *Pictures* was an exhibition of a group of current artists in New York whose strategies were based on “the literal temporality and presence of theater.”

In this new essay, Crimp connects theater in Fried’s argument and film as the artists’ reference, by describing the works as ways of “staging.” Crimp’s focus was the structure of the pictures and their temporality, which “the manner in which the picture is presented” creates. Unlike the previous essay, here he analyzed works by comparison to film, which provided new condition to supplement Fried’s theatrical condition. For instance, Goldstein’s short films were characterized as repetition; Sherman’s film still series, as fragmentations from imaginary films; Longo’s relief as a freeze frame. Each of them has psychological temporality evoking anticipation and confusion. Crimp put focused on the adoption of cinema because the cinematic threshold discriminates between formalist modernism and postmodernism. First, he differentiated postmodernism from Fried’s modernism by delineating the genealogy of modernism in

\[114\] Crimp, “Pictures,” 77.
relation to symbolist aesthetics, such as Stéphane Mallarmé, which encompasses the "literally or metaphorically temporal" dimension in works. Second, Crimp emphasized a break between modernism and different modernism, a break that made the recent work postmodernist. Here he newly presents the *Pictures* exhibition as defiance against Friedian modernism and as part of the postmodernist trajectory.

Thus, the break with Friedian modernism meant that artists came to perform in post-medium contexts. Crimp describes this condition as the emergence of new artistic practice to seek structure rather than essence of artwork, or the medium:

But if postmodernism is to have theoretical value, it cannot be used merely as another chronological term; rather it must disclose the particular nature of a breach with modernism. It is in this sense that the radically new approach to mediums is important...Needless to say, we are not in search of sources or origins, but of structures of signification: underneath each picture there is always another picture.  

Cinema is an example of the “another picture,” which represents a structure of signification. Transforming cinema to the more general term, or art, picture can rely on cinema for its structural ramification and its deconstructive practice on other signs. As a sequence of signs, films are useful for deconstructing the established medium specificity.

Again in 1979, Krauss published a companion article to Crimp’s “Pictures” in the same issue of *October*: “Sculpture in the Expanded Field.” Krauss used the structuralist

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115 Before publishing “Pictures,” Crimp wrote an essay on another modernism in pictorial medium in “Positive/Negative: A Note on Degas’s Photographs,” *October* 5 (Summer 1978): 89-100. In this essay, he analyzes Degas photographs as "an art of evocation, of allusion." Degas focuses on the process of photography as a double operation between light and dark, negative and positive, black and white, and the phantom-like presence of camera effacing the presence of the artist. Here Crimp connects Degas’s photography with Mallarmé’s self-effacement in his poetry. For Degas and Mallarmé, the medium itself speaks. This reveals the symbolist stance.

116 Crimp, “Pictures,” 87.
method to define sculpture after minimalism. This method is allegorical in that she articulates the concept of sculpture in relationship to other similar fields. Here she observes historicism in the extending sculpture from the 1960s to the 1970s to a new sculptural practice that must be viewed as “having gradually evolved from the forms of the past.”\textsuperscript{117} Sculpture expanded its range by artists revisiting the prior term, monument, the present term, modernist sculpture, and other terms such as architecture and landscape. Krauss understood this attitude as the situation of postmodernism: “within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium—sculpture—but rather in relation to the logical operation on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium—photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself—might be used.”\textsuperscript{118} Like Krauss, Crimp used the method of compensation and exclusion to expand the concept of picture by comparing two binary sets such as picture and theater, film and still photography, and moving image and freeze frame.

It becomes clear by the start of the 1980s that \textit{Pictures} came to set the terms for describing the postmodern situation. It was followed by a series of theorizations of 1970s art, with the key concept of “allegory.” For examples, Owens’ essays, “Earthwords,” published in 1979 and “The Allegorical Impulse,” part 1 and 2 in 1980; Joel Fineman’s “The Structure of Allegorical Desire” in 1980\textsuperscript{119}; and Stephen Melville’s “Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory, the Forgetting of Modernism, the Necessity of

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 42.
Rhetoric, and the Conditions of Publicity in Art and Criticism,” in 1981. Analyzing artists’ writings, photographic and filmic sources, and the *Pictures* exhibition, these essays examined fragmentation of and proliferation of language in art, and with emergence of the theatrical condition for deconstructive intent, which would replace the self-critical modernism. These essays emphasize that the artistic language of the postmodern era suggests a literal dimension of sign and the theatrical condition of art. They rely on the concept of allegory because allegory has some affinity with the concept of theatricality, which involves the durational experience. The relation between signifiers and the pursuit of outside sources replaced the meaning and origin inherent or presupposed for modernist artwork. Thus, postmodernist artwork betrays the modernist museum’s faith in the autonomous quality of artworks themselves. Postmodernist work continues to intervene in the cultural context and the technical support for visual language. This is the moment that alternative spaces emerge to supplement the modernist museum.

An alternative space, Artists Space exhibited the emerging postmodern practice; and as a new art institution, it generated discourses on postmodernism. It functioned as the postmodern art institution in between experimental venue and apparatus of knowledge, exemplifying professionalization and institutionalization of alternative spaces in the late 1970s. Behind this process was the transitional social bond between artists and curators. In other words, artists’ networks changed based on personal relationships or institutional connections. This deviates from initial expectations of its

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openness. Reviewing the inaugural exhibition of Artists Space, Roberta Smith
commented on the visible and direct selection process that could result in a diversity of
work:

It is healthy that artists, who often indirectly aid the careers of other artists
through their associations with dealers and curators, are directly and
individually responsible. The fear expressed by some artists, both the
choosers and the chosen, that their name might be irrevocably liked with
one another, has proven unfounded. The very visibility of the selection
process reduces the importance attached to any individual selection and a
more and more artists choose and are chosen, the importance continues to
diminish. Even after two months it has become just another way for artists
to have their work seen by the public.\textsuperscript{121}

Direct and individual connection among artists, however, changed into curator-centered
network. The crux is not the visibility of the selection process, but the social bond that
subsists in the organization.

\textsuperscript{121} Roberta Smith, “J.B. Cobb, Martha Edelheit, Ree Morton, McArthur Binion, Jonathan
Borofsky, Mary Obering, Artists Space,” review of 3 Shows, Artforum 12 (January
1974): 75, 76.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

If a more inclusive and democratic vision for art is our project, then we cannot possibly rely on winning validation from bright, white rooms and full-color reposs in the art world glossies. To tap into and promote the lived aesthetic of a largely ‘non-art’ public—this is our goal, our contradiction, our energy. Group Material wants to occupy the ultimate alternative space—that wall-less expanse that bars artists and their work from the crucial social concerns of the American public:¹—Group Material.

In 2011, Rirkrit Tiravanija exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. Wooden-framed dry walls stood along walls and partitioned the gallery space (Figure 6-1). Tables and chairs were set for visitors. The Museum’s restaurant staff prepared and served free curry daily, from noon to 3:00 pm. This exhibition was a re-creation of Tiravanija’s show in 1992, Untitled (Free), at the 303 Gallery in SoHo (Figure 6-2). He converted the gallery office and storeroom into a kitchen to make and serve rice and Thai curry for free. This emblematic event was also a remake of Gordon Matt-Clark’s Food restaurant in 1971 and his performance-related urban outdoor installation, Open House, in 1972. This implies that Tiravanija’s kitchen project revived the communal atmosphere of early alternative spaces, attempting to turn the aesthetically-defined gallery space into a social domain. In a sense, this project was an expression of the utopian impulse to create a community within an art scene. The gallery space, however, diluted social efficacy of the project by functioning as an independent support to transmute the social into the aesthetic. Just as the repetitive exposure of a radical work

in museums and galleries has neutralized its radicality, they can lead socially engaged practice to the autonomous domain of aesthetic legitimacy. Tiravanija’s kitchen piece demonstrates one instance of how alternative art practices have been coopted by the mainstream art world, on the one hand, and how artists have maintained the tension with the mainstream to expand their practice from cross-media work, to collective production, and to sociopolitical activity, on the other.

As discussed, the early alternative spaces offered an open space in which artists critiqued the concept of medium specificity and reinvented the medium by crossing different art forms and media and conceiving new aesthetics. 112 Greene Street, The Kitchen, and Artists Space exemplify the diverse directions, through producing new signifiers, for expanding aesthetic breadth. Those spaces moved toward urban space and communal life, toward the conceptual psychological medium of video, and toward a hybrid of canonized art media and cultural media. All these directions shared a relational, situational, and interventional character.

This new character of art media and aesthetics implies that the artist works in relation to a social bond the space creates. Thus alternative spaces enabled artists to encounter an event that constructed him or her as the subject, newly every moment. Whereas alternative spaces provided a venue for exploring the condition of medium and catalyzing intermedial practices in the early 1970s, their increasing institutionalization urged artists to search for new domains and tasks of art in the late 1970s. The so-called new alternatives have built their camps near to everyday life and social reality. Thus, the position of the artists is constantly reformulated according to both the discourse that the site sets up and the event that the situation produces. Every exhibition and activity
seeks to develop an inter-subjective relationship among artist, curator, and viewer. Communal acts and domesticities have become crucial for alternative art projects because they evoke a broader relationship than what was played within the art world.

In these terms, Tiravanija’s piece was an example of artwork based on two sides of the expanded notion of medium, which developed from early alternative spaces. First, the work was a hybrid of performance, installation, and social activity. Second, the culinary situation became a medium of art to provide social spaces for the viewers so that they could interact with each other and experience commonality. Both building an architectural structure and making food was primarily to build a condition for a social relationship, rather than to produce aesthetic property. However, the setting of his practice did not easily allow the escape from the aesthetic because the gallery space invoked the traditional legitimacy as a work of art. Consequently, his work swayed between the artistic and the social spaces.

Creating an interaction between viewer and artwork has been the crucial artistic practice since minimalism, and it has been the main interest of artists who intensively worked in alternative spaces. As my study has shown, artists self-consciously took up and staged theatrical situations, mobilized spaces of in-between in order to explore meaningful social interactions, which recently have been treated as relational, conversational, or interventional. When Shannon Jackson unpacks the meaning of social works as a medium to blur the separation between the artist and the social in *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (2011), she begins by contrasting two
different responses to artworks creating a congenial social space.² In 1998 Nicolas Bourriaud organized an exhibition, *Relational Aesthetics*, gathering artists who worked with the concept of intersubjectivity as a kind of catalyst for the art event. He interpreted the seemingly heterogeneous practices as creating “a relationality that is perceptually revisable,” rather than a servile exchange.³ In opposition to Bourriaud’s viewpoint, Claire Bishop proposes “the antagonist possibilities of art practices” as criticizing “the ‘bad’ feel-good side” of congenial social works.⁴ These different positions on socially engaged art are also related to the contemporary debates about their viability as art and also as social act.

What I intend to pick up on here is the opposition between Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics and Bishop’s critical antagonism, because these two perspectives imply different responses to the institutionalization and professionalization of alternative spaces since the mid-1970s. Bourriaud emphasizes the expansion of art forms by drawing the social and cultural elements into the aesthetic domain. From his position, the change of alternative spaces in the mid-1970s can be interpreted as the function of gallery to expand to assimilating language of culture and real life. Bishop’s position is based on her doubt about comforting social works. Critical antagonism provides viewers with an opportunity to contemplate facing issues in real life and social reality. According to this logic, the institutionalization of alternative spaces means loss of their critical

power and alternative function. The new alternatives come to emerge for seeking other liberated domains of artists outside.

The pervasive exhibition of Tiravanija’s work at major museums and galleries all over the world tells us one consequence of the institutionalization and professionalization of alternative space. It seems that the gap between mainstream and alternative art scenes has shrunk so much that artists can traverse both. This acceptability is based on reconciliation of artistic language with the established system. Compared with the original piece in SoHo in 1992, the MoMA piece is well-configured to fit to the neutral gallery space. Although the bare wooden drywall structure makes the room pretend that it has a haphazard look, the space is still a white cube equipped with dining room furniture. Food was prepared outside the room at the Museum’s cafeteria kitchen. The space lacks the communal activity the original alternative space generated. The room, named Contemporary Galleries: 1990-Now, is part of the museum’s spatial context, arranged according to the chronological order of the history of art and sectioned by media. The museum space exemplifies classified knowledge of art history. To a certain extent, the museum situation seems to transform Tiravanija’s work into mere display of a participatory social-interaction setting. This dubious aspect is even conspicuous when it is compared with a re-creation at David Zwirner Gallery in 2007. This show presented a life-size wooden recreation of the original 303 Gallery space and installed the original tables, stools, and refrigerator. In addition, Tiravanija installed next to it a wooden replica of Matta-Clark’s garbage dumpster used in *Open House*. Food was made and served in the replica room. This piece attempted to reconstruct the 1992
piece, including its ambiance and at the same time made a connection with the precedent of the early 1970s.⁵

Tiravanija’s work is amenable to the museum system because it provides a comfortable social space. Bishop has written that “underlying much of Tiravanija’s practice is a desire not just to erode the distinction between institutional and social space, but between artist and viewer; the phrase ‘lots of people’ regularly appears on his lists of materials.”⁶ Her interpretation of Tiravanija’s work also explains why alternative spaces became part of the institution of art and why some alternative practices can be shown in mainstream museums and galleries.

The other response to the institutionalization and professionalization of alternative spaces was the emergence of new alternatives trying to maintain tension with the system and search for other options of art production. They no longer persisted in their own spaces. Instead, they invaded into any available spaces in which they could make their own voice. The new alternatives followed three crucial paths in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Let me take three examples corresponding to each path. One is Times Square Show, led by Collective Projects, Inc. (Colab). It was a collaborative project, with about 60 artists exhibiting and performing their work in an empty four-story building in Times Square, in June 1980. Another is Group Material’s

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⁶ Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” 56.
Da Zi Baos, a poster exhibition in Union Square in 1982, combining aesthetic and political language. The other is the exhibition, Not For Sale, organized by Political Art Documentation and Distribution in June 1983, to intervene in local community issues. All of them integrated their works in everyday space away from a specific gallery space. The Times Square Show introduced the new aesthetic called as “punk art.” Da Zi Baos and Not For Sale directly commented on current social political issues such as U.S. interference in El Salvador and the gentrification of the Lower East Side. These exhibitions had something to do with the combination of everyday life and spaces, cultural sociopolitical statements, and non-artistic media.

First, Times Square Show (Figure 6-3) demonstrated Colab’s method of collaboration and the art media expanded to mass media and mass culture. Colab organized the show in collaboration with artists and art nonprofit arts organizations. The artists presented diverse works including installations, objects, performances, music, film and video, and fashion. These two aspects of Colab and this show stemmed from

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7 Collaborative Projects was started as an artists' meeting in 1977 and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1978 to access government funding available to arts organizations and to produce large thematic group shows, which resulted in collaboration among artists. Group Material was founded by artists who sought a collaborative practice regarding art and politics in 1978. As the group shrunk from thirteen to three members, it chose not to maintain its own storefront exhibition space. Political Arts Documentation and Distribution was formalized to form an archive of socially concerned art and documentation in 1980 and also functioned as discussion group. It organized socially themed exhibitions and street works to promote political art. For details, see Julie Ault, “A Chronology of Selected Alternative Structures, Spaces, Artists’ Groups, and Organizations in New York City, 1965-85,” in Alternative Art New York, 1965-1985: Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective, ed. Julie Ault (New York: The Drawing Center; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 48-49, 58, 60-61.

8 Collaborative Projects, 112 Workshop, Fashion Moda were involved in the organizing of the show, and Artists Space, human Arts Association, Printed Matter, Art in America, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Public Arts Council, Institute for Art and Urban

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both the composition of Colab and the complicated circumstances of New York in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. During this time, New York was in a mood of exploding pop culture and subculture and faced the municipal financial crisis. Meanwhile, artists left SoHo, because of the increasing rent, to search for new places in the South Bronx and Brooklyn. Colab was also based on Fashion Moda, a new artist-run storefront gallery in the South Bronx. This space was characterized by mixed media and communication-oriented practices. In addition, Colab had about thirty to fifty artists, which was a large artist collective at the time. The large number of its members possibly led Colab to be devoted to artistic collaboration in practice. Thus, *Times Square Show* was a significant moment to reveal to the public another way to produce artwork. The

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Resources, Harlem Studio Museum, NYSCA, NEA, Bread 7 Roses (Medical Workers Union), Con Edison, and 42nd Redevelopment Corp supported the show. See Press release, The Times Square Summer Art spectacular: The Times Square Show, June 1980, National endowment for the Arts, Visual Arts Program selected records, 1970-1980, Box 17, Folder 1, AAA.


Fashion Moda itself was a social work to create communal interaction by means of artistic events. A press release sent out by The New Museum in December 1980 describes it as “Fashion Moda (‘a Museum of Science, Art, Technology, Invention, and Fantasy’) is located in a South Bronx storefront, and for two years they have been presenting exhibitions involving artists and other professional people, community residents, and children. Its intention has been to include work, art, and ideas from cross-cultural, sources that can be made available to people within the widest possible spectrum of educational, economic, and cultural backgrounds.” See Press release, Events: Fashion Moda, Taller Boricua, and Collaborative Projects, Inc, The New Museum, December, 1980, Colab, etc: PAD/D pamphlet file: miscellaneous uncatalogued material, MoMA Queens PAD/D Archive.

Little, “Colab Takes a Piece,” 73n25. In addition, Little describes the characters generating collaboration as the group’s artistic productivity: “In the midst of these two interweaving critiques by artists’ group from the late 1960s to the 1980s, Colab was launched, its critical force located in the group’s praxis as a model for the possibilities for a mixed-gender, democratic, nonhierarchical collective dedicated to collaboration. See Ibid., 73.
artists organized their own exhibition by constructing a social and artistic connection between them. On the collective level, their medium was the process of organizing the project, the participants, and contents.

Second, Group Material introduced a new medium to communicate with the non-art public, from political scenes of China to their street project, *Da Zi Baos* (Figure 6-4). Dazibaos, which means a large character poster in Chinese, was an enlarged political leaflet publicizing issues. This medium was used in political demonstrations and movements as alternative or counter media against the established communication system. Dazibaos and street posters emerged from a revolutionary context of 1960s such as the Cultural Revolution in China and the May 1968 protests in France. Group Material’s Da Zi Baos was between a means of propaganda and a medium of art. The group brought this political medium to the artistic context and simultaneously transported art into the sociopolitical scene. Their dazibaos contained twelve statements on each sheet, and members of the group questioned passersby about social political issues.¹² By juxtaposing the politically-engaged message and the wall of the defunct S. Klein building, the group made statements in the posters more desperate. Here the artwork created a sphere of communication. In a sense, *Da Zi Baos* combined the artistic language of conceptual art with a political medium from the international context. By producing interactions among the artists, those who contributed the statements, the message, the site, and passersby, the posters as interventional activity expanded to social space and political relations. However, the alternate red and yellow sheets had two different effects: they caught the viewer’s attention to the content; and from a

distance, they looked like repetitive red and yellow rectangles. As Alison Green points out, Group Material’s method was to combine artistic and activist strategies, that is, to use the formal language of conceptual and minimal art to convey political messages.¹³ This reconciliation between aesthetic and political languages in Group Material’s projects facilitated their accommodation into the mainstream museums. We can determine the artistic position of Group Material in between Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics and Bishop’s critical antagonism, in that their work contained a critical statement on the sociopolitical agenda in familiar forms and media.

Lastly, PAD/D organized a multitudinous outdoor exhibition entitled Not For Sale (Figure 6-5) to publicize the issue of gentrification and displacement in the Lower East Side of New York. This project was an artists’ intervention into community life, attempting to transform the whole neighborhood into an art site. Artists and community residents created a community park and sculptural garden; local galleries provided their spaces for community artists; and a poster campaign was organized.¹⁴ In effect, this project was not an instant event, but a continuing engagement in the anti-displacement issue in the 1980s. The outdoor exhibition was only part of the whole project, which transformed artistic practice into communal activity. At this juncture, life became art and living became a medium of art.

The dialectics between mainstream and alternative spaces since the 1960s has constituted the concept of art and the notion of medium. This process has reached to the historicizing of alternative spaces and to the explosion of concepts regarding

socially engaged work. The early alternative spaces are the launching point of the trajectory of contemporary art and aesthetics, which have various names.
APPENDIX

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure


2-11  Stig Broegger, *Placing Platforms*, 1970. 8 wooden platforms, photographic documentation of the placement of the platforms to be made, 12 1/5” x 40
1/5” x 40 1/5” (each). Source: Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archive, New York.


3-24 Gordon Matta-Clark’s projects for Anarchitecture (Letters to the group, December 10, 1973). Black ink and felt-tip pen on blue airmail paper. 12 1/8” x 6 3/4”. Source: Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark on deposit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.


4-2 Aldo Tambellini, Black, 1969, 3:51 min, b/w, sound (from WGBH, Medium is Medium, 1969, 27:50 min, color, sound). Source: Electronic Arts Intermix.

4-3 Nam June Paik, Electronic Opera no.1, 1969, 4:45 min, color, sound. Source: Electronic Arts Intermix.

4-4 Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, Drawing for Wipe Cycle, published in the catalogue of TV as a Creative Medium, 1969.


4-6 Poster for Video Film Concert, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, 1972. Source: The Kitchen Archive, New York; Video-Film Concert, 1966-72, 1992, 34:50 min, b/w and color, sound, including Video Tape Study No. 3, 1967-69, 4:01 min, b/w, sound; Beatles Electroniques, 1966-72, 2:59 min, color, sound; Electronic Moon No. 2, 1966-72, 4:52 min, color, sound; Electronic Fables, 1965-71, 10 min, color, sound; Waiting for Commercials, 1966-72, 6:41 min, color, sound; Electronic Yoga, 1966-72, 8:18 min, color, sound. Source: Electronic Arts Intermix.
Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, *Cinema Metaphysique nos. 2,3,and 4*, 1967-72, 8:39 min, b/w, sound. Source: Electronic Arts Intermix.

Paik/Abe synthesizer (colorizer), 1970.


Installation view of Ben Tatti’s video work. Source: The Vasulka Archive.

Nam June Paik, *TV Bed*, 1972, 8 (6) televisions, wood construction, Plexiglas; and *TV Penis*, 1972, miniature monitor.


John Sanborn, *The Last Videotapes of Marcel Duchamp*, 1976, 32:03 min, b/w and color, sound. Source: Electronic Arts Intermix.


6-5    PAD/D, *Not For Sale*, 1983 (A view of the "Guggenheim Downtown" outdoor installation of *Not For Sale* at 10th Street and Avenue A).
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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