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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Research and Teaching of Art Despite Its Disappearance: Art in Academia, 1957-1977

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism with a Concentration in Art Practice

by

Timothy Michael Ridlen

Committee in charge:

Professor Grant Kester, Co-Chair
Professor Mariana Wardwell, Co-Chair
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2018

The Dissertation of Timothy Michael Ridlen is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Co-Chair

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University of California, San Diego

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Research and Teaching of Art Despite Its Disappearance: Art in Academia, 1957-1977

by

Timothy Michael Ridlen

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism with a Concentration in Art Practice

University of California, San Diego, 2018

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This dissertation looks at artists whose work was closely aligned with research and pedagogy in the American university from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Four institutional projects structure the work: a collaborative research proposal at Rutgers University, a research center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a series of exhibitions at Finch College, and an experimental school at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). My analysis begins with Gyorgy Kepes's Center for Advanced Visual

Studies at MIT, a center for artistic research meant to bridge the visual arts with the tradition of science and research. The Center's model of research shared key characteristics with the scientific tradition, such as discovering fundamental principles through experimentation (emphasizing the visible experience) and creative-problem solving. Next, I look at the "Project in Multiple Dimensions," a research proposal written collaboratively by Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts and George Brecht for Rutgers University. I argue that these artists' works offer a knowledge alternative not unlike Dewey's aesthetic experience and intelligent action, or knowing through doing, and that this model worked against the dominant trends of the university. The subsequent chapters look at the Art in Process exhibitions at Finch College, and the collaborative Feminist Art Program (1971-73) at CalArts. Some instances of conceptual strategies that appeared in the exhibitions at Finch College (seriality and the use of information and language in the work of Mel Bochner, for instance) transformed the understanding of aesthetic experience—not abandoned it—by aligning it with the ability to disclose and construct consciousness or subjective experience. The final chapter looks at how this new decentralized notion of experience collided with a political notion of experience at CalArts. Key works by John Baldessari, Suzanne Lacy, and the Feminist Art Program represented the artist in society in competing ways, as either critically detached or socially engaged.

A practice component also contributes to fulfilling the requirements for the degree, included here as supplemental files.

Introduction

The title of this dissertation, *The Research and Teaching of Art Despite Its Disappearance*, is intentionally ambiguous. Just what does the disappearing “it” refer to? Since the postwar period, not only has visual art undergone an ontological change (a change in the way it exists in the world) but so have the institutions of academia, whose primary tasks are research and teaching. As a discursive construct, academia has not literally disappeared, but there is certainly reason to think that the American university is no longer what it once was. This dissertation looks at a historical moment in which the confluence of art, research, and teaching produced a set of practices that ran counter to the dominant expectations of the university.

Shortly after World War II, American fine art academies and technical art schools, among other for-profit vocational and trade schools, rushed into a new set of university, governmental, and philanthropic relationships ready to take advantage of new benefits afforded by the GI Bill. In order to do so, schools that had postsecondary, non-degree granting studio programs now offered degrees and were recognized as accredited institutions by the regional, state, and professional accrediting organizations. One of those accrediting agencies was the newly formed National Association of Schools of Design (NASD).¹ The Association actively declared a new role for art departments and schools, one that would bridge the perceived division between fine art and commercial art education by appealing to a university model, especially as research came to define its activities. At their third annual meeting in 1949, the NASD asked its members in a questionnaire, first, “Can the seeming conflicts between modern fine arts and commercial arts, as the student so often sees them, be reconciled for him?” And second, in reference to the methods of the old French Academy, “With academic methods of art instruction generally discredited, have any important values been lost? Are we in danger of creating a new academic?”² This lingering question at the

start of the post-war period expresses an ongoing conflict between art as a scholarly pursuit and art as something that, ultimately, cannot be practiced or acquired in academia. One of the central tensions of art in academia—to the extent that it was constitutive of higher art education—concerns the characterization of art as a scholarly pursuit—like research—that combines fine art and practical skill but denies the possibility that art can be taught.

I began this dissertation with skepticism about the need for the label “artistic research,” which has recently resurfaced in Europe and the United States. Furthermore, it seemed pretty clear that the term emerged because of new practice-based Ph.D. programs in the Visual Arts, mostly in Europe but also in the United States. I was, after all, a recently enrolled student in one of these newly minted programs. New terms such as “practice-based research” and “research-led practice” have also entered the fray. Alongside recent changes to the structure of higher education in Europe, which have given rise to increased scholarship on art-as-research, the mid-twentieth century model of mass higher education in the U.S. faces new challenges in a globalized knowledge economy. In the time between the rise of mass higher education in the U.S. and the restructuring of European universities in the 21st century, the status of art as a thing in the world has gone through periods of (so-called) de-materialization, such as Conceptual Art, Institutional Critique, and relational or dialogical aesthetics. My assessment postulates that the historical changes to the forms of art can be read through their university and academic institutions. Furthermore, I suspect that these new forms of art have changed the way artists engage with one of society’s most consequential institutions, the university, and with the place of knowledge in an affluent, capitalist society more generally.

THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED POLIS

Exploiting the productive tension between theory and practice, this dissertation both employs and analyzes what Tom Holert has called the “knowledge-based polis”—which

extends from concrete and particular things like the architecture, objects, and technology of universities to the general principles that make up the cognitive, cultural and social systems of knowledge.³ While the practice component addresses the former by employing those concrete particulars, the written component analyzes historical constructions of the latter. This dissertation thus has the vexing quality of both being a part of and analyzing a slippery object. In defining the knowledge-based polis, Holert writes, “With reference to the work of French sociologist Luc Boltanski, the term polis has been chosen deliberately to render the deep imbrications of both the material (urbanist-spatial, architectural, infrastructural, etc.) and immaterial (cognitive, psychic, social, aesthetic, cultural, legal, ethical, etc.) dimensions of urbanity. Moreover, the knowledge-based polis is a conflictual space of political contestation concerning the allocation, availability, and exploitation of ‘knowledge’ and ‘human capital.’”⁴ According to Boltanski and his co-authors, the polis is an order of value or worth established through *tests* that justify social action. Legitimate tests determine just social action under various orders like the market, industry, creativity, fame, or the family.⁵ They suggest that by establishing and improving tests—some more radical than others—according to principles within and between different polities, society establishes its notions and mechanisms of justice.

Boltanski’s study with Eve Chiapello adds history to the model of polities and analyzes the development of a capitalist spirit—i.e. a justification and an engine for profit-driven modes of production—by addressing the way proponents of capitalism (corporate managers) were able to respond to critiques after 1968.⁶ The *artistic critique* of capitalism was that capitalism was neither free nor authentic—in the sense that it didn’t allow for autonomy, created different forms of alienation, and produced inauthentic goods and relationships. Capitalism reached a crisis, the authors propose, in 1968, when managers had to neutralize or incorporate these critiques. By the 1990s, a new spirit of capitalism

successfully neutralized the social critique and incorporated the artistic critique.

But still, artists and art historians have relied on a version of this recuperated artistic critique in their concerns about the way art practice is professionalized through art schools and universities.⁷ Writing in 1993, Thierry de Duve claimed that art schools underwent three major phases: first, the traditional academy, characterized by imitating the master artists; second, the Bauhaus model which replaced imitation with invention and emphasized form; third, that which came after the Bauhaus model, where attitude replaced form, deconstruction replaced invention, and practice replaced medium. De Duve sees deconstruction, critique and deskilling in art schools as a “crisis of invention,”⁸ which could be connected to the crisis of capitalism identified by Boltanski and Chiapello. For example, if invention and progress were part of the spirit of capitalism from the early to mid-twentieth century, the crisis of invention was a recognition by artists of their complicity in that spirit. De Duve, however, bemoans the turn to critical theory (and deconstruction in particular) in art education because it is nothing more than a sterile, “negative symptom of a historical transition whose positivity is not clear yet.”⁹ In other words, de Duve fails to see how this kind of art can be anything more than a reaction to or reflection of the changes in capitalist society at the time.

Howard Singerman echoes de Duve's criticism in his 1999 book, which offers a history of art in higher education leading up to the adoption of the MFA as a terminal degree in the United States. Through discursive analysis of institutional documents, artists' writings, interviews, and letters, he describes a process where artists are professionalized by the education system, which in this case, amounts to speaking eloquently about their work. In other words, artists are professionalized through discourse and turned into subjects of that discourse, giving Singerman's book its title, *Art Subjects*. Singerman points the finger at the university when he says: “All art in the university, then, might be described as Fried

described minimalism, as an ideological art.”¹⁰ Part of the ideology behind art in the university is about professionalization, which came to align itself with a longstanding myth or ideological mystification of the artist as a creative genius. To a certain extent, artists trained in the university are the products of that system, Singerman points out, but what about the ways artists transformed themselves against the grain of institutional demands? My analysis focuses on how and why figures who straddled the art world and the university, such as Jack Burnham, Allan Kaprow, Mel Bochner, and Suzanne Lacy, contributed to a reconfiguration of the artist-figure, or the art subject to use Singerman’s wordplay, through a new epistemological foundation rooted in aesthetic and political experience. Beyond that, my dissertation does not take issue with Singerman’s work. I include more analysis of specific artworks, and I take a different stand on the question of professionalization. While it is true that the university by and large has worked to make artists professionals, I focus on examples where artists either worked against this or used it to their advantage.

More recent critiques of the university from the proponents of the art world maintain that the university constrains artists because it is complicit in the market economy.¹¹ Such a radical position (in the sense that it would abandon the university altogether) holds that because the university professionalizes artists, the university is an unjustifiable constraint on artistic authenticity and freedom. While this may be true, I worry that such a position only offers authenticity and autonomy to be sought outside the university as an alternative. Meanwhile, such aims of authenticity, authentic experience, and autonomy have been incorporated into the spirit that justifies new forms of exploitation, as scholars of art have repeatedly pointed out.¹² Lane Relyea, for one, has recently taken up Boltanski and Chiapello’s theoretical framework to critique twenty-first century art practices that follow the logic of DIY aesthetics and projects.¹³ The question I am raising in the face of this problematic is, were there artists in the university around this crucial juncture in history (the

long 60s and into the 70s) who could serve as counter-examples, who were transformative within the knowledge-based polis? What lessons can be learned for the twenty-first century when notions of authenticity, experience, and autonomy are central to new forms of professionalization and the quantification of knowledge?

The intervention that I make into this ongoing conversation involves reframing “artistic research” as a convergence of art and the university, which also requires equal consideration of pedagogy and artists engagement with the construction of knowledge more generally. In the chapters that follow, I explore the epistemological models found in certain art practices within the university with the goal of finding where artists have been transformative and constructive in the university. This particular point of view is consistent with Holert’s description of “art in the knowledge-based polis,” which asks that we understand artistic research as a contestation of the way people, objects, and ideas are valued in a world where knowledge is materialized, objectified, and commodified. Whereas some recent scholars dismiss art in the university or art as a form of knowledge because it resembles the precarious and exploitative conditions of a new knowledge economy, Holert’s description of the issues at hand presents the university as a site for art to engage in a new critique of exploitative capitalism. Moreover, the university cannot be dismissed as a site of professionalization but must be contested.

CONCEPTUALISMS, CONFLICTS, AND TRANSCOGNITIVE CAPACITIES

To look at the practices of art amongst the practices of the university, namely research and teaching, requires an examination of the relationship between art and knowledge. To begin outlining art’s epistemological foundation one could look to forms of embodied or nonpropositional knowledge, which has been variously described as non-conceptual, tacit knowledge, situated knowledge, and standpoints.¹⁴ The classic example of embodied knowledge is the knowledge of riding a bike, which could be described as

knowing how, rather than *knowing that*. In an art historical context, embodied knowledge is a counter-intuitive model because artists turned toward “conceptual” strategies, while at the same time, it has also become common for artists to pointedly refer to their “practice.” For de Duve, the term “practice” inadequately replaced “medium” when deconstruction came into vogue.¹⁵ Here lies one view onto the misconception that art has dematerialized, or that artists have ceded their political position because of the turn toward practice, process, contexts, and the use of language.

“Practice” thus becomes an important shared term for art and embodied knowledge. But thinking of “practice” in sociological terms, certain types of knowledge go unarticulated in practice—which includes the kinds of habitual routines undertaken without much thought, and the carrying out of predefined procedures. This type of practice can also be carried out through discourse and other activities construed as discursive—for example, delivering a lecture, but also things like conceptual artwork and writing—where embodied knowledge meets consciously articulated thought.¹⁶ Alongside his concept of the “habitus,” which was meant to suggest that human activities, especially judgments of taste, are limited by societal constructs such as class, Pierre Bourdieu’s use of the term “practice” implied that human activity was outside of a single conceptual system that could be used to understand it.¹⁷ In the lexicon of social science, theories differ as to whether “practices” should be considered routine and overdetermined, following the likes of Bourdieu, or willful and determining.¹⁸ While the term “practice” does not mean the same for the social sciences as it does for art, the practice of art might be thought of as a way of testing or composing knowledge through various concrete and institutional forms—objects, exhibitions, events, distribution networks and other social relationships that also constitute the current modes of production. Hence critiques by scholars such Relyea take issue with the concept of practice as a symptom of late capitalism, apparently unmoored from a historical materialist position and

problematized by social, economic, and political scholarship; however, they don't do justice to some of the ways that concepts such as practice and process (discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation) have been deployed.¹⁹ My analysis does not depart from concern for the historical materialist understanding of art practice but rather emphasizes that the relations of production and modes of development must be part of the analysis, looking at the way institutions and academic contexts constitute one site of productive labor under a capitalist system that commodifies knowledge.

My inquiry began with the inkling that Enlightenment philosophy plays an outsized role in many of the concrete ways art interacts with institutions of higher education. Immanuel Kant offers a foundation not only for epistemology in his three major *Critiques* but also for the institutional structure of the university in *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Kant's analytic philosophy turns on the role of the aesthetic, which prepares the imagination to intersect with understanding and generate a practical reason that can be used towards moral questions. In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant seeks to define a role for philosophy in relation to the three other disciplines of the German university at that time: theology, law, and medicine. Compared to these three disciplines, philosophy plays an indirect role in the function of life and society, and therefore is considered a lower faculty; however, Kant's role for philosophy is a legislative one. Susan Meld Shell explains Kant's philosophy as an arbiter of other disciplines when she says, "The primary justification for free and open discussion is not the discovery of new knowledge but preservation of moral truth from skeptical despair."²⁰ For Kant, reason, established on philosophical grounds, has the responsibility of guiding free inquiry towards the truth. Meld Shell's explanation suggests that the production of new knowledge is not necessarily the only role for disciplines within the university. The critical work of knowledge is distinct in the realm of 18th century philosophy, which mixes dogma and skepticism in the context of free and open discussion; but does this still hold true for philosophy today? Could culture, media, the visual arts and

other disciplines within the university play this role? Are the arts thoughtful enough, articulate enough, and up to the challenge of taking on other disciplines in the university?

Answering in the affirmative, some recent accounts focus on the cognitive capacity of creativity, while others try to resolve the socio-cultural construct of creativity as an oppositional, transgressive, or “transcognitive” capacity.²¹ In other words, in these accounts, creativity is a special brand of knowledge production that defines itself through an oppositional, outsider, or nomadic status. In contrast, Henk Borgdorff has shifted emphasis away from the idea of creativity of the artist in favor of what Heidegger has called the “world disclosing” and “world constituting” capacities of art.²² Borgdorff suggests that these two perspectives on art in the academy either follow a hermeneutic or a constructivist model of research, and while such activities don’t preclude a creative act, Borgdorff shifts emphasis to the object or work of art as the ultimate location of knowledge. What remains in the artwork or practices is the immanent character of knowledge in art: in Adorno’s words, its truth content, or epistemic character.²³ While there is something to take from Adorno’s concept, it is also limited by his dedication to the autonomous work of art. By describing artistic research as a move from the objects of art to the world, these two concepts of world disclosure and world construction turn knowledge into a process of thought, a more promising concept for art in the university. Although I do not apply Heideggerian or Adornian concepts in my analysis, I do focus on practices that disclose and construct meaning, rather than on discovery, invention, or knowledge production.

Discussing art as a process of thought, as opposed to “knowledge production” or “research,” is one alternative way to think about artistic knowledge that I explore in Chapter 3. However, James Elkins' essay “On Beyond Research and New Knowledge” explores several ways to avoid the terms “research” and “new knowledge” for artist's Ph.D. programs, while still considering how the visual arts might lay claim to academic pursuits. The options Elkins surveys, drawn mostly from Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge’s

collection *Thinking Through Art*, amount to an emphasis on theory, or as MacLeod and Holdridge's title already suggests, thinking and thought. Elkins is a proponent of the idea that art can somehow serve in a transitive capacity, with the potential for reconfiguring the university and its subdivisions. Realistically, the visual arts will probably not be responsible for reconciling the rift, as Elkins hopes, between distinct disciplinary practices—each with their own epistemic priorities and modes of evaluation—but at least it is capable of moving between them at the level of thought and theory, being part of an interdisciplinary and integrated conversation.

Contrary to Elkins' and others' call, this study is not meant to offer a single alternative to the conception of “knowledge” with the intent of making art the arbiter of other disciplines, but rather to take a historical look at how knowledge has been disclosed and constructed—one might say composed and uncomposed—through art and aesthetic experience in or at the edges of the university. Where is this knowledge in relation to the artwork, and what kind of knowledge is it? Using a combination of archival research, visual/textual analysis, and theoretical inquiry, my writing will move through a reading of artworks in light of their academic-institutional contexts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGY

The formation of critical pedagogy that followed the social movements of the 1960s inaugurates an important tradition of contesting the construction of knowledge in the university. Although, I read practices of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s through an older model of pragmatist philosophy and social theory, one that was more widely available in the U.S. at the time, it is worth recounting some of the ways critical pedagogy has contested knowledge since the 1960s in order to give a sense of another conversation that my study joins. For instance, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is a key touchstone for more recent scholars of critical pedagogy such as Henry Giroux and bell hooks. Freire's foundational criticism of

traditional pedagogy was its reliance on what he called the banking concept of education, which treats knowledge as something to be stored and transferred (e.g. through rote memorization). The banking concept of knowledge implies that knowledge is placed in the head of students by a teacher, and all they have to do is keep it there so they can draw on it later. Instead, Freire proposed problem-posing education, which focuses on dialogue and stimulating critical thinking—that is, the ability to reflect and act with intention. Freire calls critical thought the processes of conscientization. Conscientization consists of bringing the experience and knowledge that students already have to bear on the forces in the world that oppress them. Teachers can facilitate conscientization by discovering and stimulating generative themes, but these themes should be relevant to the people pursuing education, in some cases coming from students and in others being proposed by the teacher.

Facilitating conscientization is the crux of Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed, and despite the fact that it was intended for implementation in “third world” contexts, it has been the basis for many North American movements for curricular revision. It has also been influential more generally for pedagogical strategies that anticipate a diverse and inclusive classroom. For instance, bell hooks, in her book *Teaching to Transgress*, attributes part of her pedagogical philosophy to Freire. Hooks mentions several pillars that make up her approach to education as “the practice of freedom.”²⁴ Most consequential is the claim that experience can be a constructive challenge to textual authority. In other words, hooks’ critical pedagogy makes room for the experiences of students to challenge the supplied curriculum. This accomplishes several things at once, for instance, creating a learning community that values differences, and mitigating the aspect of school that relies upon discipline and control; however, it is notable in this context for the way student experience is given equal status to other sources of knowledge. As will unfold throughout this dissertation, experience can act as a common ground for different epistemological as well as political challenges to the university.

Henry Giroux has also dedicated his scholarship to elaborating a Freirian model of critical pedagogy, and thanks to Giroux's work one crucial aspect of this pedagogical approach can be distinguished from a dominant tendency in research universities to focus on operational problem-solving. While the idea of creativity and creative problem-solving has been embraced by research universities and art programs alike, Giroux helps draw a line between creative problem-solving and the problem-posing method of education championed by Freire and others. Giroux critiques what he calls the culture of positivism for its focus on objectivity, efficiency, and technique, and helps to draw a distinction in this context between the kind of problem-solving in artistic research practiced by Kepes's Center for Advanced Visual Studies, discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, and the problem-posing method that allowed students to investigate, inquire, and learn alongside teachers in the Feminist Art Program, discussed in Chapter 4. He has also drawn a distinction between critical detachment in research and teaching from engaged or transformative academic work. The former takes a position of critical distance, while the latter recognizes the way researchers, teachers, and students are embedded in the institutions and social relationships that determine the meaning and value of knowledge (i.e. its construction).

Patti Lather, a scholar of feminist research and pedagogy, has also argued for combined research and teaching in order to further the emancipatory aims of scholarly activity. Postmodern deconstruction, for Lather, asks teachers and researchers to occupy the contradictions that come with institutions. For my purposes, the biggest contradictions are those that kept artists like George Brecht and John Baldessari from wanting to associate with the authority and instruction of academia, aspects that can be summed up by the pejorative term "schooling."²⁵ Gayatri Spivak, whom Lather also draws upon, has addressed this problem as "playing the double bind" of reason and the unknowable.²⁶ In her work on critical pedagogy, Spivak describes how the "intended mistake" of philosophizing or theorizing, performs the work of trying to "solve every antinomy" of a double bind.²⁷ She

sees this form of play not quite as Kant did—which involved a free play of the cognitive faculties, the co-mingling of sense data and *a priori* concepts—but as the practice of “epistemological performance.”²⁸ This might be a reading of Kant that is attentive to the shortcomings, mistakes, or failures of reason—that tries to abstract concepts from differences in the world or is nonetheless attentive to difference. This also comes to define the aesthetic for Spivak. In her conceptualization of the aesthetic, it is defined as a lack or absence—in other words, the failure of reason, the mistake or misreading, the unknown or that which can not be reasoned but must be accepted as an illusion. This is the idea of “play” in “playing the double bind,” and it is one model for thinking about what to do when faced with the contradiction of the university and the possibility of teaching art. I will take up a different philosophic history of play in the work of Allan Kaprow, one that was more concretely connected to his reading of sociology, but nonetheless, my reading of Kaprow’s work may provide some examples of an artist committed to “playing the double bind”—of art and life, of communication and non-communication, or reason and unreason.

Furthermore, aesthetic judgment, for Spivak, is key in its role of providing, by analogy, a model of how to deal with the double bind. Spivak writes, “This double bind of practical reason, which must beg all final questions, can therefore work only by analogy, not through cognition or the ascription of ‘proper signification’. Yet the capacity to desire (the faculty of desire) is compelled to supplement every absence and is compelled to solve every antinomy generated by that move.”²⁹ In other words, even though reason can not ensure things like freedom, equality, and democracy, something else (here she names desire) drives the subject towards those principles it generates in theory. This is like a utopian drive that emanates from the theoretical subject’s aesthetic sensibility or judgment. Defined only negatively (by absence), Spivak’s concept of the aesthetic is slippery, but she grounds it again in the work of Antonio Gramsci, another touchstone of critical pedagogy.

Gramsci provides Spivak with the only positive model (although she calls it a “false

hope”) for how the aesthetic might guide ethics, and thus transform the social structures of society that hinder freedom and keep resources unequally divided. Based on a concept of cultural hegemony, or a form of power that works through acquiring cultural consensus, Gramsci’s theory also provides a model for thinking the aesthetic and the political together. In other words, to act aesthetically—or the “epistemological performance” at the limits of reason as Spivak names it—might be thought of as representing personal experience in spaces of public and political discourse. From Gramsci, Spivak takes the “false hope” that education can produce new, subaltern intellectuals in the space of cultural hegemony. The “epistemological performance” or aesthetics of the subaltern intellectual—“from below” as Spivak also describes it—is the only way to make good on Kant’s illusion that pure reason can ensure action that is both free and ethical. The utopian drive in Gramsci is supplemented here in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 by concepts from John Dewey’s pragmatism, such as uncertainty and ends-in-view, which attempt to refine a theory of the way in which some notion of the future structures action in the present.

THE CHAPTERS

With the growth of the American research university after World War II came the claim that artists could be academics, too. This dissertation looks at how art practices have tried to use the look, language, and context of academic research and teaching to contest the institution’s role in American society. In the following chapters, I examine the way knowledge, research, and education have been thematized in works of art in order to understand the value and meaning of knowledge in American society. Scholarly work in the university is said to be about the pursuit of knowledge, but what exactly is this knowledge? While the scientific tradition of Isaac Newton seeks laws in nature, and the humanities seek to interpret the world’s meaning, artists have often claimed to pursue something called “aesthetic experience.” What is this experience, and what is its relationship to knowledge?

In this dissertation, I give a historical account of how the pursuit of aesthetic experience provided an alternative kind of knowledge. Over time, the artists I look at began to treat aesthetic experience as something more like intellectual activity, and they began to explore how it could be engendered in others. Eventually, thanks to the social movements of the 1960s, experience also took on social and political significance. The university served as an important location for this transformation of aesthetic experience, and its significance is often taken for granted. In bringing the university context and themes of research and education to light, the way we understand the relationship between art and the pursuit of knowledge is given new dimension.

A counter-history of artists in universities might begin with Allan Kaprow, who elevated aesthetic experience to the status of academic pursuit at Rutgers University as early as 1958. However, the chapters here begin with Gyorgy Kepes and the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, even though this Center for artistic research didn't come to fruition until 1967. I begin by looking at Kepes' exhibitions and publications from as early as 1944 to determine the epistemological foundation of the Center before analyzing the collaborative proposals made by Kepes and the Fellows at the Center between 1967 and 1974. My contention in this chapter is that Kepes and the Center's model of research shared key characteristics with the scientific tradition, such as discovering fundamental principles through experimentation (emphasizing the visible experience) and creative-problem solving. What was left out of this formation was a model of thought that values paradox, the irreconcilable, or the double bind, and thus this chapter closes by contrasting the model of thought represented by the Center with the work of one Fellow in particular, Jack Burnham, whose break with the Center, I contend, is symptomatic of the central paradigm shift I seek to examine in this dissertation.

Chapter 2 jumps to a formation of artistic research that began at Rutgers University in 1957 with a proposal for a "Project in Multiple Dimensions" by Allan Kaprow, Robert

Watts, and George Brecht. I argue that “aesthetic experience” was an alternative to the dominant research paradigm of the university. First, I outline John Dewey’s theory of aesthetic experience and define key concepts that will be useful in reading the work of these artists, such as consummatory experience, chance operations, intelligent action, and communication. Next, I read two key lecture-performances by Kaprow (*Communication*, 1958), Watts and Brecht (*Yam Lecture*, 1963), and a video installation by Watts (*Cloud Music*, 1974-1979). I argue that these works offer a knowledge alternative similar to Dewey’s aesthetic experience and intelligent action, or knowing through doing, and that this model works to counter the negative role of professionalization in the university. A problematic arises, however, in the notion of the self or the subject, for which the figure of the artist is both an instance and a stand-in. This question will return in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 examines a series of exhibitions at the Finch College Museum of Art organized by Elayne Varian (1965-1972). Finch College was an all-female liberal arts college on the upper east side of Manhattan that featured prominently on the New York art scene in the 1960s and early 70s. Varian’s exhibitions and collaborations with the artist Mel Bochner drew attention to the intellectual activities or thought processes that preceded the production of artwork. I argue that the interest in pedagogy at Finch prompted artists like Bochner to look toward intellectual activity as a way to decentralize aesthetic experience, emphasizing practice and process over products. From examining the exhibitions, artists, and key works that passed through Finch College, it is evident that some instances of conceptual strategies (seriality and the use of information and language, for instance) transformed the understanding of aesthetic experience—not abandoned it—by aligning it with the ability to disclose and construct consciousness or subjective experience. The decentralization of experience is best understood as a mediation of new modes of production associated with an emerging neoliberalism, one that includes new modes of development based on technology and knowledge production.

Chapter 4 looks at how this new decentralized notion of experience became a political category in art and higher education. Shifting the focus to the California Institute of the Arts, key works by John Baldessari and Suzanne Lacy are examined for the way that they disclose and construct the figure of the artist. After locating a problematic in Baldessari's work, the same one that appeared in Chapter 2 concerning the artist-self, I turn to the Feminist Art Program to examine how students in that program, such as Lacy and Faith Wilding, used role-play to construct the self and reconfigure the artist. I argue that there is a good reason to draw parallels between the work of Kaprow and that of Lacy in order to understand the political stakes of public self-construction in both their work.

Art historian Peter Osborne has noted that the generation of artists associated with Conceptual Art was the first to graduate from degree-based programs.³⁰ Though contestable, Osborne's assertion only repeats a common observation that artists began to work like scientists and researchers, or in other words, that the studio became more like a library, laboratory, or study.³¹ On a similar note, but far more polemically, art historian Benjamin Buchloh has asserted that Conceptual artists, in an effort to disrupt the critical paradigm of production and consumption in visual art, went too far in claiming that all studio activities were artworks, even those that preceded the existence of an art object or aesthetic experience. He writes, "Not only did they destabilize the boundaries of the traditional artistic categories of studio production, by eroding them with modes of industrial production in the manner of Minimalism, but they went further in their critical revision of the discourse of the studio versus the discourse of production/consumption. By ultimately dismantling both along with the conventions of visibility inherent in them, they firmly established an aesthetic of administration."³² Describing this situation somewhat more affirmatively, art historian Sabeth Buchman has written, "The traditional ontology of fine art was perceived as jaded, as overdetermined by formalist criticism and as requiring a new epistemological foundation."³³

These types of assessments indicate that something fundamental changed with strategies that rejected formalism (or the idea that the meaning of the work is located in the physical object and its perceptual effects) in favor of works that used textual and verbal forms of language and elicited thoughts instead of perceptual effects. Taking such observations about Conceptual Art at face value, one might ask instead, what were the new epistemic stakes of this work that looked so much like research or other scholarly pursuits? What was to be gained from insisting, as the artist and scholar Charles Harrison has put it, “that the type of disposition supposedly definitive of aesthetic experience—a type for which the appreciative viewing of paintings furnished the principal token—should be displaced in the culture by another, which Conceptual Art was designed to enable and to encourage, and which entailed a willingness to conceive of ‘viewing’ and ‘reading’ as requiring the same kinds of cognitive capacity”?³⁴ The following chapters explore possible answers to this question by looking to the university context.

¹ Announced in “The Reporter,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 19, no. 8 (Nov. 1948): 429.

² As published in Douglas MacAgy, “Fine and Commercial Arts Redefined,” *College Art Journal* 9, no. 4 (Summer, 1950): 406-411. Douglas MacAgy, the Director of the California School of Fine Arts, responded to the first question by redefining the distinction along an axis that was not defined by medium or profession. Rather, his distinction was between what is “*essentially* a communicative structure which tends to be coercive,” and that which “*may* communicate and is, at least overtly, *non-coercive*.” MacAgy, “Fine and Commercial Arts Redefined,” 407.

³ Tom Holert, “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis,” *e-flux journal* 3 (February 2009), <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/>>.

⁴ Tom Holert, “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis,” *e-flux journal* 3 (February 2009), <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/>>.

⁵ See Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006 [1991]); see also Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, (London; New York: Verso, 1999).

⁶ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, (London; New York: Verso, 1999).

⁷ See Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); see also, Anton Vidokle, “Art without Market, Art without Education: Political Economy of Art,” *e-flux journal* 43 (March 2013)

<<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-market-art-without-education-political-economy-of-art/>>.

⁸Thierry de Duve, “When Form Has Become Attitude—and Beyond” in *The Artist and the Academy: Issues in Fine Art Education and The Wider Cultural Context*, ed. Stephen Foster and Nicholas deVille, (Southampton, UK: John Hansard Gallery, 1994), 39.

⁹de Duve, “When Form Has Become Attitude—and Beyond,” 39.

¹⁰Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 186.

¹¹Anton Vidokle, “Art without Market, Art without Education: Political Economy of Art,” *e-flux journal* 43 (March 2013) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-market-art-without-education-political-economy-of-art/>>. For accounts of how art schools, generally speaking, contribute to undermining the freedom of artists, see various entries in Stephen Henry Madoff, ed., *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

¹²See Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness: A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); see also Miwon Kwon. “Exchange Rate: On Obligation and Reciprocity in Some Art of the 1960s and After,” in Helen Molesworth et al., *Work Ethic*, exh. cat. (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 2003).

¹³Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Art World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013).

¹⁴Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); see also Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14 no. 3, (Autumn 1988), 575-599; Nancy Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism” in *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing, 1983).

¹⁵Thierry de Duve, “When Form Has Become Attitude—and Beyond,” 39.

¹⁶For an overview of “practice” from the point of view of a sociologist, see Joseph Rouse, “Practice Theory,” in *Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology: A Volume in the Handbook of the Philosophy of Science Series*, ed. Dov M. Gabbay, Paul Thagard, John Woods, Stephen P. Turner, Mark W. Risjord, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011), 639-682.

¹⁷See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline for a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁸Another reference on this point for many “practice theorists” in sociology would be Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. E. Anscombe, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953). While language games might provide rules, one does not consciously follow those rules. Also, critiques and adjustments of Louis Althusser’s concept of overdetermination include work by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, through a mobilization of the concept of “discourse” (from Foucault), and Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Critiques of Bourdieu’s “practical sensibility” and “habitus” include works by Theodore Schatzki, and Laurent Thévenot and Luc Boltanski. These author’s don’t agree on how practice and discourse relate, but they all allow for human activity to carry some determining capacity. See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London; New York: Verso, 1985); Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Theodore Schatzki, “Overdue Analysis of Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice,” *Inquiry* 30, no. 1 (1987): 113-35; Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, trans. Catherine Porter, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Relyea, xi-xii.

²⁰ Susan Meld Shell, *Kant and the Limits of Autonomy*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009), 258.

²¹ See Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, (London: Sage Publications, 2005); Henk Slager, "Art and Method," in *Artists with PhDs*, ed. James Elkins (Washington, D.D.: New Academia Publishing, 2009), 49-56.

²² Henk Borgdorff, *The Conflict of the Faculties: Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Amsterdam: Leiden University, 2012). For more on world disclosure see Nikolas Kompridis, "On World Disclosure: Heidegger, Habermas and Dewey," *Thesis Eleven* 37 (1994): 29-45.

²³ See Theodore Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1997).

²⁴ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

²⁵ See Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

²⁶ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2011). Spivak speaks in terms of transcendental Kantian reason, on the one side, and something at the limits of Kantian reason (i.e. its failures or mistakes), on the other. The concept of the double bind came from Bateson's study of childhood schizophrenia but was generalized to describe how therapists had to discover abstract-universal rules and put them to use in concrete-particular cases. Spivak claims that this is also an appropriate concept to describe how Kant's system of reason was applied, in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, to the concept of morality (arrived at freely without the dogma of religion or the force of law). For Spivak, this double bind, or a mistake that occurred in trying to apply a theory of reason to a normative model of social action, underlies democracy.

²⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 1999), 23.

²⁸ Spivak, *Aesthetic Education*, 122.

²⁹ Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 23.

³⁰ Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 28.

This is not strictly true, as David Deitcher has made the same claim about Pop Art. See Deitcher, "Unsentimental Education: The Professionalization of American Artists," in *Hand Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-1962*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 95-118. The link between degree-based art education and the rejection of the art object (or said differently, an emphasis on the art idea) is problematic mostly because not all degree-based programs were the same, and what can be called Conceptual Art did not emerge with a single generation or a single movement of artists.

³¹ References to the studio as study or library are common in accounts of Conceptual Art beginning with Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 2 (Feb. 1968): 31-36. Reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 46-50. See also Francis Colpitt, "In and Out of the Studio," in *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2011), 63-80.

³² Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 133.

³³ Sabeth Buchman, "Introduction: From Conceptualism to Feminism," in *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Numbers Shows 1969-1974* (London: Afterall, 2012), 12.

³⁴ Charles Harrison, "Indexes and Other Figures," in *Essays on Art and Language* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2001), 69.

CHAPTER 1 — THE NEW ACADEMIC: RESEARCH AND ART IN THE UNIVERSITY

Roughly twenty years after being hired at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Gyorgy Kepes proposed the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) in 1965 and established it as a means to advance visual design “in a manner similar to research-based study.”¹ Kepes had worked for László Moholy-Nagy in Berlin and London and taught alongside him at the Illinois Institute of Technology, first known as the New Bauhaus, in Chicago. A major achievement before arriving at MIT was his publication entitled *Language of Vision*, in which he outlined his aesthetic theory for educational purposes.² As scholars of the time pointed out, this book became a standard-bearer in design and industrially oriented fine art programs.³ It established Kepes as a major figure in the theorization of art as an academic pursuit on par with science. This equivalence was only further reinforced when Kepes published his plans for the Center in 1965, which essentially served as a blueprint when it eventually opened in 1967.⁴

Kepes’s Center was based on the idea to host artists as research fellows who would work collaboratively on a main project while pursuing individual projects at the same time. Their collaborative potential would also extend across campus through public talks, meetings, and panel discussions. Working with the Fellows Otto Piene, Vassilakis Takis, Harold Tovish, Ted Kraynik, Stan VanderBeek, Jack Burnham, and Wen-Ying Tsai, Kepes’s first project for the Center was to be a technologically innovative public monument for Boston Harbor that Kepes described as a “focal hearth, a monumental gateway matched to the age of flight.”⁵ The Boston Harbor project never became a reality, but nonetheless

served as a collaborative testing ground for the “research-based study” that Kepes proposed and the Center embodied. The question I will endeavor to answer here concerns the characteristics of this research-based study, or its underlying epistemological and ideological foundation. Ultimately, I will establish how Kepes’s Center presented a model of artistic research within the institutional confines of higher art education. In Kepes’s example of art as an academic subject, art and research became a matter of creative problem-solving in collaboration across disciplines. More tellingly, the way art-as-research was construed at MIT was indicative of an ideology, common in the post-war university, that knowledge is a force for guiding and developing nature seen as an “endless frontier.” Vannevar Bush’s report to the President in 1945, titled *Science, The Endless Frontier*, was the defining text of the postwar research university, and it promoted the idea that “basic” research, also referred to as “pure” or “fundamental” at the time, was the highest priority of the university researcher.⁶ By promoting a “pure” and “fundamental” knowledge, Bush’s report validated an institutional structure and set of relationships that have been characterized as a “fragile contract” between scientists and those that financially support their research, whether federally granted or philanthropic.⁷ More troubling ideologies lurk below this surface, but knowledge as primarily an objective, disembodied, propositional, cognitive, or mental pursuit characterize both the construction of research in the American university and at Kepes’s Center. In the process of fitting art into the university, The Center’s model of research reduced aesthetic experience to the visual alone, a paradigm that was actually being challenged by other forms of art and academic practice.

The Center at MIT exhibits common characteristics and presents several terms for consideration when beginning to examine art and the university, beginning with experience

and experimentation. If the Center was guided by a philosophy of knowledge, it was based on *visual* experience as the grounds for discovery. This was Kepes's aesthetic theory established in the *Language of Vision*, which sought fundamental principles of visual design in nature. Experience of this kind was the experience of scientific experimentation, where fundamental principles of nature could be discovered and tested. As the historian and philosopher E.A. Burt wrote, this focus on fundamental principles betrays a metaphysical position inherent in the tradition of science since Isaac Newton. In other words and in regards to Kepes, the discovery and use of visual fundamentals were to interpret humanity and nature as harmonious, stable, and whole and Kepes saw art's role as furthering the growth of modern industrial society in the image of this harmonious course. The next important characteristic of Kepes's project and the Center at MIT is an emphasis on creative problem-solving, which would align thinking and thought with educating the sensibilities to discover fundamental principles. When combined with collaboration, this was the major overlapping tenet of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies and the post-war research university. What was left out of this formation (that is, what was left out from Kepes's Center) was a model of thought and thinking that values the paradoxical, the irreconcilable, the sustained contradiction, or double bind. My contention in this chapter is that Kepes and the Center's definition of research and knowledge was determined by the scientific tradition (discovering fundamental principles through experimentation with an emphasis on the visible experience), and a demand from the knowledge complex (universities, federal government, and corporations that set the dominant cold-war agenda) that "creative problem-solving" was the key to uniting art and other disciplines in the university.

KEPES'S VISION—EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIMENTATION

It is possible to see Kepes as a great facilitator of collaboration and conversation. Whether in his edited books, symposia organized for MIT, or the Fellowship program that was the core of the Center, Kepes's career was focused on putting different disciplines from the university, mainly art and science, in conversation. For Kepes, the most important bridge was that between a rapidly industrializing modernity fueled by science and technology and the humanizing value of the arts (vision in particular). Creative innovation, as a form of knowledge acquisition that involved discovering basic principles and applying them, was the common method between art and science. Creativity was a way to underscore problem-solving, rather than disciplinary or methodological differences. In addition to serving as a methodological common ground between art and science, Kepes's creative innovation contained a philosophy of knowledge built on discovering fundamental principles of perception and applying them to humanity's progress. That is, Kepes was not working on the problems of science (e.g. physiological research into vision), but on how vision contributes to our knowledge of nature and the environment. Kepes's work was therefore humanistic in that it sought to interpret the world—humanity and nature—in a particular way, and yet, woven into the scientific pursuit of knowledge.

Kepes's philosophy of building bridges through collaboration was formed in the context of scientific research at MIT, but earlier experiences working in Moholy-Nagy's studio and at the New Bauhaus already introduced him to a fundamental tension that he spent his career trying to ameliorate. At times, Kepes would play both sides of the divide—for instance bringing skepticism towards the “mechanical ways” of the twentieth century when working with Moholy-Nagy⁸—but he began to see the role of the arts as ensuring that

a set of values drove scientific pursuits, hence the name of his publication series, “Vision and Value.” In his introduction for the first of the series, *Education of Vision*, perceptual qualities of light and color were mixed with value judgements (e.g. “cowardly in color”) to condemn the lack of “visual integrity” in the modern, technology-ridden society where “second nature” obscures the inherent structure and righteousness of nature itself.⁹ Visual phenomena were associated with a morality in which structure, order, and unity were of the highest value. Vision was both that which needed to be improved and that which would lead to the improvement of an increasingly technological society. Improving vision for Kepes did not mean physiological improvements to sight, but rather improving the relation between the formal properties of things seen and their psychological effects. An education in vision meant an advancement of the visual environment and its psychological effects towards the values of structure, order, and unity—values that would then be essential in guiding human interaction with the environment, with one another, and with oneself.

But crucially, this human interaction or the “social man” that Kepes thought would emerge once vision had been perfected was to emerge only later, in a distant future beyond the frontier of research. His work on the principles of design and perception, his exhibition projects, and even his plans for the Center were all predicated on the idea that the first task was to educate the mind, or more accurately the senses, to become attentive to potential problems. This was part of the subtle shift between Kepes and the earlier Bauhaus model. Kepes would work on educating the senses, as the cornerstone of creativity, to be put to use later. Art and design historian Anna Vallye has written about this as the “deferred social instrumentality” of Kepes’s project.¹⁰ Kepes’s distinction from Bauhaus figures like Moholy-Nagy and the early work of Walter Gropius occurs in two steps. First, Kepes looked

to the psychological effects of visual forms, rather than the material forms themselves, and consequently creative problem-solving became a matter of training students' creative senses. What problems might emerge or might deserve to be addressed were left unspoken, though Kepes certainly had a few ideas. First and foremost, Kepes was after values such as structure, order, and unity that he thought would provide an ideal combination of stability and freedom for a democratic society. As a refugee from Hungary during World War II, Kepes found himself invested in a U.S. national project within a global, cold war context. Vallye has pointed out that in addition to diverging from the Bauhaus model, Kepes's focus on the creative intellect (or training the senses, instead of the "whole man") also distinguished Kepes's views from the progressive education of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, which will play an important part in the following chapters.

The importance of structure, order, and unity in Kepes's visual epistemology is worth dwelling on critically. It was the focus of study in Reinhold Martin's *Organizational Complex*, which describes a discourse seeking to balance freedom and control that was used across the private and public sphere (e.g. in universities, corporations, and the federal government). "Organization" was supposed to be "natural" (i.e. independently produced) and yet stable and self-regulating. Martin places touchstones such as Norbert Wiener's *Cybernetics* (1948) and Marshal McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage* (1967), on equal footing with the concerns of art and aesthetics by looping in earlier figures of the avant-garde like Moholy-Nagy and Kepes. Martin suggests that Kepes saw the relationship between art and science as part of a feedback loop, in which "pure patterns in a natural world' are revealed to art by science, only to be fed back into science by art."¹¹ Martin here provides a take on how Kepes sought to bridge art and science. Instead of a humanizing or

value-producing role for art, Martin describes Kepes's bridge as one of mutual regulation. Seeing social life as part of an organized and "natural" structure, no matter how chaotic it appeared, was the mutual project Kepes sought for art and science; he reckoned, however, that modernity and city life in particular had obscured the human ability to *see* and take part in nature's self-regulating development. It is clear from study of Kepes's university-based practice that the self-regulating feedback loop of art and science was not about achieving stability or equilibrium with nature, but a steady advance of "natural history" with humanity in a guiding role.¹² Kepes's idea of this development was borrowed from Alfred North Whitehead, who thought of nature and humanity as united in a single organicism proceeding towards a more evolved state. The hints of this philosophy have led some scholars to conclude that Kepes was more interested in imbuing art with its own instrumental logic than demanding art play a humanizing role for science.¹³ Narrow critiques of instrumentality or art's subordinate role in relation to science, however, would obscure the way Kepes's lifework participated in the construction of humanistic "research" and the pursuit of knowledge as an interpretation of humanity and nature, the ideological implications of which demand to be scrutinized. Ultimately, Kepes's epistemology for art was hindered by appeals to what was deemed "natural" and faith in a future state of humanity that would grow stably and in harmony with nature, itself, and others. The deferral of this "social man" would prove a shortcoming of Kepes's project, and the Center in particular.

Most of the ideological foundations of Kepes's theory of vision had been laid down in *Language of Vision*, which combined Gestalt psychology with a set of tasks to be performed on nature and the environment. The tasks included first learning the laws of images from nature, reproducing and controlling those images, and then elaborating this

process by working with images as a language. The tripartite set of tasks was borrowed from the work of Charles Morris, the neo-pragmatist semiotician and University of Chicago professor whom Kepes came to know while teaching at the New Bauhaus.¹⁴ Morris's study of language was a combination of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy and Rudolf Carnap's propositional logic, whereby larger truths were established based on a series of basic propositions about one's experience. When adapting Morris's basic semantic schema, Kepes reduced experience to sense perception (primarily vision), isolating it from other forms of embodied, corporeal experience as well social interaction, and effectively reducing pragmatist and phenomenological influences on Morris's theory to assumptions about the physiological workings of sight and the Gestalt psychological principles of perception. Even though Kepes would use Gestalt psychology to shift attention to principles of perception rather than principles of material form, Kepes's focus on visual fundamentals overlaps with the Bauhaus model and also falls in line with the scientific tradition established by Isaac Newton, the underlying tenets of which was a discovery of basic laws (discovered through experimentation in the case of science). Visual experience was for Kepes what formal experimentation was for the tradition of modern science.

To dwell on this for a moment, Newton's scientific method became a new metaphysical position by default with important consequences for the humanities. As the intellectual historian E.A. Burtt argues, this was Newton's significant break from earlier figures of classical or medieval science, whose scientific discoveries came with explicit worldviews, mixing the study of nature with metaphysics.¹⁵ Newton, on the other hand, represented an early modern tendency to focus on incremental pieces of knowledge and the method by which they were obtained. Following Burtt's argument, looking for the laws of

nature, as Newton did, meant assuming that these were the organizing force of the world. While Newton was explicitly working against metaphysics, he nonetheless naturalized a metaphysical worldview that suggested nature and humanity were ordered by laws and principles at the level of observable phenomena. Furthermore, humanity could only come to know nature and itself by discovering those laws through experimentation. From then on, the pursuit of the truth became more important in philosophy than the scholastic tradition of reconciling contradictions according to various concerns like what was “useful” or what was “good.” Following Burt’s logic, Kepes also operates with certain metaphysical and humanistic assumptions despite the rather scientific way he approached his study of vision. These were in line with the research practices that became dominant in the post-war university. When Vannevar Bush described scientific research in the university as an “endless frontier” of knowledge, he continued the tradition of Newton by focusing on the frontier immediately ahead. What lies “beyond the frontier,” so to speak, is less important than what can be discovered in small, observable phenomena. While this might sound like an anti-metaphysical view, in that it is concerned first with what can be gleaned from the physically present, it assumes an order that emanates from laws in nature and a truth located in those principles. For Kepes, this amounted to a focus on the principles of perception and Gestalt psychology that would be necessary to harness for the education of the creative problem-solver in the future.

As Kepes’s visual epistemology grew from the *Language of Vision* to the establishment of the Center, it became hard to distinguish what made the research and study of visual art different from the natural sciences in his estimation. Sybil Moholy-Nagy pointed out and took issue with this elision in Kepes’s publication *The New Landscape in*

Art and Science, which announced Kepes's explicit attempt to bridge the work of art and science.¹⁶ It was an important step for Kepes in establishing a shared pursuit between art and science, to advance knowledge through research. Later with the establishment of the Center, a common aspect of university research would also include an emphasis on collaboration, but *The New Landscape* project began that work by building bridges between the two disciplinary pursuits, first as an exhibition in 1951 and then as a publication in 1956. The project posits that art and science share an understanding and pursuit of nature. This "new landscape" was to be found in what had previously been too small to see or invisible, a view now available because of scientific pursuits and new visual technologies. Images from the exhibition included microscopic, telescopic, stroboscopic and high-speed photographs, as well as x-ray, electronic and computer-generated images. The book that was published five years after the exhibition put these images side-by-side with photographs of artworks drawn from museum collections across the United States. Kepes's own text ran throughout the book, the major task of which was to treat visual evidence from natural science and art history with equal weight. Moholy-Nagy's review brings to light some of the larger stakes of Kepes's project as he settled into the research environment at MIT. She writes that "It is from the very incompatibility, from the vital antagonism of the objective disinterested scientific impetus and the subjective passionately partial artistic impetus that a culture receives its incentive to grow and deepen." The review also points out that the visual appearance of an artwork is often consciously created, whereas the visual appearance of images discovered under a microscope, for instance, are not. What this critique makes clear is that Kepes's epistemology, in an attempt to establish a shared mission with science, forfeits the conflictual and critical role that art has often played. Even leaving aside the

question of art and science's antagonistic relationship, in emphasizing the visual experience alone, Kepes's epistemology forfeits the capacity for art to stage a critical tension. Without a framework for staging such a tension, the utopian aspect of Kepes's epistemology remains rooted in the universalizing discourse of scientific categorization and problematic notions of what is "natural."

The role of vision in guiding the human-nature course was further developed in Kepes's work on light and cities. In an article published in *Daedalus* in 1959, "Notes on Expression and Communication in the Advancement of a City," Kepes rehearsed his theory, now aided by his work with Kevin Lynch from the planning department of MIT. Kepes stressed the expressive character of cities over functional design, giving credence to the idea that Kepes was, at least in his public scholarship, sincere in his commitment to a non-instrumental role for design at its most basic level. Following a logic familiar from the *Language of Vision*, Kepes first identifies the importance of reading the city symbolically. As theorized by Gestalt psychologists, Kepes suggests this is not a conscious reading, but one performed by vision and the psyche without a moment's thought.¹⁷ Next, he discusses the way symbols are juxtaposed in the city to reveal a larger relationship. In his example, the skyline towering over Central Park symbolizes the power of the city. Then, he stresses the importance of a city's distinct neighborhoods linked through transportation networks as an expression of diversity and social cohesion. After identifying parking and traffic as two automobile-related problems of the modern city that could use expressive design fixes, he focuses on the problem that was a preoccupation throughout his life: the creative use of light.

Light in the city was not just an untapped potential medium of creative expression, but a real tool that could be used to solve the problem of man's inability to see the structure and order of nature. In identifying a new "creative mentality" that could be used to meet this challenge, Kepes plotted a path for artistic knowledge between fine art as it was studied in the French Academy and craft or metier as it was passed down from guilds, the arts and crafts movement, and American industrialists. In addition to acquiring an aesthetic sensibility and technical know-how, Kepes proposed that this creative mentality required an awareness of the immediate problems in society. If art were to serve an instrumental role, it would not come through mastering tools and techniques, but through a somewhat vague notion of a creative mind, trained in the universities, of course, to identify and address problems. This was the main legacy of the Bauhaus that Kepes continued.

The work of charting a new course between fine and applied arts had already begun before the World War II, but the growth of the American university, and the research university in particular, marked a new kind of higher art education.¹⁸ After the war, American fine art academies and technical art schools, among other for-profit vocational and trade schools, rushed into a new set of university, governmental, and philanthropic relationships ready to take advantage of the GI Bill benefits. In order to do so, schools that had postsecondary, non-degree granting studio programs had to offer degrees and gain recognition by the regional, state, and professional accrediting organizations. In 1948, a new accrediting body was formed, the National Association of Schools of Design (NASD), with members from across the spectrum of independent fine art schools and university art departments. Excluded from membership were schools or departments "where art is taught merely for appreciation or as part of a liberal-arts program, and schools where skills alone

are taught.”¹⁹ The goal of the association was to improve professional and educational standards, and so a “school of design” was defined as “one offering education in the visual arts of such quality as to prepare its students for professional practice upon graduation.”²⁰ This middle ground between “mere appreciation” and skill was characterized by “professionalization” in a sort of vague sense that meant artists were entering into a new set of economic relationships along with the rest of the growing middle class.²¹ Of course, in the 1940s, manufacturing was still the economic engine of the U.S., but increasingly this would come to be reliant upon characteristics of a post-industrial economy, such as research and intellectual labor. In so far as “creativity” was being injected into general education, it was associated with an “eagerness to experiment” and most importantly with the capacity for problem-solving.²² Members of the Bauhaus, once in the U.S., were also instrumental in this transformation, as scholars have shown.²³ Whether art was part of revitalizing general education, or new university models were reconfiguring the education of artists, the main product of higher education during this period was “the professional” as creative problem-solver.

Kepes’s educational program at MIT reflected the new professional emphasis, but it was not a matter of imbuing architects with technical skills so much as it was turning them into creative problem-solvers, i.e. training their senses. Amongst his teaching notes, Kepes wrote “Architecture is made of architects—their vision, ability to form.”²⁴ Since Kepes was not a trained architect but hired to teach architects his principles of visual art, his courses and teaching notes point to the way the education of creative professionals was being transformed at the same time that creative problem-solving was given value within general education in the university. The brand of visual art that Kepes sought to institute was not

only important for architects but also built on the idea of the professional as a “full man sensitive to the issues of [the] present.”²⁵ This was the opposite of the “professional” as the vocational or skilled worker, who may know how to solve a problem but not identify one, and the academic who may identify a problem without knowing how to solve it.

To summarize the major aspects of Kepes’s epistemology, and to point out the way they participated in the developing ideological construct of research in the university, one could say that Kepes’s research operated with a certain romantic view of nature as ordered and full of potential. As part of that nature, an artist, architect, or designer’s potential was represented through creativity and creative problem-solving. The romance, for Kepes, was the somewhat utopian assumption that principles of vision and visual art, if discovered and elaborated, could guide the course of nature and human development. This is what has led scholars to describe the role of art at MIT as supplying “aesthetic virtue” or humanizing the technological research of scientists.²⁶ This is true in the sense that, in Kepes’s view, artists and architects (either ones trained in his classes to be creative problem-solvers, or ones brought to MIT through the Center and other exhibition projects) would solve problems not yet foreseeable by educating the senses of scientists along with the rest of humankind. However, Kepes’s projects up to and including the Center performed their own research, and thus participated in establishing order and structure (of nature, of the visual environment, of the human psyche, and hence of society) as the highest value. What seems to be left out, or at any rate deferred, was a framework for critical reflection beyond what could be gleaned from initial observations of fundamentals in nature.

In the sense that Kepes’s aesthetic theory treated art as the study of visual fundamentals and his educational practice was an attempt to supersede the Beaux-Arts and

applied arts rift, Siegfried Giedion was correct when he wrote in his introduction that *Language of Vision* was a continuation of the Bauhaus project.²⁷ But Kepes may have abandoned some aspects of Bauhaus education, shifting from the study of forms to the study of perception, while holding on to others, such as the emphasis on fundamentals. Although Kepes shifted his attention from the study of form to the study of perception and from the production of architecture to the production of architects, he also continued the tradition of creative problem-solving and innovation, only the real problems were to be solved in the unforeseeable future. Thus, his university practice did not break with the Bauhaus tenets of fundamental principles and innovation, even as he increasingly became focused on proposals and ideas that would never leave the page. Art, creativity, and humanistic pursuits were a key part of an arts education that sought to make higher education more than vocational training, but still a shaping of the professional man. Rather than a refinement of aesthetic taste or judgment, or an ability to resolve or live with contradictions, the new academic was meant to sharpen the mind and the senses through perception. Kepes's philosophy of aesthetics became an epistemological project as he continued to frame what could be known through the research of art, and what was ultimately at stake in researching it. While he considered his vision for the Center a matter of "creative expression," its real task was to "clear the way" for future fulfillment, a deferred dream of utopia, forever on the horizon.²⁸

A PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATION AND A MODEL FOR THOUGHT

In 1965, two years before the Center would finally open, Kepes made a case for the happy marriage of art and science that he sought. In his proposal for the Center penned in

1965, he continued the work of bridge-building that he had begun with the *New Landscape* exhibition, as well as his own research with light and city planning.²⁹ Kepes's projects discussed in the proposal serve as the concrete example of how artists can advance knowledge in their field. I have already examined the foundation of Kepes's epistemology and university practice, which focused on interpreting a human-nature relationship and framing art as creative problem-solving, but how did these take shape at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies and the work of its Fellows? By and large, these examples of artistic practice in the research university continue the project Kepes started—to advance an interpretation and approach toward nature and the environment. Collaboration would become another defining overlap with the characteristics of the post-war research university and the work of the Center. As a thinking model, or *Denkmodell* as Otto Piene would refer to it, the Boston Harbor project was a collaborative effort that ought also to be read as orchestrated by Kepes.³⁰ The Fellows would refer to the Boston Harbor project as Kepes's own, even though each had come up with individual proposals and none would ever be implemented. In some ways, thought and discussion *was* the work of the Boston Harbor project. In addition, collaboration was more than a methodology conveniently adapted from the research university. Rather, it was connected to the deeper implications of the Center's visual epistemology. The Center's physical environs in the remodeled Harvard Cooperative Society's store were designed around the function of collaborative work, what Kepes called "interthinking." Borrowed from Julian Huxley, "interthinking" was like the next stage in human evolution, where "interbreeding" had led to new species, "interthinking" would lead to evolution of the mind. At the Center, the orchestration of "interthinking" around collaborative projects was directed at a potential outcome on an evolutionary scale,

transforming the human as much as it might transform the physical environment of Boston or any other city. The Boston Harbor Project was meant to be the first project that the Fellows invited to the Center would work on together, but it would later be appreciated for its speculative character.

Before looking at some of the Fellow's proposals individually, it is important to frame the Boston Harbor project and the Center as a paradigmatic example of artistic research that grew out of Kepes's vision. The works that Kepes identified in his proposal for the Center were similar to what had always preoccupied him: utilizing the power of light to symbolize and transforming the visual environment of the city to match his interpretation of nature. His Charles Center Tower of Light, produced with the help of engineers for a plaza in Baltimore, was singled out in his proposal for its use of engineering advances, like stronger steel and high voltage lights, but also for its integration with its surroundings. Based on constantly changing patterns, Kepes compared the light tower to a central fireplace, a favorite analogy for his city light projects. This analogy would be replicated in the "focal hearth" planned for Boston Harbor. The symbolism of the fireplace or hearth, generally speaking, is built not only on patterns in a flickering flame that occur randomly and visually fascinate observers (according to Kepes), but also contains an underlying social symbolism of belonging. Kepes's central focus was to replicate this on a city-wide scale, where the sense of belonging one gets from a family at home or a group of friends around a campfire is expanded to entire urban populations. In the city of Boston, however, integration was easier symbolized than done. The need for such a unifying force was real enough, given the turmoil of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, though never articulated by Kepes in

more than vague terms about living in a “time of crisis” or in a time of environmental denigration.

In fact, the lack of specificity about *which* problems Kepes’s projects were meant to solve should give one pause. Kepes identified time and time again the way humanity’s place in nature was being forgotten, overlooked, or lost, without much connection to other social problems of the postwar/cold war period. In recalling his arrival to the city of Chicago, he referred to his time on the south side of Chicago where the New Bauhaus and IIT were located. Shocked that such poverty could exist alongside such wealth in an American city, it is not hard to imagine that racial segregation played an unspoken role in Kepes’s conclusion that American cities felt divided, in need of some symbolic integration. Witnessing poverty and unfair segregation at the end of the Depression era, Kepes referred to the south side as a “Dante’s *Inferno*” he would never forget.³¹ In his later article describing the way one should read the “symbolic structure” of a city, Kepes focused on the way constituent neighborhoods are bounded but connected together through transportation networks. Here one could imagine any trip Kepes took through segregated Chicago as an opportunity to identify a problem in the symbolic expression of the city. He notes the way “a well-harmonized basic spatial pattern can be greatly helpful in manipulating group life, mixing people, or keeping them separated, as necessary.”³² After this nod to the way cities contribute to social stratification, he shifts to the way space and light can be used to symbolize the relationship between humans and nature and goes on to describe the way the expression of the city must remind man of his place in nature, “to borrow as much as possible from nature to make urban life acceptable.”³³ At a time when racial ideologies mixed with scientific ones to define what was “natural” (in eugenics, for example), the very use of the term cannot be left

unscrutinized. It is not my intention here to fault Kepes's work for having certain preoccupations over others, but his focus on the lack of human-nature integration comes at the expense of any attention to the social divisions, such as racial segregation, and an assumption that certain problems were universally more important than others.

The criticism might seem out of context if it were not indicative of a larger rift between the Center at MIT and the countercultural movements whose sentiments Kepes tried to make use of. In an article for *ArtsCanada* characteristically titled "The Lost Pageantry of Nature," Kepes not only outlined his own parameters for the Boston Harbor project but also shared some of the proposals from the Fellows. With the Center in general and the Boston Harbor project in particular, Kepes aimed to take on "the need to rebuild, clean and enrich the chaotic, polluted, and impoverished environment so that it will evoke a constructive response from all citizens."³⁴ He immediately aligned this task with the aims of disgruntled young people in 1968, which he characterized as seeking "to straighten, clean, and replenish twisted, fake, and hollow personal lives."³⁵ While such a characterization of the counterculture was not entirely inaccurate, it certainly excised the goals connected with civil rights and militarization during the cold war that were exemplified by Students for a Democratic Society or even protests that would hit MIT in the following year.³⁶ Kepes instead wanted the Boston Harbor project to focus on revitalizing a "nature" that had been lost while naturalizing group identity and the urban landscape, not to mention the painting of Seurat and the custom of taking Sundays off for leisure.³⁷ Design parameters for the project written by Kepes indicated that he wanted it to draw on motifs of nature, perhaps marking lunar time alongside weekends and civic holidays; use light to give a new aesthetic dimension to the city and pattern to suggest part-whole relationships; give dignity to man

over machines; and involve the play instinct to invoke freedom.³⁸ The proposals that followed did not necessarily fulfill all of these requirements, but each artist used Kepes's parameters as a menu and generated ideas in line with their own sensibilities.

One proposal that appeared in the *ArtsCanada* article bears the name of Kepes, with photos by Nishan Bichajian. *Caustic Curves* was a proposal for a group of light-reflecting buoys to be floated out in the harbor, each containing a hemisphere that would be controlled or directed. Light directed at the buoys would be reflected off of their curved surfaces and become visible in the air above the harbor wherever two or more beams of light intersected with one another. Water would have to be sprayed into the air to act as a receiving surface for the projected light, but the illusion would be that of an animated light pattern, similar to shining a bright light through curved glass onto a reflective surface. The photographs that demonstrate the effect of caustic curves are not really drawings or diagrams for the piece, but rather examples of the common optical effect. As such, their forms are irrelevant, standing in for any number of caustic curve arrangements that could be made from the piece. They do exhibit, nonetheless, the kind of formal composition—balanced, rhythmic and organic—that Kepes schematized in *Language of Vision*. One may be reminded, by the technique of the photographs, of other camera-less works: the photograms of Moholy or the Rayographs of Man Ray. The curves themselves, determined by naturally occurring phenomena, might also be reminiscent of Man Ray's *Mathematical Objects*, which were not photograms (that is, not camera-less) but photographs of three-dimensional models of trigonometric equations taken from a school of mathematics. The curving and intersecting planes of Man Rays *Objects*, however, are carefully lit, framed and re-photographed to appear uncanny, as if part of the human anatomy or some other vaguely recognizable,

sinister yet organic form. Kepes's *Caustic Curves*, by contrast, elicit another view of the natural world, not uncanny, not sinister, not existentially threatening, but harmonized through formal principles of line, shape, and balanced composition.

The proposals that appeared in *ArtsCanada* and other publications of the Center act as Bichajian's photos for *Caustic Curves*: illustrative and exemplary but not diagrammatic. The diagram, as David Joselit describes, emerged as a formal strategy in key Dadaist works of Duchamp and Picabia, but dealt with a certain incommensurability between what could be known through the visual and what could be known through the word or text. Although Joselit uses the term "diagram" in order to locate the emergence of this strategy in certain types of machine drawings, it can also be applied to works that stage an "epistemological crisis" (Joselit's phrase) between word and image. It is especially useful as a concept when considering how artists responded not only to new modes of production under modernity, such as new machinery, but to the increasing importance of knowledge and information within those modes of production. American postwar research universities such as MIT were, in fact, a primary marker of that historical trend. As a strategy that sought to produce a critical tension between different modes of thought, the diagrammatic stands in opposition to the kind of *Denkmodell* that was the Boston Harbor project. It should come as no surprise that, despite the fact that Kepes was invested in a visual language, the central project of the Center should be focused far more on elevating the epistemology of the visual than confusing or confronting it with the textual. In other words, Kepes's "language of vision" and his attempt to put visual art on par with scientific research was not built on the kind of crisis of meaning that Dada staged when combining words and images. Joselit describes two ways that the diagrammatic was deployed in Dada. The first is best exemplified by Marcel

Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915-1923) with its counterpart in *The Green Box* (1934), which contains notes describing the thought process behind the work. As a textual version of the same piece and not merely a supplement, *The Green Box* works together with *The Large Glass* to mark two poles, the image and the text, between which one's experience of the piece can shift. As a strategy that can also play out on the same visual surface or semiotic plane, "the diagrammatic" operates within the panes of the *Large Glass*, too. This second type of diagram, Joselit explains, is also exemplified by the machine drawings of Francis Picabia, Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, in which the distinction between text and image is blurred on the same surface, and thus one's "reading" must shuttle between the visual and textual.³⁹ The *Caustic Curves* illustrations do not operate as text pointing to a corresponding visual experience (as Duchamp's *Green Box* does), nor allow a reader to switch between the conceptual experience of words and the visual experience of line, shape, texture, and composition on the surface of the image (as *The Large Glass* does). Instead, *Caustic Curves* demonstrates principles, i.e. properties of light and visual fundamentals of "good" design.

While the diagrammatic offers an alternative way to see thought and thinking processes, in which one oscillates or shuttles between competing modes of knowledge, the Center was not set up to engender such modes of thought through art. Some of the Fellows proposals illustrate this better than others. Piene's own "list of suggestions," not exactly a proposal, stands out by its sheer excessiveness (14 ideas in total, with the last one "any combination thereof"). Piene's ideas mostly revolved around making the tallest beam of some kind or another: a light beam, a beam of water, steam, a giant flame. Other ideas include a floating island of "millions of birds" and a "fun vessel" equipped for "any

performance conceivable.” The spirit of this list reflects the monumentality of Piene’s other works carried out at the Center and the sense of pageantry and play that Kepes prescribed in his article. Working with a team of engineers at MIT, Piene had begun working on large-scale inflatable sculptures that were also essentially giant beams, or tubes in this case, that arched across the sky. These works might be read for their performative or collective dimensions since they required a team of people to get off the ground, but they offer very little besides a celebration of man’s control over the elements, the ability to control them and shoot them into the air at great heights. It is worth considering these proposals for the way in which they carry out the mission of the Center and extend the life of Kepes’s epistemological project for artistic research. In other words, some projects of the Fellows continue to exhibit the worldview that research in the arts should discover fundamentals of visual perception that can be harnessed for guiding humankind’s development in harmony with nature. Paying attention to some of these projects should help to see the paradigm that was being established and then contested at the Center.

Piene’s spectacles are similar to Harold Tovish’s proposed Harbor project, “Spectacle for a Summer Night,” but Piene’s beams also become symbolic in a way that resonates with Kepes’s epistemology slightly better. Tovish’s “Spectacle,” a twenty-minute event, is ephemeral and simple, playful but full of pathos. A 50- or 100-foot balloon is rapidly inflated in the water and lit with pulsing strobes. Once it has reached full form, it is deflated even more rapidly by some means or another, “Possibly, a few men in rowboats could shoot flaming arrows to do the job.”⁴⁰ One can imagine the pulsing strobes turning the whole event into a kind of animation or live film as flashes from the strobe freeze-frame the action. Rather than a spectacle that plays out clearly before one’s eyes, light mediates the

event, setting it at a distance and slicing it into fragments of time. A narrative and an allegory are made by blowing up a giant balloon and popping it, where the destruction or collapse is the ultimate resolution. Not only does it suggest a collapse to follow from rapid expansion, it also invites mythic interpretations with the possibility that a team of men in rowboats might hunt the expanding form with flaming arrows, Captain Ahab after the white whale of technology. At the very least Tovish's spectacle invites narrative readings and creates a fragmented experience of the spectacle, where Piene's relies on the visual awesomeness of "the tallest (fill in the blank) ever."

In a later essay for one of the Center's planned publications, Piene would emphasize the way his balloon works made themselves "visually available" to the viewers, rather than simply "visible."⁴¹ Piene's beams of light, water, steam, or hot air balloons rely on the kind of visually striking gestalt that Kepes had written about in his work on cities. One of Kepes' favorite examples was the cathedral overlooking the medieval city, where the power of the Church was represented through the act of symbolically and literally overlooking the city's inhabitants. Through a part-to-whole relationship, the cathedral united the apparently scattered pattern of the medieval city. Although the modern North American city may not have this same scattered pattern, the beams of Piene attempted to create a visual whole simply through working on an enormous scale and by mastering the elements, visually represented with the rather phallic "beam" that can be seen from great distances. The only image presented with Piene's list of suggestions for *ArtsCanada* is a found photograph from Spain in 1964. A giant funnel cloud or tornado threatens a harbor with the masts of ships dwarfed by the towering force of nature. Kepes might have agreed with Piene that the spirit of the Harbor project was one of generosity, to make something "available" rather than

threatening, but this shows the Center's rosy outlook, if not its downright naivety, about how their projects would be received.

A major turning point for the Center revolved around its next collaborative project, this time realized as an exhibition. Invited in 1969 to represent the United States at the 10th São Paulo Biennial, Kepes and the Center would draw controversy over their participation, and eventually withdraw. Despite Kepes's efforts to frame the Center's participation as critical of the dictatorial government in Brazil, the withdrawal of nine artists (some Fellows at MIT, others invited by Kepes) made the project untenable in Brazil. Meanwhile, that same year, the campus and the scientific community were protesting MIT's complicity in the production of military technology, and artists were growing skeptical of the art and technology marriage. Given that Kepes had succeeded in getting public support for participation in the Biennial, as John Blakinger's research has shown,⁴² the withdrawal of several artists, including Hans Haacke, Jack Burnham, and Harold Tovish was likely rooted in a deeper suspicion of the Center's central tenets. The exhibition, titled *Explorations*, would go forward at MIT and the Smithsonian's National Collection of Fine Arts with the participation of some who had threatened to withdraw, and Kepes would try to redeem his vision of the Center from this point on as a project for civic art.

By 1974, the last year he would remain Director of the Center, Kepes was still trying to clarify for the public some of its central tenets. In a book tentatively titled *Public Art*, all of the key ideas from Kepes's tenure as Director would be brought together. This was to be a book not about the Center, "but rather a fundamental clarification of the ideas that motivate the work of the Center."⁴³ As such, it would include an introductory essay collaged together by Kepes from the *ArtsCanada* article, the *Explorations* catalog, the Center's

dedication booklet and some new material.⁴⁴ It would also include essays and illustrations of projects by artists, both Fellows at the Center and others whose works Kepes simply felt were sympathetic. An early outline for the publication includes three main sections, one on “artistic tasks for a new environmental scale,” one on “artistic tasks in a new social environment,” and one on the “nature of collaboration between artists, and between artists and scientists.”⁴⁵ It is worth noting how the outline for the book re-aligns Kepes’s original proposal for the Center, if only slightly. Three areas of exploration that Kepes had initially proposed for the Center included light, environmental art, and graphic communication; in the 1974 proposed publication, these areas of exploration are de-emphasized in favor of the larger tasks that Kepes thought artists faced for engaging in civic art. In the original proposal for the Center, Kepes summarized the Center’s aim to make artists sensitive to larger scale projects, to collaborate with architects, scientists, engineers, and city planners, and to learn how to work with new technology.⁴⁶ In the outline for the book in 1974, Kepes’s emphasis on environmental scale and collaboration remained, while replacing the emphasis on technology with concern for the “social environment.” What this actually meant in the context of the Center, however, was extremely limited, given the alternatives that had begun to emerge.

SYSTEMS AESTHETICS AND SYSTEMS IN CRISIS

Ted Kraynick and Jack Burnham, already in their proposals for the Boston Harbor, began to stretch the epistemological foundation of Kepes’s Center through an engagement with the invisible systems of the city. Kraynick’s proposal, *Synergic Light Buoys*, was for a 11x11 grid of floating buoys like pillars or masts of ships floating in the harbor, each one a

light-emitting pole. Compared to Piene's beams, these are relatively modest in size and arranged together to form a group. Describing the city as an "organic entity," Kraynick imagined the piece would be like an indicator of the city's activities: telephone usage, electrical usage, and perhaps transportation usage. As measurements of the city's activities in different areas are fed into the sculpture, the lights on different poles rise and fall, "creating a sort of topographical three-dimensional map."⁴⁷ The map, however, is of the communications and transportation flow in the city, and thus Kraynick's sculpture works less with the visual environment than with a systems-oriented conception of the city as a network of flowing information. While clearly space was made at Kepes's Center for the emergence of such systems-based conceptions of the environment or cityscape, it is somewhat cordoned off from the initial impetus of Kepes's Harbor project. Kepes himself had written in his "Notes on Expression and Communication in the Cityscape" that the communication network was less "symbolically significant," and that "on a visual level, the transportation network as a whole becomes increasingly conceptual, a question of cartography abstracted from immediate visual legibility."⁴⁸ For Kepes, this was a drawback in taking the network or systems-oriented approach to conceiving of civic art projects. It is telling that he contrasts the "conceptual" approach to conceiving of the city with the more "significant" approach of making something "visually legible." Visual legibility, in the sense that a work's meaning could be understood upon sight and relied primarily on perceptual effects for its symbolism, was preferred over works whose meaning and significance required further knowledge beyond the visual, such as what was causing lights to rise and fall or patterns to emerge.

The difference between these two approaches is the fulcrum of a critique of the Center on aesthetic terms, and it was Burnham's involvement with the Center that highlights this critique best. Burnham's proposal for the Boston Harbor, *Plug-In* was integrated with the existing function of the harbor as a flight path for airplanes landing in Boston. Using electroluminescent tapes made by the Sylvania Corporation, Burnham's project was to extend the landing strip of Logan International Airport into the harbor. Highlighting the Harbor as a point of entry, and as a space that already had a symbolically important function, Burnham's piece would have added very little in terms of "symbolic significance" or "visual legibility." In addition to differences in approach, Burnham and Kepes had a real falling out over the São Paulo exhibition, which Burnham claims led Kepes to instruct Sylvania to cut off his supply of tapes.⁴⁹ This proved to be no real loss for Burnham, who moved increasingly away from art production and towards criticism and scholarship.

Although Burnham was trained as a sculptor, he stopped producing artwork around the time he went to the Center. His attention was focused instead on critical and theoretical analysis, and he was the critic most associated with the work of the artist Hans Haacke before art historian Benjamin Buchloh usurped that role.⁵⁰ Haacke, in fact, attributes his early interest in systems analysis to Burnham and their early friendship.⁵¹ Art historian Luke Skrebowski attempted to "recover" both Haacke and Burnham's "systems aesthetics" in tandem, arguing that a simplification of the relationship between art and technology has overdetermined the familiar reading of their work as marked by a turn away from technophilia.⁵² However, Skrebowski's recovery stops short of unpacking the significance of Burnham's conflictual relationship with the Center. Contextualizing "systems aesthetics" within the research program of the Center, Burnham's articulation of an aesthetic theory (to

be found in Haacke's work as a prime example) exemplifies what was left out of the Center's conception of artistic research. The systems aesthetics of Burnham was premised on putting competing modes of knowledge—i.e. other senses, social contexts, abstractions of data and mathematics—in tension with what was visible. As I hope to draw out here, Burnham's systems aesthetics casts the Center's brand of university practices into sharp relief.

Burnham would go on to play an important role in the history of Conceptual Art. After leaving the Center, Burnham's exhibition for the Jewish Museum entitled *Software, Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art* brought together artists who embodied his idea of a systems-oriented art that would replace the art object. The exhibition was billed as a response to the Museum of Modern Art's 1968 exhibition *The Machine at the End of the Mechanical Age*, but that year, 1970, it nearly coincided with the Museum of Modern Art's seminal Conceptual Art exhibition curated by Kynaston McShine, titled *Information*. Burnham's exhibition stood somewhere in between, making a connection between Conceptual Art and information technology. Burnham's systems aesthetics, articulated in his exhibition and writings, was an explicit theory for a new art that complicated the symbolic, visual legibility of Piene and Kepes by pairing it with other invisible systems.⁵³ While Burnham was focusing on software as a model for his idea of systems aesthetics, Kepes was committed to the "hardware" that was the visually legible environment of the city. As discussed in the opening of this chapter, to say that Kepes was focused on the hardware of the visual environment, however, is not to say that he was interested in a material or pragmatic aesthetics, or even concerned with form itself so much as its perceptual and

psychological effect. So what distinguishes the research-based practice of Kepes, and that of Burnham's system aesthetics?

In one of Kepes's outlines for his proposed book on public art, after the phrase "Technical social aspects" appears a reference to "Burnham's system article."⁵⁴ Despite disagreement over the São Paulo participation, Kepes clearly saw Burnham's work on systems aesthetics as coextensive with the mission of the Center.⁵⁵ A later outline for the same publication does not include Burnham in the list of participating contributors, but the reasons for Burnham's excision are unclear.⁵⁶ If Kepes did seek to include Burnham in the publication, it would not be the first time that Kepes would reach out to those with whom he had had public disagreements. Even after Robert Smithson very firmly declined Kepes's São Paulo invitation, he later agreed to participate in the final publication of the Vision and Value series titled *Arts of the Environment*. Reinhold Martin has keenly read the push and pull between Kepes and Smithson as a result of Smithson's attempt to get at "organicism's other," or the inverse of Kepes's interpretation of nature as a self-organizing, harmonious development.⁵⁷ As it concerns Burnham, the distinction with Kepes must be drawn along a different axis. If Burnham's systems aesthetics fit into the Center's program as late as 1974, when Kepes was organizing his book on public art, it was due to a shared concern with self-organizing systems, natural or computer-driven; the distinction, however, would concern Burnham's rejection of the *visible* in isolation from other modes of meaning-making, such as language and information. Burnham would be drawn increasingly towards the variety of epistemological systems exemplified by Duchamp's *Large Glass* and *Green Box*. Duchamp was already on Burnham's mind when conceiving of systems aesthetics, but it wasn't until the summer of 1971 that he began to read Duchamp's oeuvre for its arcane and esoteric

references. By 1980, Burnham was a full-blown art and technology skeptic, calling it “the panacea that failed,”⁵⁸ but Burnham’s systems aesthetics had already taken leave of the Center when he began to write about the paradigm shift that was taking place with what he termed “post-formalist” art of the 1960s.

Burnham would reject the work that he saw as “formalist,” meaning work that was concerned primarily with its visual effects. In his 1968 article “Systems Aesthetics,” to which Kepes’s outline may very well refer, he writes, “the idea that art could ‘beautify’ or even modify the environment was naive,” instead arguing that works utilizing light or kineticism have only succeeded where they have pointed away from their visual effects.⁵⁹ For Burnham, works that were overly “formalist” meant that they relied too heavily on their visual appearance for their significance. He reads the Minimalist works of Robert Morris, Donald Judd, and Carl Andre for their engagement with the social systems of production, and distinguishes Dan Flavin’s use of light from others’ who “fabricate light sculptures – as if *sculpture* were the primary concern.”⁶⁰ These works were prototypes for what Burnham saw as a shifting concern away from the product and towards the production process, which he saw less as a matter of artistic craft or *métier* and more as a matter of designing, evaluating, altering, and setting the boundaries of a system, defined as a “complex of components in interaction.”⁶¹ Burnham pinpointed the fact that the L-shaped forms of Morris or the boxes of Judd could be industrially produced without compromising their status as art objects, or that Andre’s floor pieces could be experienced kinesthetically and that Flavin’s light installations were reliant on their context rather than their visual appearance. These examples all share a reliance on processes, other senses, or contexts beyond the visual properties of the work. It is no surprise that Kepes and Burnham would

come together around systems, but it seems they drift apart where those systems extend beyond the visible arrangement of patterns and point towards competing systems of knowledge. Although Burnham's article starts off with an interest in introducing virtually *any* other kind of somatic experience or knowledge of process into tension with the visual experience of an artwork, Burnham's systems aesthetics increasingly pointed towards knowledge of a social totality, starting with production processes and institutional contexts.

If Minimalist sculpture was prototypical, the conceptual work of Haacke was a more exemplary form of Burnham's systems aesthetics. Burnham writes, "Formalist art embodies the idea of deterministic relations between a composition's visible elements. But since the early 1960s, Hans Haacke has depended upon the invisible components of systems."⁶² The salient difference between Burnham's systems aesthetics and the aesthetics of the Center was not only a rejection of the visible in favor of the other senses, however. Some of Kepes's works and proposals for public art projects integrated sound with the visual experience of the city environment. In *Flame Orchard* (1972), for example, a work Kepes produced in collaboration with Mauricio Bueno and Paul Earl, sound was actually used to produce movement in the flickering flames as they emanated out of a controlled gas pipe that was also producing heat. In another proposal for a *Sound Oasis* (1972), which Kepes designed with James Taggart, a series of noise-reducing "fins" arranged in a circular pattern would provide a deadened acoustic environment in the middle of the city, an escape from noise-pollution.⁶³ Other works to be included in the public art book, from Fellows like Maryanne Amacher and Charles Frazier for example, also worked with sound and immersive environments that created experiences more than visual environments. The importance of reaching beyond the "visible elements of composition" towards the "invisible

elements of systems,” was not about rejecting the visual as such, but about throwing all sense experience into crisis by recognizing the way visual art was deeply imbricated, and often in conflict, with existing social and epistemological systems.

Haacke’s work with systems does more than disappear into the invisible systems surrounding production, distribution, and viewing of art work. In the recent scholarly efforts to revisit Burnham’s system aesthetics, by Skrebowski and others, Haacke’s work is more contested than that of Les Levine, for example, even though Burnham calls Levine’s work more consistently systems oriented.⁶⁴ The reasons for this, I would argue, is that Haacke’s work points to a more productive tension between epistemological systems—i.e. between what is visible in an art object and what is invisible in the social and political totality surrounding it. Furthermore, Haacke’s work also redeems Burnham’s systems aesthetics, wresting it free from the technophilic and technologically determinist concern with self-regulating systems and the naive assumption that systems are neutral or value-free.⁶⁵ First, Haacke’s works exist simultaneously within two systems at once, the system defined by the traditions and expectations of the art world *and* those that Burnham recognizes as invisible. His pieces for the Software exhibition, *News* (1969-1970) and *Visitors’ Profile* (1970), emphasize this aspect of Haacke’s oeuvre. *News* was a series of five teletype machines arranged in a straight row, with obvious allusions to the boxes and primary forms of Minimalist sculpture. Each machine was hooked up to a different commercial wire service and constantly printed the incoming information on reams of printer paper. Filling the exhibition space with the material (paper) and information (news), the piece draws attention to its existence in the space of an art exhibition by allusion to the sculptural practices of the 1960s but also performs with exaggeration an otherwise text-based function: delivering the

news. One can either treat *News* as news or as art; or as Burnham's exhibition does, one can hold that distinction in tension.

In *Visitors' Profile*, a work that was actually out of order during the *Software* exhibition due to computer trouble, Haacke intended to stage a poll where visitors to the exhibition would be asked a series of questions pertaining to their demographics (age, sex, education, and income) and their opinions on different subjects. This information would then be processed and re-presented by the computer, as both a print-out and a large projection, cross-referencing the demographic data with the opinions of visitors. This kind of poll would have offered a statistical picture of the exhibition visitors, projected for all to see and contained as a set of data. Moreover, the work may have drawn attention to any demographic similarities amongst visitors to the exhibition; before even considering how this translates into political opinions, *Visitors' Profile* pointed to the way exhibitions and their viewers are located within a system of social stratification according to age, sex, income, and education.

The next work that Haacke would attempt along these lines was the better-known *MoMA Poll* (1970) for the McShine exhibition of the same year. Instead of depending on a computer to process the results, however, *MoMA Poll* used two ballot boxes and a simple yes or no question. The single question, "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?" focused attention on the issue of militarization, but did not provide the same insights on the demographic representation of museum visitors. In works like these from Haacke, the visual and the statistical provided an experience of two epistemological systems held in suspense, stimulating thought not as a problem-solving process, but as a

confrontation between seeing and (in this instance) counting. Crucially, these ballot boxes were clear, allowing viewers to see how many votes had been cast. Although the ballots were also counted with a light sensor, visitors could gauge the audience's relative opinion by seeing about how many ballots were cast for each. Curiously, by the same gestalt principle that so attracted Kepes, one could see without counting exactly which opinion a majority of museum visitors held, and thereby obtain a profile of the typical museum visitor. For Kepes, however, the gestalt principles of psychology were used to visually symbolize a totality that was modeled in nature, whereas for Haacke and Burnham's system aesthetics the totality signified in the works was a political and social totality that required critical attention beyond what any appeal to nature could provide. *Visitors Profile* and *MoMA Poll* both pointed out, then, just how visual and aesthetic principles could be combined with those conceptual systems that Kepes saw as too abstract to be significant (i.e. the social and political systems that were imbricated with art, culture, and the visual environment).

Numerology, alchemy, and the Kaballah increasingly occupied Burnham's thoughts on the meaning of art in society. Instead of bracketing off this later period of thought from Burnham's systems aesthetics, I see the real value of Burnham's later work (vis-à-vis Kepes's Center) in his use of confounding and competing systems of knowledge to understand the same objects. Chief among those objects were the *Large Glass* and the *Green Box* of Duchamp. In a key interview with Willoughby Sharp, Burnham signaled the importance of this work already in his *Software* exhibition, letting it slip that he originally conceived the show according to the composition of the *Large Glass*. Works dealing with computers and technology were staged on the first two floors, and works of Conceptual art with a more ephemeral presence on the third, corresponding to the appearance of scissors,

grinders, and other machines in the bottom pane of Duchamp's glass, and more abstract imagery in the top. It may be, then, that Burnham's reading of the *Large Glass* and the *Green Box* are a cipher for what was arguably his most important contribution to the practice of art at the end of the 1960s. Without space for detailed discussion of the competing systems of knowledge that Burnham would later take up in reading Duchamp, suffice it to say Burnham's interest in Duchamp's *Large Glass* was with the way it staged one system of knowledge within and against another.

In simplified terms, Burnham read Duchamp's piece as both an allegory for the end of art, and as a work of non-art. When pressed to explain how Duchamp's work could function as non-art when it was made with artistic intention, Burnham relies on Levi-Strauss to claim that Duchamp "culturalizes the cultural," but his earlier reference to Bertrand Russell probably makes his point more sharply.⁶⁶ In Russell's paradox—a famous problem in mathematics, logic, and analytic philosophy—propositional logic breaks down when one propositional function is applied recursively and comprehensively. To briefly explain, Russell's paradox emerges in set theory, which is based on a foundational rule (called the comprehension axiom) that a set is formed when a common property is defined. An example of the comprehension axiom would be, all *things* which have the property of *a teacup* make up the *set of all teacups*. Ideas, numbers, or abstractions of language can also be grouped into sets, which means some sets include themselves and some sets don't. For instance, the *set of all ideas* would include the idea of such a set (in this example, a set and an idea are synonymous). While some sets, such as the set of all teacups, cannot contain themselves (because an idea such as the *set of all teacups* is not itself a teacup), other sets, such as the set of all ideas, can contain themselves (because the set of all ideas is also an idea). The

paradox arises when trying to devise a set of all sets that don't include themselves. If such a set does not include itself then it should be contained within itself, an obvious contradiction. Russell once illustrated this with a story of a barber who, one can imagine, lives in some small town in the English countryside: "You can define the barber as 'one who shaves all those, and those only, who do not shave themselves'. The question is, does the barber shave himself?"⁶⁷ A contradiction arises because the barber can only be defined as such if he shaves those who do not shave themselves; and yet, if he does not shave himself, he must be shaved by the barber (himself). Burnham refers to the true-false propositions of Russell to indicate that the *Large Glass* is both a work of art and a work of non-art in the sense of Russell's paradox: it is an artwork that seeks to exclude itself from the category of artworks. In the comparison that Burnham makes to Duchamp's *Large Glass*, making an artwork that claims not to be art is like creating a set of all sets that do not include themselves, an obvious contradiction.

Burnham's reading relies on the iconography Duchamp employed, divided between the bottom and top panes of the glass. The "bride stripped bare" is depicted in the top pane, which Burnham reads as the fate of modern art, with "her bachelors" depicted below. The bachelors, Burnham writes, are "the patriarchal element, the elements of reason, progress, male dominance."⁶⁸ Burnham reads the work of Duchamp as a statement about the fate of art being "stripped bare" by instrumental reason, *and* an enactment of the exact opposite, a holdout against this supposedly inevitable fate. The *Software* exhibition not only re-staged an antagonism between the machine-heavy works and those of Conceptual artists like John Baldessari and Joseph Kosuth, but it also staged the epistemological crisis at the heart of Duchamp's work as Burnham saw it: an irreconcilable contradiction between different ways

of knowing. Burnham used the analogy of software to underline a basic commonality that blurred art and non-art. In the catalog for the exhibition he writes, “Any ‘art’ that transpires—if such a term is needed—is the direct result of interaction between the computer’s software and the ‘program’ (behavioral idiosyncrasies) of a human being.”⁶⁹ The machines themselves are not the key to the analogy, but rather the propositional functions that exhibit the rules of systems (or sets). I take this to mean that Burnham was less concerned with an antagonism between machinery, instrumental reason, or techno-fetishism on the one hand and art forms that would critique such rationality on the other, but with staging such critical tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes that were not so easily reconciled.

The interview ends with Sharp’s question to Burnham, “Do you see art dissolving into nothingness in the near future?” and Burnham’s response, “No, it’s dissolving into comprehension.”⁷⁰ The significance of this reply for an epistemology of systems aesthetics relies on the dual meaning of the word “comprehension.” As it is used in the comprehension axiom, it refers to a state where all things belong to the same set. In its more quotidian use, it refers to the act or capability of understanding. In invoking “comprehension” as the fate of art, Burnham may or may not have realized at the time the paradox bound to follow, but it remains there nonetheless.

CONCLUSION

I’ve finished with an account of Burnham’s systems aesthetics using Russell’s paradox, but other theoretical models would also fit the case. For example, Burnham engaged briefly with the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, critiquing his inability to see certain

systems-oriented works for how well they fit within his theory of aesthetics and social change.⁷¹ Other concepts may be just as useful for describing the kind of epistemology or epistemological crisis that I see at the heart of Burnham's conflict with the Center. It is characterized as a mode of thought that reconciles or sustains contradictions where appropriate, lives with paradox if necessary, but finds a way to exist nonetheless. It is in the face of these types of critical tensions and contradictions that alternatives to Kepes's model for artistic research emerged.

The Center for Advanced Visual Studies was built on a certain worldview where basic research was meant to, someday, lead to a new type of professional architect, artist, or designer, and new "social man." Whereas some artistic strategies held epistemological systems in tension with one another—as in the visual and textual components of the same work—the Center's projects sought to demonstrate harmony, control, structure, and order derived from nature and applied to a new social organization (although this new social organization was always beyond the frontier). The Center's focus on this horizon, supported by Kepes's visual epistemology and worldview, was at the heart of all its collaborative projects.⁷² With certain kinds of knowledge in a constant state of deferral (knowledge of the social totality, for instance), one is left with a pairing of humanistic and scientific knowledge oriented towards an endless frontier, or a "focal hearth" for the Boston Harbor that never comes to pass.

If the Center was built on this foundation of university research, plenty of examples within the university began to break this down much earlier than 1967. In his article, Burnham calls the Happenings of Allan Kaprow "tangential to this systems approach."⁷³ If that was the case, they were also "tangential" to the aesthetics of Kepes and the Center in

their attempt to align aesthetic experience with the work of the university as early as 1958; however, where Kepes and the Center re-inscribed an earlier alliance between art and science into the research university, Kaprow and others began the work of opposing this new academicism from within, which is where the next chapter picks up.

¹ Donlyn Lyndon, "Department of Architecture," in *Massachusetts Institute of Technology Bulletin* 105, no. 3 (Dec. 1969): 36.

² Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision* (Chicago: P. Theobald, 1944).

³ Frederick M. Logan, *The Growth of Art in American Schools* (New York: Harper, 1955).

⁴ György Kepes, "The Visual Arts and Sciences: A Proposal for Collaboration," *Daedalus* 94, no. 1 (Winter 1965): 117-134.

⁵ Kepes, "Center for Advanced Visual Studies," in *Massachusetts Institute of Technology Bulletin* 104, no. 3 (December 1968): 48.

⁶ See R.L. Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also, Vannevar Bush, *Science—The Endless Frontier: A Report to the President on a Program for Postwar Scientific Research*, Reprint, National Science Foundation, 1960 (Washington, D.C.: 1945). See also Donald E. Stokes, *Pasteur's Quadrant: Basic Science and Technological Innovation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1997). Donald Stokes uses the work of Louis Pasteur to argue that the division of basic and applied research, asserted in Vannevar Bush's report, was a false and damaging one.

⁷ David H. Guston and Kenneth Keniston. "Introduction: The Social Contract for Science" in *The Fragile Contract: University Science and the Federal Government*, ed. David H. Guston and Kenneth Keniston (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 1-41.

⁸ Oral history interview with Gyorgy Kepes, August 18, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁹ Gyorgy Kepes, "Introduction" in *The Education of Vision* (New York: Braziller, 1965), i.

¹⁰ Anna Vallye, *Design and the Politics of Knowledge*, Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2011, p. 288.

¹¹ Reinhold Martin, *Organizational Complex* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 40.

¹² Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1929).

¹³ See Anna Vallye, *Design and the Politics of Knowledge*, PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2011.

¹⁴ For more on the intellectual underpinnings of Kepes's *Language of Vision*, see Michael Golec, "A Natural History of the Disembodied Eye: The Structure of Gyorgy Kepes's 'Language of Vision'," *Design Issues* 2 (Spring 2002): 3-16.

¹⁵ E.A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1954; Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003).

¹⁶ Sybil Moholy-Nagy, "Gyorgy Kepes: The New Landscape in Art and Science," *College Art Journal* vol. 18, no. 2 (1959): 192-194.

¹⁷ See Kurt Kofka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935); see also Rudolf Arnheim, "Visual Thinking," in *Education of Vision*, 1-14.

¹⁸ On this configuration in the United States, see R.L. Duffus, *The American Renaissance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).

¹⁹ "The Reporter," *The Journal of Higher Education* 19, no. 8 (Nov., 1948): 429.

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- ²⁰ “The Reporter,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 19, no. 8 (Nov., 1948): 429.
- ²¹ See Barbara and John Ehrenreich, “the Professional-Managerial Class,” in *Between Labor and Capital*, ed. Pat Walker (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 5-45.
- ²² Ziegfeld, *Art in the College Program of General Education* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1953), 80.
- ²³ See Margaret Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts, 1919-1936* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2001).
- ²⁴ Handwritten note by Gyorgy Kepes, undated, Gyorgy Kepes Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Reel 5312, frame 461. Also cited by Vallye, *Design and the Politics of Knowledge*, 279. Where Vallye’s research overlaps with my own, I have cross-referenced the citations.
- ²⁵ [Gyorgy Kepes,] “introduction,” handwritten note, Kepes Papers, Reel 5312, frame 441; cited in Vallye, 280.
- ²⁶ See Matthew Wisniewski, “Why MIT Institutionalized the Avant-Garde: Negotiating Aesthetic Virtue in the Postwar Defense Institute,” *Configurations* 21 (2013): 85-116.
- ²⁷ S. Giedion, “Art Means Reality” in *Language of Vision* (Chicago: P. Theobald, 1944), 6-7.
- ²⁸ The Center for Advanced Visual Studies initial publication, 1966, Center for Advanced Visual Studies Special Collection (CAVSSP), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, unpaginated.
- ²⁹ Gyorgy Kepes, “Proposal for the Center for Advanced Visual Studies,” December 1965, CAVSSP, Box 1. See also Gyorgy Kepes, “The Visual Arts and Sciences: A Proposal for Collaboration” *Daedalus* 94, no. 1 (1965): 117-34.
- ³⁰ Otto Piene, “In Memoriam: Gyorgy Kepes, 1906-2002” *Leonardo* 36, no. 1 (2003): 3-4.
- ³¹ Oral history interview with Gyorgy Kepes, August 18, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- ³² Gyorgy Kepes, “Notes on Expression and Communication in the Advancement of a City,” *Daedalus* 90, no. 1 (Winter 1961): 147-65.
- ³³ Kepes, “Notes on Expression and Communication in the Advancement of a City,” 156.
- ³⁴ Gyorgy Kepes, “The Lost Pageantry of Nature,” *Artscanada* (Dec. 1968): 31.
- ³⁵ Kepes, “The Lost Pageantry of Nature,” *Artscanada* (Dec. 1968): 31.
- ³⁶ For an outline of the aims of the Students for a Democratic Society, see “The Port Huron Statement,” in *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left’s Founding Manifesto*, ed. Flacks Richard and Lichtenstein Nelson (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 239-84.
- ³⁷ See Kepes, “Lost Pageantry,” 32. The design options for the Boston Harbor suggested that it ought to make use of visual Gestalt and also give the city a shared sense of community through the use of light that could respond to the environment or be programmed to coincide with the calendar.
- ³⁸ Kepes, “Lost Pageantry,” 32.
- ³⁹ David Joselit, “Dada’s Diagrams,” *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (New York: D.A.P., 2005), 223.
- ⁴⁰ Harold Tovish, in Kepes, “Lost Pageantry,” 34.
- ⁴¹ Otto Piene, “Spectaculum,” [1971], unpublished essay, Book File: “Art on a Public Scale,” Kepes Papers, Reel 5314, frame 1287.
- ⁴² See John R. Blakinger, “The Aesthetics of Collaboration: Complicity and Conversion at MIT’s Center for Advanced Visual Studies,” *Tate Papers* 25 (Spring 2016): <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/25/aesthetics-of-collaboration-2>.
- ⁴³ Gyorgy Kepes, memo to the Fellows, March 6, 1974, Kepes Papers, Reel 5314, frame 1310-1311.
- ⁴⁴ Gyorgy Kepes, “Outline for Center Publication,” undated, Kepes Papers, Reel 5315, frame 20.
- ⁴⁵ See Gyorgy Kepes, “Outline for Center Publication,” undated, Kepes Papers, Reel 5315, frame 20.
- ⁴⁶ Proposal for CAVS, December 1965, CAVSSP.
- ⁴⁷ Ted Kraynik in Kepes, “Lost Pageantry,” 37.
- ⁴⁸ Kepes, “Notes on Expression and Communication in the Cityscape,” 154.
- ⁴⁹ Jack Burnham, “Joan Brigham Interviews Jack Burnham,” in *Dissolve into Comprehension* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2015), 242.
- ⁵⁰ Luke Skrebowski, “All Systems Go: Recovering Hans Haacke’s Systems Art,” *Grey Room* 30 (Winter 2008): 79 n 16. Skrebowski notes that Burnham was the only early critic, one of three, against which Buchloh took a position.

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- ⁵¹ Jeanne Siegel, "An Interview with Hans Haacke," *Arts Magazine* 45, no. 7 (May 1971): 18. "I met Jack in 1962 when we were both isolated from people interested in what we were doing. Since then we have been in contact and have had a very fruitful exchange of ideas. It was Jack who introduced me to systems analysis."
- ⁵² That familiar reading is embodied in Benjamin Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason," in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 203-242.
- ⁵³ See Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 30-35.
- ⁵⁴ Kepes, "Outline for Center Publication," Kepes Papers, Reel 5315, frame 20.
- ⁵⁵ Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 30-35. Reprinted in *Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art* (New York: Braziller, 1974), 15-26.
- ⁵⁶ Gyorgy Kepes, "Public Art Synopsis by Gyorgy Kepes," undated, Kepes Papers, Reel 5315, Frame 125-132.
- ⁵⁷ Reinhold Martin, "Organicism's Other," *Grey Room* 4 (Summer 2001): 34-51.
- ⁵⁸ Jack Burnham, "Art and Technology: The Panacea that Failed," [1980] in *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John G. Hanhardt (Rochester, NY: Gibbs M. Smith, 1986), 232-248.
- ⁵⁹ Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Great Salt Works*, 16.
- ⁶⁰ Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Great Salt Works*, 22.
- ⁶¹ Ludwig von Bertalanffy, quoted in Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Great Salt Works*, 17.
- ⁶² Burnham, "System Aesthetics," *Great Salt Works*, 22.
- ⁶³ See Gyorgy Kepes, "A Proposal 1970," Kepes Papers, Reel 5313, frame 905-919.
- ⁶⁴ Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," 20.
- ⁶⁵ Jack Burnham "Art and Systems," *Art in Society* 6, no. 2 (summer/fall 1969): 195-203.
- ⁶⁶ Jack Burnham, interview by Willoughby Sharp, *Arts Magazine* 45, no. 2 (November 1970): 23.
- ⁶⁷ Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2010 [Reprint: Fontana, 1979]), 101.
- ⁶⁸ Burnham, interview by Sharp, 23.
- ⁶⁹ Burnham, Notes on Art and Information Processing" *Software, Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art* exh. cat., 12.
- ⁷⁰ Burnham, interview by Sharp, 23.
- ⁷¹ Burnham, "Art in the Marcusean Analysis"
- ⁷² For discussion of this "deferred agency" in Kepes's work, see Anna Vallye, *Design and the Politics of Knowledge in America, 1937-1967: Walter Gropius, Gyorgy Kepes*, phd diss., Columbia University, 2011.
- ⁷³ Burnham, "Systems Aesthetics," *Great Wester Salt Works*, 22.

CHAPTER 2 — AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: A PROJECT IN MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

In 1957, Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, and George Brecht proposed a “Project in Multiple Dimensions” to be carried out at Douglass College (1918-2005), a women’s college that became part of Rutgers University.¹ The proposal was an open-ended request for research funding with the assurance that these artists, just like scientists, were indeed discoverers. Rejected by the Rutgers Research Council and by the Carnegie Corporation, their request for funding served as the basis for what became the Voorhees Assemblies (1958) and was amended the same year in light of the events held at Voorhees Chapel. At one of the Voorhees Assemblies, inspired by stories and figures of Black Mountain College, Kaprow orchestrated a proto-Happening disguised as a lecture and Robert Watts installed a temporary light installation in the basement of the Chapel. Several other artists and academics were invited to speak on the theme of communication, which appeared to be a mutual interest across the disciplines of art and science, both engaged in practices of research. The theme of communication also seemed to unite the discovery or creation of new knowledge with the question of how to pass it on, which meant that the Project in Multiple Dimensions was concerned not just with knowledge for its own sake, but with what that knowledge might be good for, and how it might be transferred or taught to others.

The topic of communication was part of a more general trend towards interdisciplinary and collaborative research that swept university research communities as well as the academic art world.² For example, the American Federation of the Arts conference in Houston brought together artists, dealers, critics, collectors and historians the

same year as the proposal for a Project in Multiple Dimensions. At the conference in Houston, Marcel Duchamp toyed with the scientific language, explaining the tantalizing notion of an “art coefficient” in his process of selecting, detouring, diagramming, and visual punning, and Meyer Schapiro established a general line against the burgeoning interest in cybernetics and communication.³ Abstract Expressionism, in Schapiro’s account, refused the rational efficiency of direct information delivery, opposing instrumental communication with the messier reality of communication in everyday life. Kaprow’s lecture for the Voorhees Assembly most readily adopted Schapiro’s assessment, and his later work increasingly shared Duchamp’s insights on the gap between intention and interpretation. Something of Duchamp and Schapiro’s influence can be found in the “Project for Multiple Dimensions;” however, a more important figure hangs over Kaprow and his colleagues’ focus on the experience of art and aesthetics in relation to the university.

In contrast to the American postwar research university's emphasis on basic research, or the search for principles and laws in nature, “experiential” knowledge came to hold an important place in postwar American art as a form of university practice. The pragmatist philosopher John Dewey was an important source of speculation on the capacity for art to communicate through aesthetic experience, and for a developing critique of scientific knowledge (i.e. merely intellectual, cognitive, verbal, or propositional). In what follows, I will read some of the performances, events, and multimedia works of Kaprow, Watts, and Brecht, specifically ones that addressed audiences in the university and used scientific rhetoric, for their contribution to a theory of art-as-knowledge based on aesthetic experience. This is not something that I bring to their work without invitation. The Proposal for a “Project in Multiple Dimensions” was just the beginning of a prolonged attempt, on the part

of these three artists, to frame their work as research or a contribution to the advancement of knowledge.

Kaprow's career in the university stretches over forty years, from his earliest position at Douglass College at Rutgers, where he was hired in 1953 to teach art history, until his retirement from the Visual Art department at the University of California San Diego in 1997, with interim stops at the State University of New York Stony Brook, and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Robert Watts began teaching art history at Douglass College in 1952. There he would remain as Douglass became part of Rutgers University, with a one-year stint at the University of California Santa Cruz, where he took part in a program to see how visual experience and communication could be taught. Meanwhile, George Brecht was working as a chemist at the New Jersey company, Johnson and Johnson, when he met Brecht and Kaprow and had frequent lunches at a nearby diner. For Watts, Brecht, and Kaprow, the intersection of art and the university has been taken for granted—acknowledged, but theoretically unexamined until recently.⁴ The publication of Kaprow's writings in 1993 in an anthology titled *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* paint a picture of an artist who developed into teaching.⁵ The anthology, arranged by decade, suggests a germinating interest in "Happenings" and "Environments" in the fifties, developing in the sixties, and turning inward with his essays on education in the seventies. This arrangement tells the story of an artist, one among many by the late sixties and seventies, who turned toward teaching at a time when art schools, not university art departments, were exciting, forward-thinking, experimental environments for art. CalArts, discussed in chapter four of this dissertation, would become a paradigmatic example of the new conceptually-oriented art school. Conceptual Art has also been considered the moment

that artists became, once again, academics.⁶ This impression may be true to the larger picture—a more or less accurate depiction of the trajectory by which many artists, genres and practices entered the game of higher education—but fails to reflect the writing, thinking, and work that artists carried out in the university art departments of the 50s and 60s.

A more accurate depiction begins with Kaprow, Watts, and Brecht's work and writing while at Rutgers and in the classroom of John Cage at the New School. After the *Proposal for a Project in Multiple Dimensions*, a few key texts and later proposals left out of Kaprow's anthology speak to his development as an artist in the university who combined research and teaching for ends in themselves. Watt's, too, was thinking about the way university education could be redesigned as he developed his plans for the *Project in Multiple Dimensions* into a class he called the *Experimental Workshop*. For these two artists, the university setting was not the backdrop to life as an artist, but the medium of art-in-life. In other words, Kaprow and Watts worked in and through education like others worked in and through painting, sculpture, or performance. Reflecting on the influence of his one-time teacher Hans Hofmann, Kaprow wrote, "He once encouraged me to become a teacher 'as a way to survive'. I thought he meant that teaching was a way to buy the groceries. But in the twenty years I've been buying the groceries that way, I've come to see that the survival he was talking about was a little more subtle than the price of eggs."⁷ I will contend that Kaprow and Watts' did not arrive at this sort of realization about their practices in the university as an afterthought, but rather early on and in parallel course with the maturing of their practices in art beginning around 1958 and the *Project in Multiple Dimensions*. Brecht offers a point of contrast, for his work overlaps in so many ways, although unlike Kaprow and Watts, he never taught or worked for the university, and thus

his relationship to academia was removed. More importantly, these practices (artistic or otherwise) established a form of aesthetic experience, similar in many ways to the ideas of John Dewey, but an adaptation in sly opposition to both the forms of research and uses of education.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE: DEWEY'S AESTHETICS

John Dewey theorized aesthetic experience and its relationship to art more thoroughly than any other American philosopher of the early twentieth century, and his influence extends to the artists considered here, though mostly through indirect means.⁸ Originally delivered as a series of lectures, *Art as Experience* was published in 1934.⁹ By this time, Dewey had already established himself as a founder of progressive education and within the tradition of American pragmatism. His pragmatist philosophy had already inspired applications in aesthetic theory by Van Meter Ames in 1928, but what would appear there in *Aesthetics of the Novel* looked very different from what Dewey himself would write.¹⁰ By the 1950s, John Dewey's *Art as Experience* was a key text for art educators but had begun to fall out of fashion with philosophers.¹¹ Despite the relatively late publication of *Art as Experience* in Dewey's overall output, Dewey's notion of the *aesthetic* was paramount in his philosophical project. Ultimately, aesthetic experience included a combination of moral, cognitive, and sensible experience and made up a practice that Richard Shusterman has defended as "pragmatist aesthetics."¹² Dewey's aesthetic philosophy reconciled not only fine and applied arts, but also inverted the hierarchy between scientific knowledge and aesthetic experience without rejecting the value of scientific knowledge or claiming determining power for aesthetic experience, as many adaptations of

Kantian aesthetics have done before and since.¹³ As such, Dewey's aesthetic philosophy is a very powerful starting place for artists in the university setting.

For Dewey, aesthetic experience included art, but it also, and more importantly, included ordinary experiences that weren't normally classified as art. In Dewey's words, an aesthetic experience would be identifiable "when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment," by its quality of wholeness, in other words, its recognizability as *an* experience that somehow rises above the humdrum, unremarkable, static, and uninteresting experiences of ordinary life.¹⁴ For this quality of wholeness or completion, Dewey describes having *an* experience as a consummation.¹⁵ The consummatory character of aesthetic experience will be central to the way that aesthetic experience was made legible by educational institutions in the work of artists examined here, especially that of Kaprow on college campuses.

Furthermore, the label of aesthetic experience applied not only to the creation of artwork but also to the experience of those artworks by others. Aesthetic experience was not passive, though it involved an accumulation of various sense data. Dewey gave the example of a stone rolling down a hill, in which the stone does not simply allow itself to be pulled indifferently towards the bottom, but rather feels something—intellectually, emotionally, and practically—towards the dips, slopes, and obstacles that mediate the journey.¹⁶ The comparison was meant to draw a continuity between the human being and nature, but also to point out that an aesthetic experience unifies different registers—sense data, conceptual knowledge, emotions—over a period of time with a beginning and an end. The aesthetic, and all art as Dewey wanted to expansively redefine the category, is not the materials or objects that one encounters along the way, but the totality of the journey experienced through those materials.

Kaprow, who studied philosophy at New York University before studying Art History at Columbia University, reportedly read Dewey, was deeply influenced by him, but was confused by his categories.¹⁷ A common criticism of Dewey was that the pragmatist philosopher saw concepts like art and aesthetic experience as unfixed, provisional, and good so long as they were useful. Art and aesthetic experience represented what Dewey called “the challenge to philosophy” because the consummation of experience stands outside of, though contains, conceptual or discursive knowledge.¹⁸ While conceptual thought is a kind of experience, it does not become part of aesthetic experience until it is made whole (or consummated in Dewey’s terms) by recognizing it as such (as whole). Dewey writes of the aesthetic that it “cannot be sharply marked off from intellectual experience since the latter must bear an esthetic stamp to be itself complete.”¹⁹ Dewey saw aesthetic experience as a larger category that included the abstraction of concepts in thought, be it natural laws and principles or philosophic concepts, but he sought to organize these under the umbrella of the aesthetic. Dewey thus prioritized something quite different from that of the American research university, even though intellectual experience also had a consummatory, aesthetic quality. *Art as Experience* suggests that Dewey’s philosophy is teleologically oriented towards making all experience aesthetic experience. As Shusterman puts it, Dewey’s philosophy is set up to “achieve more concrete goods in experience.”²⁰ In other words, art, science, and all intellectual activity should move us towards more and better aesthetic experiences, but this is quite difficult to conceive because the aesthetic exists as a larger category than conceptual or discursive knowledge alone. The question when examining artists in the university becomes whether or not this aesthetic quality of intellectual activity can be recognized and mobilized in moments of experience that are fragmented, either

across various moments in time or across spoken language, written text, and different types of sense experience.

The sentiment that intellectual activity was also aesthetic, though expressed in *Art as Experience* as a descriptive statement, was more prescriptive in Dewey's earlier writing on the scientific method. In *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), Dewey chastises science for its failure to recognize its most important character—knowledge produced through experimentation, through experience. Dewey writes optimistically of the link between ideas and ideals, "Everywhere an idea in its intellectual content, is a projection of what something existing may come to be."²¹ Ultimately, Dewey does not want to throw the baby of scientific experience out with the bathwater of scientific methodology, but rather to make sure that scientific experience is oriented towards a larger project of "more concrete goods in experience," to quote Shusterman once more. Dewey continues, "In like fashion, thought, our conceptions and ideas, are designations of operations to be performed or already performed. Consequently, their value is determined by the outcome of these operations. They are sound if the operations they direct give us the results which are required."²² In other words, Dewey sees no intrinsic value in the scientific method, such as objectivity, efficiency, verifiability or any other quality, so long as it is oriented towards some ideal. Ignoring the means, or "operations" as he calls them, Dewey argues for a method of "intelligent action" that focuses more on the outcomes or effects, not in an instrumental or utilitarian sense, but in the sense that knowledge "resides in the consequences of directed action."²³ This was a method of knowing-by-doing that required one to be in the moment, so to speak. But this requires a willingness to live with uncertainty. To focus only on effects and not look for causes shows comfort with not knowing why things are the way they are, so

long as one can navigate one's way through the world. Such comfort with the unknown is shared by all three artists discussed here, who were deploying randomness in their work and defining chance operations as a relinquishing of certainty.

Brecht and Watts, in particular, made randomness a cornerstone of their research methodology, but one question that will be important for an examination of this work is whether uncertainty and not-knowing were directed, as Dewey thought it should be, towards some idea(l) of the self. The cultivation of the self was central to Dewey's theory of progressive education, and it appears again in his late works such as *Nature and Experience*, *The Quest for Certainty*, and *Experience and Education*. In Dewey's philosophy of experience and education, the self is constructed through habit, whose "basic characteristic," Dewey writes, "is that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences."²⁴ This is what makes experience a cornerstone of education, and it makes Dewey's theory teleological: all experience affects the quality of subsequent experience, and for that we should handle experience with care, to make it whole and consummate it as aesthetic and purposeful.

One last point should be made in outlining Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience, and that is the meaning of expression and communication. One may find these terms muddled, since expression, as in expressionistic painting, is often used to refer to the communication of emotion, while communication, especially as it was studied across the university in the postwar period, was built on the clear transmission of conceptual knowledge or sense data in the form of information. However, the distinction between expression and communication is essentially meaningless in Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience, which consummates

these three registers—emotion, conceptual knowledge, and sense data—together. Expression is only expression if it is successful in communicating, but what is communicated is an experience. While scientific knowledge may express or communicate instructions for an experience, the communication of art instructs in a completely different way, by providing *an* experience with aesthetic quality. As Dewey writes, “It is by way of communication that art becomes the incomparable organ of instruction, but the way is so remote from that usually associated with the idea of education, it is a way that lifts art so far above what we are accustomed to think of as instruction, that we are repelled by any suggestion of teaching and learning in connection with art.”²⁵ Repulsion at the connection of teaching, learning, and art belies a set of tensions sustained in the work discussed in this chapter, from the communication of Kaprow’s Happenings to the Fluxus instructions of Watts and Brecht.

LECTURE AESTHETICS, PART ONE: KAPROW’S *COMMUNICATION*

In April of 1958, Kaprow’s performance for the Voorhees Assemblies took on the theme of communication with a sardonic appropriation of the concept. *Communication* (1958) was a lecture-performance and proto-happening with pre-recorded speech and bell sounds, draped banners, various actions done by participating students, and Kaprow in a tennis outfit lighting matches. In the aisle, a two-sided canvas ran a partial length of the audience and a girl bounced a red ball, while in the back of the audience, two men took colored tin cans out of a bag and noisily arranged them on a table. Kaprow’s notes, score and sketches, the text of the pre-recorded speech, and a retrospective description by Kaprow make up the material remains of this first public happening. Since this piece is the only specific work mentioned in the proposal for a Project in Multiple Dimensions, it seems

worth exploring first as an example of the kind of artistic research proposed for the university. Kaprow writes in his description, “I chose to enlarge and complicate the idea of communicating by turning a speaking occasion into a multimedia activity.”²⁶ Kaprow’s description recreates the scene, slipping between public speaking engagement, theatrical performance, and what would emerge as an altogether new form of visual art that owes much to its academic setting. I will first examine the degree to which this work, and Kaprow’s artistic practice as a whole, sustains a dialectical tension in the practices of research and teaching art in the university, before looking at the practices of Watts and Brecht. Dewey ascribes a function for education in his aesthetic theory that may not have been part of Kaprow or Watt’s agenda in entering the university; the key, however, lies in Dewey’s faith in the idea(l) of intelligent action, *institutionalized*. From his earliest recognition that the campus represented a serious investment in society on the part of the artist, and vice versa, Kaprow’s work in the institution was aimed at reunification of knowledge and action, or that which can be communicated with that which can be acted out. When looking at Kaprow’s body of work, it appears as if what was contained in his earliest Happening was divided into various components—textual diagram, preparatory meetings, actions carried out, and final discussion—only to be made whole by the educational framework in which he often worked.

Kaprow’s “lecture” for *Communication* delivers its message in more than one way, kicking off several registers of meaning that come into conflict. First, Kaprow expresses disgust at the idea of communication, where his text reads, “‘Communication’ is one of the most hateful words. I have dedicated my best energies to retaining this disgust. I am offended by the smug and complacent techniques designed to facilitate the passage of one

man's thoughts to another, served up as they are in a syrupy sauce of democracy and smiling optimism."²⁷ He contrasts this injunction to communicate with "true experience," saying that the trend to talk about communication "results only in the preservation of miles of cliché." The closing lines of this spoken word read, "The only 'communication' that interests me is the communication of non-communication. This alone is potent, variable, fresh and communicable. Beyond that there is only the simple act. A child hugs the grass. I lick the icicle. They shatter mirrors. Three sunflowers." Retreating from a communicated aversion to communication, the text of Kaprow's speech devolves into simple descriptions of acts, and then things, which are presumably beyond communication, or perhaps communicate only because they are not explicit attempts at communicating. Kaprow, on stage, acts out this non-communication by lighting matches and blowing them out. Simultaneously, a red light flashes on the lectern, and eventually the recorded speech, though looping, is made indistinct by the accumulation of bell sounds and other noises, eventually culminating in a repetition of the phrase "How d'ya do?" Along with these sounds, the previously spoken words repeat, but are no longer intelligible, like a round that has gone out of sync. By drowning out its own message, Kaprow's lecture both delivers and embodies its meaning. Furthermore, the speech is separated from the person on stage, Kaprow, who is ostensibly there to deliver it. Divided among the words, sounds, and actions on stage, Kaprow's lecture displaces its message with the meanings being produced by all the other activities taking place around the Chapel and offstage.

Before attributing specific meaning to the accompanying actions—bouncing a ball, painting a canvas, pulling tin cans out of a bag—the event-structure of the public lecture can be read as the medium for an aesthetic experience. The specificity of that experience escapes

interpretation, and thus shows the limitation of reading Kaprow's work through his notes, sketches and post-hoc description; however, one should still understand *Communication* as an occasion to insert sights, sounds, and actions into a place where a speech, talk, or lecture was the expected form. Kaprow's notes suggest attention to exactly those categories of action, sight, sound, and words because they distinctly divide his piece into a list enumerated by those four categories, pitting words, sounds, and sights, meaning and nonsense against one another. Under the heading "actions," Kaprow lists the major elements recounted above—painting a canvas, bouncing a ball, holding placards in the audience, the men in the back arranging tin cans—while the heading "sights" indicates the three banners strung from the balconies, and the red light flashing on the lectern. Finally, the heading "Taped Sounds" includes things like "high freq. / low thud sound / words / piano," and the heading "spoken words" simply lists "short sentences." Undoubtedly the "short sentences" refers not to the speech that Kaprow had recorded and carefully choreographed, but to phrases spoken by the men in the back, which Kaprow also briefly notes in his description. The list of taped sounds includes an unspecified set of "words" which would stand out no more than the "high frequency" or "low thud" sounds if it were not for the document that preserves the speech. These are surely the words to which the list refers. More importantly, the four-part list suggests that while Kaprow's recorded speech may have tried to state its message plainly, the speech was just another element among many. The speaking occasion itself is acted upon, disrupted and put in tension by the "words" delivered as "speech," but equally by a set of planned distractions, visual, auditory, verbal, and generally experiential in nature.

In the field of action that is the lecture setting, Kaprow's *Happening* appears equally informed by the structure of the classroom and university as from the work of figures like

Jackson Pollock or John Cage. There is no doubt that Pollock and Cage were key figures for understanding Kaprow's move from painting and assemblage to environments and the events he called Happenings, as other scholars have overwhelmingly concluded,²⁸ but *Communication* and the occasion of the Voorhees Assemblies calls for a reading of the educational context as a dimension of Kaprow's work alongside the others. Kaprow's writing on Pollock, produced in 1956 and published in *Art News* two years later, all but guaranteed the reception of Kaprow's Happenings, Environments, and Assemblages in part through the construct of action painting. In reading the work of Pollock, according to Kaprow, viewers "must be acrobats, constantly shuttling between an identification with the hands and body that flung the paint and stood 'in' the canvas and submission to the objective markings, allowing them to entangle and assault us."²⁹ Kaprow's description of how to read Pollock's work assumes a kind of sustained tension in the "shuttling" between different modes of reading a painting, but perhaps those insights are most helpful for understanding environments like *Yard* (1961) or *Apple Shrine* (1960). Another crucial element comes from his close study with Cage. Judith Rodenbeck has stressed the significance of visual cues in Cage's performance of *4'33"* (1952), reminding us that Cage's performance was signaled by the presence of the performer and the raising and lowering of the piano cover, in addition to the sounds of silence over a given duration.³⁰ In addition to the practical circumstances that led Kaprow to produce "composed" events while in Cage's experimental composition class at the New School, the influence of Cage was the cornerstone of Kaprow's move into time-based works. Specifically, Kaprow employed Cage-like strategies in the structure of Happenings, composing sites, sounds, actions, and

speech while allowing chance and elements outside of the composition to play a determining role.

Most importantly, both of the aesthetic trajectories that Kaprow's Happenings tried to extend, that of Jackson Pollock and John Cage, met with another: the aesthetics of the university. That is to say, Kaprow provided experiences of sights, sounds, actions and words within the institutional framework built for research, knowledge, and learning. In this way, he put the non-communicable in tension with conceptual knowledge, substituting aesthetic experience for scientific knowledge as the teleological end. The Voorhees Assemblies served not only as an opportunity for Kaprow to publicly test out the kind of work he had been doing in Cage's class, which included similar performances, but also to present this way of working as a kind of knowledge alternative in the university. Kaprow had already said of Pollock that he was "capable of becoming involved in the stuff of his art as a group of concrete facts seen for the first time," and that "few individuals can be lucky enough to possess the intensity of this kind of knowing."³¹ Pollock's "concrete facts" might be those of the material (paint on canvas) or the action (dripping), and "seen for the first time" they have not yet been ordered into principles (of good design, say) or even given names. This description of Pollock's work gets at what makes the mode of knowledge in art unique for Kaprow, what he would go on to call the "communication of the non-communication" in his performance for the Voorhees Assemblies.

The theme of the events on Rutgers campus, preceded by the Project in Multiple Dimensions proposal that argued for these events as a form of research, suggests that *Communication* was more than a staging ground for more developed work to come and that the campus setting was more than an opportune site. Rather, the epistemological demands of

the university, which were addressed by the proposal and further shaped by the assembly or lecture format, are a significant framework within which Kaprow could reconcile Pollock's gestural abstraction and Cage's chance compositions. While the use of sites, sounds, actions, and spoken text remained consistent between *Communication* and a work like *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), one limitation of the lecture format, certainly, was the strict division between the audience and performer. Jeff Kelley has written that Kaprow was unsatisfied by *Communication* for that reason, and *18 Happenings* has been given more attention as the ground zero of Kaprow's work.³² Perhaps this is because of the elaborate structure of the performance or perhaps because of its setting at the Reuben Gallery in New York City; either way, the problem of performer and audience was not solved simply by moving the Happening to another setting, and Kaprow's works on campus continued to work on this problem without abandoning the university or its demand for a knowing art practice.

Kaprow's written reflections on teaching while at Rutgers already took seriously the challenge of teaching the "communication of non-communication," and a closer look suggests that his earliest Happening at the Voorhees Assembly was more than a flippant response to a trendy theme. In a text published for a student-run publication, Kaprow grappled with the question of how to teach a subject like art that is highly personal and, most emphatically, uncommunicable.³³ For Kaprow, the individual starting point of art production is the source of its authenticity, an idea to be challenged by incorporating the compositional strategies of randomness and chance. But most importantly, Kaprow does not let the artist's claim to authenticity trump the necessity to pass on the knowledge of art. He compares the university to the mass medium of television when he writes that the artist "has agreed to

become a performer on TV and a sage on the campus. These are his newest community achievements.”³⁴ The comparison between the campus and TV is curious and premonitory given Kaprow had not yet worked on *Gas* (1966) with the Dwan Gallery and cooperation from WCBS-TV, nor made the claim that artist’s video was “old wine” in a “new bottle.”³⁵ He continues, “In the former [TV] he may derive a flash in the pan sort of success, good for a few bucks once in a while; which allows him a certain amount of accustomed freedom from a steady regime. But the latter [the campus] represents a lifetime investment of society in the artist and, in turn, the artist in society.”³⁶ These writings suggest that as early as one year before he staged *Communication* at the Voorhees Chapel, Kaprow had considered the campus a consequential site for artists to intervene. Furthermore, teaching and the strictures of the university counterbalance the mythic construction of artistic genius. As Kaprow writes, “Most artists will readily agree that their presence in a classroom is meant to indicate that artists are not different from anyone else.”³⁷ In other words, the authenticity of art is not to be held beyond the grasp of society’s mass institutions but rather folded in somehow. Art and aesthetic experience may have something to offer, but the artist is no outsider. Kaprow concludes that “Rub-a-dub, Rub-a-dub,” as the Zen Buddhist master said to his pupil, is the only curriculum if artists are to remain in the university. The meaningless phrase stands in for the “communication of non-communication,” or the inability to use principles or concepts in teaching art, but not the inability to provide aesthetic experience as a form of knowledge and thought.

Furthermore, the university was well-suited to a participatory structure that abandoned the audience-performer model, more so even than the gallery, loft, or abandoned warehouse in which Kaprow often staged his work. Kaprow’s Happenings off campus

continued to lean heavily on a set of actions carried out by performers, though Kaprow himself was less often featured, and gradually the Happenings and Environments began to include more participation by the audience. For example, in *Courtyard* (1962) staged at an old hotel, the audience was asked to take part in sweeping up bits of tinfoil, and in *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann* (1963) at the Museum of Modern Art the audience was invited to arrange the furniture between two rooms. But the culmination of this move towards audience participation and away from spectatorship took place in a handful of Happenings on college campuses in 1964, specifically *Paper* at the University of California Berkeley, *Birds* at the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale, and *Household* at Cornell University. Each of these works was preceded by a preliminary meeting with the artist, where Kaprow gave instruction and explanation as if in a classroom or lecture setting. An image from the preliminary meeting for *Household* shows Kaprow dressed in a jacket and tie standing before a chalkboard diagram that explains the structure of the event, and thus even his attire played on the academic staging of the artwork. The crucial development occasioned by these works in the university is evident when compared to another also carried out in the same year. *Orange* (1964) took place in an abandoned warehouse and did not strictly mandate participation in the same way as the campus Happenings. While *Orange* used the language of participation, just as *18 Happenings* had, the “participants” were simply sent a letter with instructions on how to proceed with the work. In later participatory Happenings after 1964, even those not on campus, a format similar to the campus visits was staged. Participants for *Fluids* (1967), for instance, were asked to attend a preliminary meeting at the Pasadena Art Museum where “the happening will be thoroughly discussed by Allan Kaprow and all details worked out.”³⁸ Given the increasingly private nature of

Kaprow's Happenings, eventually renamed "Activities," it is hard not to see these preliminary meetings as an exciting part of the works themselves.

The posters and preliminary meetings began shaping an aesthetic experience that would ask for the intellectual, sensual and perhaps emotional involvement of the participants. The score distributed for *Household*, for example, explained that the setting was to be a dump out in the country. The participants were to be divided into groups: men, women, and people. The diagram depicted in the photograph of Kaprow, and shown in his notes for the meeting, outlines the structure of *Household* as an arrangement of longer and shorter parts, rising and falling in intensity. Each step in the Happening is numbered 1-13. To make sense of the diagram, Kaprow's notes for his preliminary talk explain that the piece has a larger structure and a sub-structure with recurring motifs. The large structure is roughly symmetrical, opening with a long period of time when the men are building towers and the women are building nests, and closing with silent observation and cigarette smoking as a car burns up. Somewhere in the middle, people arrive in cars and begin advancing upon the other two groups, banging and whistling as the intensity rises. A conflict ensues between the men and the women over a jam-covered car that both eat from (the women licking the jam off, and the men using bread). After which, the men destroy the car at the height of intensity and the women leave while the rest watch the car burn. The recurring motifs of *Household* include people arriving and leaving in groups, women and men screeching, cheering and laughing, putting on and taking off clothing, eating jam, building and destroying structures, and smoking. All of these thematic relations are listed in Kaprow's notes and depicted in the diagram through a series of arrows that point out these roughly symmetrical relationships.

The shape of an experience to be had by the student participants of *Household* thus began in the classroom with Kaprow in front of a chalkboard explaining just what the structure of the following day's activities were to be. No one was let off the hook to simply follow or perform instructions, but rather all were subjected to a lecture from Kaprow on the nature of Happenings, generally, the structure of the Happening to be performed, and finally the intended symbolic meaning of its component parts. Kaprow explained that the "household" of the title is like the dump, where one discards memories but perhaps breeds something else. Conflict and harmony co-exist and the household/dump is a sacred place of ritual. From his explanation, it is clear that Kaprow's Happenings weren't always as light and playful as their popular impression, nor were they facile celebrations of a new ethos embodied in the term "participatory democracy." Although the explanation from Kaprow robs the participants of their own freedom to interpret, and thus to thoughtfully engage with the symbolic meaning of the work, I am not inclined to fault Kaprow for the intentional fallacy. Rather, the way he used the pedagogic framework of the classroom, the chalkboard diagram, and the explanatory lecture set off an intellectual understanding of the piece against a physical and sensory engagement that would follow. The explanation of the symbolic meaning of jam spread across a beat-up car and the experience of licking it off enact a kind of epistemological friction within the university, one in which the experience challenges the verbal explanation or symbolic content.

Kaprow expressed as much in the preliminary meetings for these campus Happenings. For *Paper* at the University of California Berkeley that same year, a similar pattern was repeated. This time, his notes for the preliminary meeting begin with a list of two traditions, one a "non-verbalizable art vis á vis the artist," and the other an "exclusively

verbalizable (i.e.) non-sensual art vis á vis the critic and professors.”³⁹ Separately, these two traditions, as Kaprow calls them, are competing systems of knowledge associated with the production of art, on the one hand, and the *interpretation and instruction* of art on the other. Only in tandem do these two systems of knowledge manage to get “nearer the truth” as Kaprow writes: “Both are, exclusively speaking, far from the truth but in some proportion together, nearer the truth.”⁴⁰ Curiously, the meaning or symbolic content of the piece resides with the critics and professors, despite Kaprow’s propensity to spell out his intended meaning for each part. The truth content of these works lies somewhere in the irreconcilable combination of sensual experience and interpretation/instruction, shuttling between an embodied and interpretive knowledge. Instead of shuttling between an identification with the body of the artist who stands “in” his painting and the marks on canvas, as Kaprow wrote of Pollock’s painting, the participants are asked (or instructed as the case may be) to shuttle between their own experience of the Happening and the interpretation/instruction delivered in the classroom.

Kaprow’s work increasingly took on pedagogic moments that supplemented the artwork, holding the work of communication in tension with the incommunicable aesthetic experience. However, read properly through their university setting, the pedagogic moment is part of the aesthetic experience, consummating it, as Dewey would say, with reflection. If in works like *Household* or *Fluids* the work was divided into a preliminary meeting followed by the experience of the Happening or Activity, which is in some cases then discussed afterward, then the aesthetic experience was already distributed over a variety of visual and auditory phenomena. Kaprow’s posters for Happenings and Activities, for example, already began the process of instruction and explanation in visual form. In a later

work called *Company* (1982), participants experienced the work privately but gathered afterward with Kaprow to discuss their experience. This accumulation of phenomena—like the actions, sights, sounds, and words of *Communication*—add up to an experience that is not really contained in the Happening alone, but achieves its wholeness over a brief period of time. While the experience provided may embody a set of tensions and contradictions, it is framed and made legible by forms like the lecture, classroom, or seminar provided by the university context. Kaprow's body of work, then, attests to the way that practicing this kind of aesthetic experience was something art could pursue in the university. Where *Communication* and even *18 Happenings* delivered speeches on the work as one element amongst other sights, sounds, and actions, later Happenings and Activities spread these out over other verbal and textual forms, from the poster that announced the event to the meetings afterward for discussion.

As Kaprow's Happenings found a home in the university and drew on its structures, the effort to communicate the non-communicable appears in the dual structure of the Happening or Activity preceded or increasingly often followed by the pedagogical or explanatory moment. While in *Household* and other works, Kaprow literally used diagrams to explain the work, the positivity of Kaprow's practice is constituted by the interplay of the experiential with the verbal and textual elements surrounding the work: the posters announcing the event, the preliminary or final meeting, and even the documentation after the fact. This can be linked to the diagrammatic strategy of Dada and in Marcel Duchamp in particular, a strategy discussed in Chapter 1 that played on the "epistemological crisis" between text and image;⁴¹ but Dewey's model of accumulated experiences whose aesthetic quality is present when consummatory allows for another way to see the conflict between

sense experience and language. To offer only the Happening free of its academic context, i.e. its verbal or textual explanation, would have been to metaphorically leave the university and the possibility of communication altogether, or in other words to claim that the work spoke for itself. Coupled with announcement, explanation, discussion, and storytelling, Kaprow's works were framed by the experience of acquiring or transferring knowledge at every stage of planning, producing, explaining, and discussing the event. The distance traveled from the first Happening of *Communication* to later participatory Activities corresponds to a maturing understanding of how art mirrors thought by sustaining a contradiction—"the communication of non-communication."

LECTURE AESTHETICS, PART TWO: ROBERT WATTS AND GEORGE BRECHT

Robert Watts began his career as an engineer, taking classes at the Art Students League in New York before studying art history at Columbia University and joining the faculty of Rutgers. His assemblages and sculptures earned him brief recognition as a Pop Artist in the early 60s, and he even tried to copyright the term in 1964, but his closest companions and collaborators were those associated with Fluxus, such as George Brecht, George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, and Alison Knowles. His sculptural work often involved kinetic elements that invited audience activation, but he was also interested in how objects moved as commodities, organizing events that were disguised as stores or catalog sales, and making objects sold as stamps and clothing. He was increasingly known for his use of media technology, such as video and electronic sound generators. After the rejection of the proposal for Project in Multiple Dimensions by the Rutgers Research Council and the

Carnegie Corporation, he continued to frame his work as “basic research” through sculptures, events, games, and films that tested the limits and forms of the art object.

Watts worked increasingly with audiovisual media and electronics, but his work was distinct from the art and technology link that was forged by Gyorgy Kepes at MIT, or Billy Klüver with *Experiments in Art and Technology*.⁴² Watts’ personal statement about his work in the proposal for a *Project in Multiple Dimensions* highlights the innovations he sought with new media. “Within the broad scope of multi-dimensional media, certain facets interest me at the present moment,” he writes, “These have to do with an exploration of various time-space-movement situations through the use of both electro-mechanical devices and selected synthetic and natural materials.”⁴³ In simple terms, Watts was interested in exploring the technological possibilities for art with movement, light, and sound as well as newly invented pigments, dyes, and colors and the use of unconventional materials such as earth, plants, water, and air. In that sense, Watts appears in his research proposals to adhere most strongly to the rhetoric of discovery and creative problem-solving that was taking shape in the university (and discussed in the previous chapter). That tradition defined basic research as the discovery of fundamental principles that might potentially lead to a new human ability to identify and solve problems on a distant horizon. However, a closer analysis of the work Watts completed with his research funding does not allow for so quick an alignment with the methodology and end goals of something like Kepes’s Center for Advanced Visual Studies. Ultimately, in the work funded through the Rutgers Research Council, Watts achieved something similar to Kaprow in subsuming scientific research and forms of inquiry under the umbrella of a Deweyan aesthetic experience.

Although Watts worked with pedagogy and drew on its forms (e.g. the seminar, the workshop, or the lecture), the strength of his engagement with the university came from his engagement with the forms and language of scientific research. Watts' first grant money from the Rutgers Research Council was awarded for a line of inquiry that Watts subtitled "A study of random and non-random events as applied to constructions, environments and art-games."⁴⁴ Funding for research at Rutgers was typical of research expectations in that it asked applicants to identify an important problem and define a methodology they would employ to solve it. For Watts, the problem was the lack of "new forms for the presentation of art ideas and art experiences," and the method was "the application of programming and switching that will make possible a wide variety of combinations."⁴⁵ Primarily, Watts sought to use technology and principles of computer programming, but combine them with chance and random occurrences. The non-random events would be the sculptures, performances, films, and music created by Watts and his Fluxus collaborators, randomly combined with images, sounds, and objects that were not necessarily works of art. Watts thought of this combinatorial process as a form of programming, but he was interested in the way his "programs" could lead to unforeseen results. In this way, Watts' project not only took the language of research and experimentation in order to get funding for artworks, but it also engaged a set of concerns around organized systems and communications technology that research universities began to pursue.⁴⁶ However, while the growing interest in systems and cybernetics in the research university was an effort to find new forms of control through feedback that still allowed for a relative amount of freedom, Watts turned his attention to new forms that undermined any idea of control and embraced the unknown.

For Watts, Brecht and other artists of the 1950s, time was the crucial new element that visual art could engage, be it through kinetic objects, audience participation, or audiovisual media. Events became a framework for art, rather than objects. Several historians have pointed to the importance of Cage's class at the New School in 1957-1959 for the emergence this new strategy for artwork.⁴⁷ These classes were built around students' experiments with musical instruments (and objects used as instruments), followed by discussion. Framing events in front of the class as compositions was a key step in the incorporation of time and language into the visual arts, just as in Cage's composition of *4'33"* the performance event was marked by a duration of time, and anything that happened within that duration comprised the work. While Kaprow picked up on the visual and contextual cues that marked a duration in which an artwork could occur, George Brecht's works such as the *Event Cards* (ca. 1960)—eventually collected and published in *Water Yam*—utilized language and instruction to mark durations of time and space with minimal visual means (i.e. handwritten notecards). From classroom events and compositions of time, artists extrapolated various methods that splintered into and collided with other art movements of the sixties, including but not limited to Kaprow's Happenings and the Fluxus Events or Event Scores.

For his part, it seems, Watts became interested in the way these Events could be programmed, recombined, bought and sold, or entered into circulation outside of the art context. This interest overlapped with chance and randomness, which George Brecht had begun to write about even before taking Cage's class. A text called "Chance Imagery" written by Brecht in 1957 appears in the papers of Robert Watts. In 1966 this text would be published as a Great Bear pamphlet by Something Else Press, but presumably, Brecht and

Watts had been engaged in the implications of chance since before their intersection with Cage.⁴⁸ In his text, Brecht took chance to mean “that the cause, or system of causes, responsible for a given effect is unknown or unlooked-for, or at least that we are unable to completely specify it.”⁴⁹ In other words, to see an event as a result of chance is to focus not on any concrete reason, law or principle for its occurrence, but rather on the result as one among a set of possible outcomes. Randomness may be a better way to describe the use of chance that interested Brecht and Watts, where results could be programmed, yet still be the result of chance. A result is random when it is not arrived at by intentional or identifiable cause, again that the cause is unimportant because the mechanics of cause and effect are either unknown, ignored, or uncertain. To use and appreciate chance and randomness in an artwork, then, would mean that the artist and the artist’s intention are irrelevant, or at least unlooked-for. Brecht may have first thought of Pollock’s work as an example of chance imagery, but he eventually came to see Cage’s compositions as more important for his own development. The distinction relies on two different aspects of chance in artwork that Brecht identified. The first ignores the causes of the imagery because the causes are unconscious, while the second ignores the causes because the imagery is the result of uncontrolled processes. For example, The first would place Jackson Pollock’s drips in a tradition with the automatic drawing of Surrealism, while a reference for the second might be Duchamp’s *Three Standard Stoppages* (1912-1914). In both cases, the composition of the image is the effect of a cause that is not known or accounted for. Artworks that were the result of chance or randomness relied on a state of not-knowing, which goes against an assumption behind the scientific method that results are repeatable because they are based on laws and principles in nature.⁵⁰ This was indeed Dewey’s critique of the scientific method in *The*

Quest for Certainty, and artists like Watts and Brecht were embracing uncertainty as a compelling epistemological alternative.

In 1963, Brecht and Watts organized the Yam Festival, a series of events in Manhattan, on the Douglass campus of Rutgers, and on George Segal's farm in New Brunswick. As part of the festival, Watts and Brecht collaborated on a "delivery event" as well as a multimedia lecture, which was given at a loft in Manhattan in January of 1963 to inaugurate the public events of the festival. The lecture comprised multiple sources of image and sound projection, plus performances selected randomly from a set of instructions like cards from a deck. A film loop showing a close-up of the artist Dick Higgins' mouth was projected upside down on one side of the room, while two screens side by side projected film footage and still slides on the other. Sound came from a record player playing pop music, a radio manually tuned to various stations, and two different tape reels of pre-recorded sounds. Ushers with flashlights helped to guide the audience to their seats, and an attendant passed out chewing gum. As two lecturers read off the instruction cards by candlelight, three additional performers performed them. The work would come to an end when one of the candles went out, and the performers would complete the current Event before retreating behind the screens. Slowly the sounds would fade and the projected images would go dark. In what turned out to be a 38-minute performance, the recognizable features of a lecture were used side by side and simultaneously with the silly, banal, and sometimes serious set of actions, images, sounds, and words.

Yam Lecture (1963) was an aesthetic experience that was both composed and uncomposed, a product of disruptive contingency as much as artistic intention or form. Without knowing exactly what occurred, there are still several things that can be said about

the performance. Moving images coincided with live performances, perhaps even projected on top of them, while sounds of music were treated side-by-side with sounds of appliances, airplanes, television, and an adult teaching a child the alphabet. Like Dewey's expansion of the aesthetic beyond the category of art, elements of non-art experience were treated equally alongside those that had been composed. Some of these elements have been composed by others, and some of them were probably being modulated in an improvisatory fashion. The radio, for instance, was meant to be tuned by one of the attendants, and Watts himself was operating the film projector with footage from his own films and found footage from newsreels, sporting events, or home movies. The performances written out on cards were a mix of instructions written by Brecht and Watts, as well as Ben Patterson, Emmett Williams, Dick Higgins, and Alison Knowles. Many compositions thus came together one after another and overlapped. These artists wouldn't have been listed as collaborators, but instead, their works were being played like instruments in the chance composition of Watts and Brecht, orchestrated and even undermined by the competing non-art sounds and images. This kind of random overlapping in *Yam Lecture* emptied any pretension to individual intentionality, not only the intentions of Watts and Brecht as the composers of *Yam Lecture*, but also the work of others they made use of. The artists themselves were discarded or ignored like the causes of random occurrences. *Yam Lecture* might be described as a composition of compositions, then, but it is also paradoxically the undoing of the composition by the discarding or erasure of the artists and their intentionality. The process of doing and undoing, composing and disrupting, demonstrates the use of randomness as a method of research that Watts sought to employ in his search for new modes of presentation.

The images, sounds, actions, and instructions being read aloud exist on equal footing, and thus the lecturers may be in the nominal position of “instructing,” but their instructions are not privileged among the other registers of action, image, and sound. The looping image of Dick Higgins’ mouth in close-up, moving upside-down, also seems to have mocked the idea of instructing, literally flipping the mouth that speaks upside down and detouring, in a way, language and the act of speech. This send-up of the classroom or lecture environment makes *Yam Lecture*, at least in its first version, a parodic gesture. If not to be taken seriously in a Manhattan loft, the second performance of *Yam Lecture* pushed the academic aspects of the work beyond satire. Later in the fall of 1963, Watts was invited to stage the *Yam Lecture* as part of a Symposium on the Arts at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. The campus setting and participants gave some purpose to the designation of a “lecture,” and though changes were minimal and mostly done to accommodate the space of the cafeteria in the Oakland Center, they included the removal of the Higgins loop. Although it makes little sense to parse out where Watts’ contribution to *Yam Lecture* ends and Brecht’s begins, the work might be read with two different points of inflection. First, in light of Watts’ academic engagement, the piece seeks to program random occurrences that might undo the work of composition, and second the work parodies the academic institution and lecture format through the use of the instruction cards, the Higgins loop, and other features that satirically allude to the form of a lecture.

Thus it is crucial that some of these features were different from the Manhattan version upon arrival in Michigan. The notes sent to student and faculty participants fill out a picture of the event by indicating the costumes and details of the setting.⁵¹ The lecturers, slide projectors and taped sounds of a child learning the alphabet remained. The female

lecturer was to be dressed in black, holding the lecture materials in a felt hat, while the male lecturer was to wear a guard uniform of some type, and the three performers to be dressed in white or light colors. As in the Manhattan version, Watts would operate the projector on a swivel stand so images could be moved from screen to wall and back. Some references to the *Yam Lecture* in New York City indicate that Watts and Brecht were wearing white lab coats, but no such outfits are mentioned in the detailed notes regarding the Oakland version, and it is unclear what Brecht's performative role was in the Manhattan version.⁵² While artists in lab coats would certainly draw allusions to the artist-as-researcher, perhaps with tongue in cheek, the aim of the Oakland University *Yam Lecture* handles the academic value of the work with utmost sincerity. The chair of the Department of Art, John Galloway, notes in his memorandum that the piece is one of the major presentations of the Symposium, which was designed to bring attention to the scholarly ambitions of artists and had also commissioned a piece by the composer Henry Cowell the previous year.⁵³ *Yam Lecture's* fall presentation at Oakland University built on those ambitions, and distinguishing between the two versions of the piece points towards the way Watts' work would continue to be framed as an academic pursuit, while Brecht would continue to selectively appropriate elements of academic research with skepticism.

Generally, Brecht saw his own practice as equally informed by a scientific worldview, eastern philosophy, and aesthetic or artistic theories, but his use of the event-structure was definitely thought of as a method of research.⁵⁴ As Brecht writes, this research is "meta-creational, that is, it is concerned with creativity as such, with the nature of creativity, conditions for maximizing it, possibly its measurement, certainly the stimulation of it in individuals who have not previously made use of their creative potential."⁵⁵ The

primacy of encouraging others to make use of their creative potential in his method of “innovational research,” as he called it, and the mere possibility that this creativity could be measured would seem to cast Brecht as an academic. In fact, Cornelius Cardew has written that the real function of Brecht’s *Water Yam* was “a course of study, and following on that, a teaching instrument.”⁵⁶ In an interview with Michael Nyman, Brecht himself agreed with this assessment of his work, at least partially, saying that “if you want to perform those pieces anymore, you’d perhaps acquire certain ways to move through life.”⁵⁷ But nonetheless, the pedagogic function of *Water Yam* lies entirely outside of the actual institutions and practices of the university. Brecht also adds, “*Water Yam* implies no discipline, no control, no emphasis,” rejecting those facets of teaching that rely on the disciplinary mechanisms of the institution.⁵⁸ An aversion to discipline and control—certainly one shared by Kaprow and Watts, despite their university credentials—ultimately distanced Brecht from academic institutions and should inform a reading of *Yam Lecture*, at least as it was performed in Manhattan.

Brecht and Watts took on randomness as a methodology together in *Yam Lecture*, but Watts’ *Cloud Music* (1974-1979) involved an even more sophisticated use of chance as a research methodology. In addition to the grants that would support *Yam Lecture* awarded from 1961-63, Watts was given funding from the Rutgers Research Council for experimental films in 1965-66, and for media environments in 1972-73. The work completed under this rubric extended his method of using audiovisual media and randomness to find new forms of art. The major work produced with funding in 1972-73 in collaboration with Bob Diamond and David Behrman was *Cloud Music*, which utilized video, electronic signal generators, and customized electronic circuitry to create sound

compositions from images of the sky. A video camera was pointed at a patch of sky and the image transmitted to a television monitor which was used to select precise areas marked by six crosshairs. Parts of the video signal from the six crosshair positions were analyzed and converted into output voltages which fed into eight banks of signal or audio-function generators that made up the musical composition of the piece. As the clouds moved across the sky, the soft electronic chords would shift slowly or suddenly according to the brightness or darkness of the image. All of this was experienced in a relaxed setting with comfortable seating arranged in a semi-circle around two monitors. If works like *Yam Lecture* and *Cloud Music* worked on a problem in a fashion similar to research, it is not because they employed technology to generate new sounds from frequencies of light, or because they were collaborations with engineering know-how. Moreover, it may have been the search for a new type of aesthetic experience that construed Watts' work as research, but the discovery or solution of his work laid within the method itself, programming randomness and embracing the unknown.

The randomness and chance of *Cloud Music* embraced the unknown on an environmental scale. While *Yam Lecture* randomly combined its artistic and everyday source material, *Cloud Music* randomly combined six points of light that shift due to complex weather patterns. The use of randomly shifting cloud patterns to generate aesthetic experience eschews more instrumental examinations of the sky for, say, weather forecasting or telecommunications.⁵⁹ The latter both require scientific knowledge of causes and effects in the natural and mechanical world, but *Cloud Music*, though technological, does not really promote the valuation of such scientific knowledge except as an aesthetic experience. Since weather patterns are translated at 30 frames a second into video signals that are then

analyzed and turned into sounds, the inner workings of the video analyzer and sound generator become part of the complex set of causes; this technology, however, is placed alongside nature as a system of unknowns. In other words, the technical workings of *Cloud Music* remain as much an unknown when viewing the piece as the reasons for the shifting cloud patterns outside. While the idea for *Cloud Music* belonged to Watts and was born from his earlier experiments with randomness and audiovisual media, the video analyzer was the work of Bob Diamond, and the sound generator that of David Behrman. Diamond and Behrman independently held technical knowledge that was not necessarily known to one another in its creation. As a model of collaborative work, then, *Cloud Music* treats the technical know-how of fellow collaborators as part of the complex set of unknown causes. From the weather outside to technology to technical know-how, the orchestration of the piece and the aesthetic experience it provided communicates, in Dewey's sense, but does not instruct. Its expressive content is not the pleasure of Behrman's electronic sound compositions, but the experience of not knowing or not being certain, in any precise sense, of the natural and technological world that produced it.

Like Kaprow, Watts created consummatory aesthetic experiences in programming various elements and randomly setting them off against one another. If Kaprow's orchestration of aesthetic experience (with intellectual, sensual, and emotional content) was consummated by a pedagogic or discursive moment, even one as ambiguous as "Rub-a-dub," Watts seemed to do the same in programming his random and non-random events. One way that *Yam Lecture* differed from Kaprow's lecture for the Voorhees Assembly was because its target for transformation was the art object more than the injunction to communicate that was popular among academics, while *Cloud Music* used chance to flip the

hierarchy between scientific knowledge and aesthetic experience. As I have argued, Kaprow's practice in the university was in tension with the various forms to be found there—the lecture, the seminar, the research laboratory—in ways that utilized verbal, textual or diagrammatic content to unravel the static object and eventually to transform the reified form of the Happening into the more personal and participatory form of the Activity. In Watts' search for new art forms through the use of chance and randomness, he ended up challenging the way knowledge had come to be valued, instead embracing uncertainty and the unknown. The final piece of the puzzle asks whether the model of aesthetic experience exhibited here was oriented towards a development of the self, as Dewey thought all experience should be.

UNTEACHING EXPERIENCE

Brecht's work has been championed by scholars for its use of the Event Score as a precursor to Conceptual Art, but more importantly, it has been acknowledged as a signal of the shift in visual art from static object to experience, idea, or system.⁶⁰ Julia Robinson has argued that Brecht's events pushed beyond Pollock's use of chance by creating a repeatable model. In other words, Brecht's use of chance developed into a methodology, not a style. Liz Kotz has emphasized Brecht's place in the lineage of Cage, developing the structure of his Events on the model of the score "as an independent graphic/textual object, inseparably *words to be read* and *actions to be performed*."⁶¹ The significance of Kotz's comparison to Cage is that theories of text and performance usually emphasize the primacy of the performance or action, while Kotz argues for the equality and inseparability of text *and* action, or ultimately a transformed poetics of the fragment (i.e. both the textual fragment and

the performance-as-fragment) distinct from the prewar avant-garde.⁶² This interpretation suggests that Brecht's work with scores is a model for thought in which two competing epistemologies are brought together in reading a text and performing an action. Another scholar, Gascia Ouzounian, has added that Brecht's broadly sketched model of the Event was aimed at facilitating an enlightened experience—enlightened in a Buddhist sense, where “a self that achieves freedom from itself (which realizes the non-existence of self) is enlightened.”⁶³ Thus, scholars have started to get at the way Brecht's work in event-structures constructed a type of experience that competes with forms of scientific knowledge and research but also differs slightly with the Deweyan model in its relationship to the self.

If as Ouzounian suggests, Brecht's aesthetics worked on the dissolution of self, rather than its development through experience, then it is a break with the Deweyan aim of aesthetic experience. In Dewey's theory of experience, development of the self was the teleological end point of all experience, which differed with certain construals of Zen Buddhism. The comparative scholarship of Steve Odin has shown that the construction of *self* in the Kyoto school of Zen Buddhism was in fact not a complete negation of self, but a breakdown of the self in order to be rebuilt in a mutually dependent relationship with (a developing concept of) society; however, most Euroamerican cultural and philosophical interpretations of Zen misconstrue these in some fashion, focusing on emptying the self, or negating the self, without emphasis on the final stage wherein the self and society emerge mutually dependent.⁶⁴ The scholar D.T. Suzuki, who was influential on Cage and Brecht as well as others, was a proponent of the Kyoto school, but the question here in regard to Brecht's work might ask if Brecht's work focused on the negation of Zen-like enlightenment, as Ouzounian suggests, or on a pragmatist knowing through doing, in which

the self is constructed through symbolic interaction and a continuity of experiences over time.

Without space to further explore works of Brecht's here, I would simply point out that the place of the self in the teleology of aesthetic experience will continue to be an issue for Conceptual Art practices discussed in the following chapters. Ultimately, Kaprow addressed this problem with the process he called "un-arding," distinct in some ways from the "nonart" of Brecht. In three essays written over four years while he was Dean of Visual Art at the California Institute of the Arts, Kaprow explicated "The Education of the Un-Artist." While nonart adopted readymade objects, concepts, sounds, and environments—Kaprow lists both Brecht's Events and his earlier Happenings as examples—they always became adopted art forms in the end. The un-artist must concentrate instead on leaving art, as an active process of play and de-professionalization. Just as he worked to become a practitioner in the university, Kaprow wrote that "the un-artist is one who is engaged in changing jobs."⁶⁵ Rather than professionalizing artists, the un-artist was changing professions altogether. Kaprow substituted play for work, relying on Johan Huizinga theory from his 1955 book *Homo Ludens*.⁶⁶ Furthermore, he contrasted an open-ended kind of play with playing games. The point is not to "win," by finding success as a professional artist but to continue playing. Kaprow writes, "Play, however, [as opposed to gaming] offers satisfaction, not in some stated practical outcome, some immediate accomplishment, but rather in continuous participation as its own end." In other words, the purpose of play in art was simply to play more, achieving more concrete goods in experience, through play.

Arguably, Kaprow was an "un-artist" all along, at least in his work *Communication* and others on college campuses. Kaprow's Happenings and Activities on college campuses

were instrumental in un-artisting in the sense that they prepared the participants, including Kaprow himself, for more and greater aesthetic experiences beyond the career artist. For his 1988 retrospective, organized by Jeff Kelley at the University of Texas at Arlington's Center for Research in Contemporary Art (CRCA), Kaprow delivered four lecture-performances, the last of which took his own career in retrospect. He compared his own artistic development with a cultivation of the self through action. The self was not something that one was, but something that one perpetually became. Kaprow described the self in pragmatist fashion, as an idea in constant transformation and a product of action, connecting this to how he saw his own path from artist to un-artist, from his early Happenings and Environments to later Activities. One idea of the self, Kaprow notes, is an image privately held, while the other, bound up with being an artist, is publicly created. Publicly, Kaprow was the artist credited with inventing the Happening; privately, he was something else. In "The Education of the Un-Artist," Kaprow classified his Happenings as nonart before turning to Activities that adopted the strategy of the un-artist; however, as I have tried to argue for his work here, his earliest Happenings in the university were those of an un-artist, already in the process of changing professions.

His handwritten notes for the retrospective lecture outline the process of creating a self, culminating in the phrase: "notion of a future self, the product of a constant present self modified by memory of the past, is a constantly transforming image of self."⁶⁷ In another version of his notes for this lecture, Kaprow seems to struggle, crossing out lines and rewriting, to describe how the self becomes an idea or an image. In this description, he echoes Dewey's method of intelligent action and a notion of the self modified by experience. According to his outline, Kaprow would then point out that the various ideas of

past, present, and continually transforming self are empty. The notes read, “But in fact they have no substance, a created self like that is a nothing, it can’t be pinned down.” Thus Kaprow’s conception of self passes through nothing-ness, at least as an idea that has no substance. His notes for this part of the talk conclude, “the self disappears as a question and appears only in the act (of doing something).” Finally, Kaprow concludes that, although the idea of the self is empty or lacking substance, it reappears through action. In reading these last lines, the final words from the pre-recorded speech of *Communication* reverberate: “Beyond that there is only the simple act. A child hugs the grass. I lick the icicle. They shatter mirrors. Three sunflowers.”⁶⁸ Just as Kaprow’s earliest Happening retreated from a stated aversion to communication to a list of actions, his retrospective lecture concludes with action as the only place where the self appears.

Kaprow’s self was cultivated through play, not work, and not games. Furthermore, Kaprow’s play was a form of intelligence, “intelligent action” as Dewey would call it, in which doing is a form of knowledge.⁶⁹ His practice in the university was a cultivation of the self as it passed through meaningless concepts and intellectual activity only to reappear in playful actions. Play was a knowledge alternative that art could embrace. In Part II of “The Education of the Un-Artist,” Kaprow takes a more aligned stance with nonart, writing, “Imitation as practiced by nonart artists may be a way of approaching play on a modern yet transcendent plane, which, because it is intellectual—or better, *intelligent*—can be enjoyed by adults afraid of being childish.”⁷⁰ If artists were going to imitate objects and activities from other spheres of life, as nonart sought to do, they must do it playfully and intelligently, as a form appropriately characterized by Dewey’s “intelligent action.” Moreover, play, although contrasted with work and games, was aligned with intellectual activity, better

labeled intelligent in the sense that it enabled the acquisition of knowledge. As Kaprow blurs the distinction between nonart and un-art in Part II of his text, he also comes closer to defining the teleological end goal of these strategies as a kind of activity that will replace work, in the sense of industrial and newer forms of post-industrial labor. The self cultivated by Kaprow's intelligent action was playful, hugging grass and licking icicles, perhaps, in order to show others how not to get caught up in the game of professionalization. Kaprow's instruction, in that sense, was as much about the uses of the university as it was about the blurring of art and life or the process of un-artisting.

CONCLUSION

In the work of Kaprow, Watts, and Brecht, aesthetic experience was a mode of knowledge that could compete with science, and scientific knowledge was taken off the throne of all-important ends. Dewey was a pragmatist on this issue, refusing to nail down aesthetic experience as a mode of knowledge, at the same time that he gave intellectual activity an important place within a model of knowing-by-doing. In *Art as Experience*, he writes,

I cannot find in such remarks as these any intention to assert that esthetic experience is to be *defined* as a mode of knowledge. What is intimated to my mind, is, that in both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience. I have from time to time set forth a conception of knowledge as 'instrumental.' Strange meanings have been imputed by critics to this conception. Its actual content is simple: Knowledge is instrumental to the enrichment of immediate experience through the control over action that it exercises.⁷¹

As Dewey clarifies, aesthetic experience is not, strictly speaking, a mode of knowledge, but prioritizing the production and reception of art is an alternative to the pursuit of knowledge in isolation. If aesthetic experience was the ends and thought or inquiry was just one register of means, then the usual relationship between art (re-defined broadly as the aesthetic) and scientific research was reversed in the work of these three artists. The pursuit of knowledge was directed towards aesthetic experience as the kind of experience that makes life worth living.

To say that Kaprow and Watt's works were made whole, not fragmentary, belies the possibility of a postmodern character in Dewey's aesthetic experience. I have presented these practices here, however, as more of a challenge to the dominant construction of research in the university and the fear of an overly "academic" art by virtue of their ability to be fragmentary and whole at the same time, a seeming contradiction. Kaprow and Watts' practices shared with Brecht's a certain knowledge alternative—what Dewey called intelligent action, or knowing through doing—to be found in aesthetic experience, but the fragmentation in their work—the interpenetrating and randomly programmed sights, sounds, actions, or words—is made whole again by the institutional framework and forms of research. The lecture, the seminar, and research as predetermined forms to be utilized were tolerated despite their disciplinary, as in authoritarian, character. Both Kaprow and Watts found ways to adapt these forms to their liking; however, I have also intimated in discussing Brecht that important aspects of Dewey's aesthetic experience were not taken up in art practices that built off of instruction, language, text, and intellectual experience. The parodic elements of *Yam Lecture*, Brecht's aversion to the authoritarian or disciplinarian qualities of academia, and the uncertain place of the self in his adoption of Zen philosophy all point to

crucial ways that his practice stood outside of Dewey's model, and represents one pole in an axis that will return in later Conceptual practices. Although he worked in proximity to Kaprow and closely with Watts, Brecht also remained mostly outside the university and its forms. He is often discussed as a proto-Conceptual artist, or a forefather of so-called dematerialized, concept, idea, or systems art, which makes the distinction all the more significant for understanding the mutual transformation of art and university practices that will be taken up in the next chapter as visual art became rooted in ideas, processes, and operations.

¹ See Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, and George Brecht, "Project in Multiple Dimensions," in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963*, ed. Joan M. Marter and Simon Anderson (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 153-159.

² See William Kaizen, "Steps to an Ecology of Communication: *Radical Software*, Dan Graham, and the Legacy of Gregory Bateson," in *Art Journal* 67, no. 3 (2008): 86-107.

³ See Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act" *Art News* 56, no. 4 (Summer 1957)[Reprint in Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 77-78]; Meyer Schapiro, "The Liberating Quality of the Avant-Garde," *Art News* 56, no. 4 (Summer 1957): 36-42.

⁴ Aside from a few dissertations on the topic of education in Kaprow's work, this facet of his career has been studied, but rarely in reading his art practice, and certainly not as fundamental to his work from the beginning. See O'Dell, Kathy Rosalyn. "Allan Kaprow: The Artist as Educator," Ph.D. Diss. University of California Berkeley, 1982; Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Judith Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011).

⁵ Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993; expanded edition 2003).

⁶ References to the studio as a study, laboratory, or library are common in historical accounts of Conceptual Art beginning with Lucy Lippard and John Chandler's essay on the dematerialization of art. See Lippard and Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 46-50. See also Francis Colpitt, "In and Out of the Studio," in *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art 1974-1981*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2011), 63-80.

⁷ Allan Kaprow, "Notes for the Effect of Recent Art Upon the Teaching of Art," 1963, Allan Kaprow Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Box 46, Folder 20, p. 3.

⁸ See Maurice Berube, "John Dewey and the Abstract Expressionists," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 211-27 (especially 223). Meyer Schapiro was Kaprow and Watts' professor at Columbia University and a known convert to Dewey's formulation of aesthetic experience.

⁹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 1934. Perigree, 1980). Dewey's complete works have been published by Southern Illinois University Press in fifteen volumes; however, the main citations here are from an edition more widely available.

¹⁰ Van Meter Ames, *Aesthetics of the Novel* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1928).

¹¹ See Maurice Berube, "John Dewey and the Abstract Expressionists," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 211-27. For one art educator's opinion at the time, see David B. Manzella, "John Dewey and the Materialism of Art Education," *Art Journal* 28, no. 1 (Autumn, 1960): 19-21. For an account of how Dewey

fell out of fashion, see John Fisher, "Some Remarks on What Happened to John Dewey," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 23, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 54-60. See also Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) for historical context in relation to analytic philosophy in the United States.

¹² See Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). Shusterman does not take on Dewey's project to redefine the boundaries of art, but more like Kaprow's "blurring of art and life," seeks to enhance and cultivate the aesthetic experiences wherever they are found.

¹³ See Christoph Menke, *The Sovereignty of Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998). The most influential development Kant's aesthetic theory was Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹⁴ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 35.

¹⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 35. The full quote is: "A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation."

¹⁶ See Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 39.

¹⁷ Allan Kaprow, interview by Judith Rodenbeck, October 29, 1996, transcript, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 272.

¹⁹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38.

²⁰ Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 57.

²¹ Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1929), 299.

²² Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, 137.

²³ Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, 196.

²⁴ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1938), 35.

²⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 347.

²⁶ Allan Kaprow, "Note to 'Communication', Happening in April, 1958," Kaprow Papers, Box 5, Folder 2.

²⁷ Allan Kaprow, "Recorded Speech," Kaprow Papers, Box 5, Folder 2. Subsequent quotes in this paragraph are also from this document.

²⁸ See Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes*; Paul Schimmel, "'Only Memory Can Carry It into the Future': Kaprow's Development from the Action Collages to the Happenings," in *Allan Kaprow—Art as Life*, ed. Eva Meyer-Hermann, Andrew Perchuk and Stephanie Rosenthal (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2008), 8-19.

²⁹ Kaprow, "The Legacy Jackson Pollock," (1958) *Essays*, 5.

³⁰ Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes*, 30.

³¹ Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," (1958) *Essays*, 6.

³² See Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay* (as in note 4).

³³ Allan Kaprow, "Rub-a-Dub, Rub-a-Dub" in *Anthologist* 29 (1957): 16. The quotes below are from the version of the article found in the Kaprow Papers, Box 49, Folder 12.

³⁴ Kaprow, "Rub-a-Dub, Rub-a-Dub," 6.

³⁵ Kaprow, "Video Art: Old Wine, New Bottle" in *Essays*, 148-153. Originally published in *Art Forum* 95 (1974): 46-49.

³⁶ Kaprow, "Rub-a-Dub, Rub-a-Dub," 6.

³⁷ Kaprow, "Rub-a-Dub, Rub-a-Dub," 6.

³⁸ Poster for Fluids (with score), reprinted in *Allan Kaprow—Art as Life* (as in note 28), 189.

³⁹ Allan Kaprow, notes for Papers, Kaprow Papers, Box 9, Folder 3.

⁴⁰ Allan Kaprow, notes for Papers, Kaprow Papers, Box 9, Folder 3.

⁴¹ David Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams" in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (New York: D.A.P., 2005), 223.

⁴² See Anne Collins Goodyear, "Gyorgy Kepes, Billy Klüver, and American Art of the 1960s: Defining Attitudes Toward Science and Technology," *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (2004): 611-635. See also, chapter 1 of this dissertation.

⁴³ Watts, "Project in Multiple Dimensions," *Off Limits*, 158.

⁴⁴ Robert Watts, "Rutgers Research Council Proposal," 1961, Robert Watts Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Box 6, Folder 1.

⁴⁵ Robert Watts, Project Proposal, circa 1962, Watts Papers, Box 6, Folder 1.

⁴⁶ See Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), especially 183-192. See also Roger L. Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities since World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 67-68.

- ⁴⁷ See Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Liz Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," *October* 95 (Winter 2001): 54-89; Gascia Ouzounian, "Structures of Experience: On George Brecht's Event Scores," *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, no. 2 (2011): 1-14.
- ⁴⁸ George Brecht, "Chance Imagery," *A Great Bear Pamphlet* (New York: Something Else Press [1957] 1966). A note in the 1966 publication states that Brecht had only just met Cage when he wrote the text in 1957, and thus hadn't realized the importance of chance in Cage's work.
- ⁴⁹ Brecht, "Chance Imagery," 4.
- ⁵⁰ Of course, scientists were also studying randomness in nature, but using randomness did not replace the scientific method (nor should it).
- ⁵¹ The Oakland version is detailed in notes that accompany a memorandum sent to participants by John Galloway, September 27, 1963, Watts papers, Box 8, Folder 2.
- ⁵² Julia Robinson, "From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in Art of the 1960s," *October* 127 (Winter 2009): 102-103/n63. Robinson mentions the white lab coats. A later work by George Brecht titled *The Chemistry of Music* (1968/1969) took place at the Drury Lane Arts Lab in London and also featured Brecht in a white lab coat setting off fireworks in front of a series of slides. See Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht" in *George Brecht: Works from 1959-1973* (London: Gagosian, 2004), 46-65.
- ⁵³ John Galloway memorandum, Watts Papers, Box 8, Folder 2. See also, Walter Collins and John Galloway, "First Annual Symposium on the Arts Oakland University Rochester, Michigan October 24, 25, 26, 1962," *College Music Symposium* 3 (Fall 1963): 25-31.
- ⁵⁴ See George Brecht, Interview with Michael Nyman, published in *George Brecht: Works from 1959-1973* (London: Gagosian Gallery, 2004): 46-65.
- ⁵⁵ George Brecht, *Innovational Research*, unpublished essay, copy accessed in Watts Papers, Box 57, Folder 5.
- ⁵⁶ James Cardew quoted in "Volo Solo" programme, note to Brecht concert at the Royal Court Theatre, London, 22 November 1970 (quoted in *George Brecht*, 65, n41).
- ⁵⁷ Brecht interview with Nyman, *George Brecht*, 58.
- ⁵⁸ Brecht interview with Nyman, *George Brecht*, 58.
- ⁵⁹ Watts reports that growing up in the midwest he used to look up at the sky to tell the weather, something no longer possible while living in New York.
- ⁶⁰ See Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966-1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1973] 1997). Lippard's historical index starts with the publication of Brecht's text, *Chance Imagery*.
- ⁶¹ Liz Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," *October* 95 (Winter 2001): 57.
- ⁶² See Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977); Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). In theorizations such as Roland Barthes "writerly text" or Umberto Eco's "open work," Kotz points out, the emphasis is on the way one reads the text or performs the score.
- ⁶³ Gascia Ouzounian, "Structures of Experience: On George Brecht's Event Scores," *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, no. 2 (2011): 10-11.
- ⁶⁴ Steve Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1996).
- ⁶⁵ Kaprow, "Education of the Un-Artist," (1971), *Essays*, 104.
- ⁶⁶ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon, 1955).
- ⁶⁷ Allan Kaprow, notes for "The Recreation of One's Past and the Transformation of a Present Self," undated (lecture April 4, 1988, University of Texas at Arlington), Kaprow Papers, Box 32, Folder 3. Underlining appears in the note, with the word "self" underlined twice. I've represented that here with italics. Quotes that immediately follow are also from these notes.
- ⁶⁸ Allan Kaprow, "Recorded Speech" [for *Communication*], Kaprow Papers, Box 5, Folder 2.
- ⁶⁹ Dewey, *the Quest for Certainty*, 1
- ⁷⁰ Kaprow, "The Education of the Un-Artist, Part II," (1972) *Essays*, 115.
- ⁷¹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 290.

CHAPTER 3 — ART IN PROCESS: THINKING THROUGH ART

Elayne Varian came to Finch College to establish its Museum as a collecting and exhibiting institution that would serve the all-female, private liberal arts college on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. As the curator of the Museum's Contemporary Wing, her aim was to reveal something about the way contemporary art at that time was produced and exhibited, and she was able to do so successfully because of the College's location in New York City. Over the course of ten years, exhibitions at the Contemporary Wing were received relatively well by critics ranging from *The New York Times* to *Arts Magazine*, and Varian herself was known as the woman capable of lending an air of authority and seriousness to contemporary art because of her previous work dealing Old Masters paintings and European furniture. The Museum, however, was uniquely positioned for another reason. Since it was primarily an educational institution, the Finch College Museum of Art did not hold the same mission as other museums in the city. While museums often have an educational dimension to their mission, Finch was rejected for membership in the New York City Museums Council for its primary role as a college art museum. Varian's series of exhibitions would work to build on the Museum's role as an exhibition space that served the college from its very first year. From 1965 to 1972, Varian arranged the series of exhibitions, "Art in Process" as a way for students to see how artists developed the ideas behind their work. At first, the "Art in Process" shows were arranged around specific media—painting, sculpture, and collage—but those distinctions broke down, while focus on the artist's process or the life of the artwork played a role in other ways. Exhibitions such as "Documentation" (1972) and "Projected Art" (1966-1967 and 1972) also focused on the

process of art and exhibition making. Drawings, prototypes, models, artist statements, and documentation—objects which resembled what came to be called Conceptual Art—were all exhibited next to finished objects for the purposes of pedagogy. In pursuing the educational mission of the Museum, these exhibitions and others at Finch aligned higher education and intellectual activity with Conceptual Art as it emerged in New York in the late 60s.

At the time, Minimalist sculptors like Carl Andre, Eva Hesse, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Morris were providing an aesthetic experience that was phenomenological (i.e. based on visual and kinesthetic perception in interaction with an object). Their objects were often simple cubes, rectangles, and other shapes made from industrially produced materials like steel, plexiglass, and factory-finished bricks. In 1967, Sol Lewitt's emblematic "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" articulated a new dimension of this work in addition to the phenomenological experience it provided for the viewer. Without exactly rejecting experience as the epistemic foundation for his art, Lewitt's "Paragraphs" asserted that the work of art preceded its actual physical production as an object. Lewitt writes, "If the artist carries through his idea and makes it into visible form, then all the steps in the process are of importance. The idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product."¹ Because the meaningful qualities of the objects were no longer being produced by hand, LeWitt's statement insists that the meaningful qualities pre-exist the object and experience in the form of an idea. The observation that there were important "steps in the process" of producing Minimalist sculptures, as banal as that may sound, was exactly what Varian's exhibitions set out to reveal.

Meanwhile, the artist Joseph Kosuth expressed LeWitt's sentiments as a rejection of the aesthetic experience in favor of the art idea. Kosuth's reflections suggest that aesthetic experience had permeated everyday or non-art experiences, and thus art had to set itself apart somehow. He writes, "I began to realize, as well, that the intelligent and sensitive people in my environment had experiences with nonart portions of their visual world that were of such quality and consistency that the demarcation of similar experiences as art would make no appreciable difference; that perhaps mankind was beginning to outgrow the need for art on that level; that he was beginning to deal with his world aesthetically."² Kosuth's statement suggests that an aesthetic experience is just as likely to happen walking down a city street as in an art gallery. For Kosuth, the frequent occurrence of aesthetic experience made it an unremarkable phenomenon, and thus art had to change and adapt.³ While Kosuth's statement does not stand in for the whole of Conceptual Art any more than LeWitt's, his thoughts expressed here represent a position that sought to challenge aesthetic experience as the privileged place of meaning in art.

The most successful Conceptual works did not abandon aesthetic experience completely but rather transformed it. Mel Bochner, who engaged seriously with the exhibitions at Finch through his own criticism, curation, and exhibition, presented an alternative to the outright rejection of aesthetic experience. After studying painting at Carnegie Mellon University and philosophy at Northwestern University, Bochner moved to New York, where he was hired at the School of Visual Arts in 1966. His exhibition of Xerox "drawings" (*Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art*, 1966) was a seminal work of Conceptual Art for its use of text, its focus on ideas in process, and its pared-down style. Around that time he also began working with

photography and writing criticism for *Arts Magazine* and *Artforum*. Throughout his career, he has engaged with systems of counting, measuring, and language, all of which extend from his early investigations of conceptual strategies and systems. A thread through this chapter is an assessment of Bochner's early work with Finch College exhibitions; through his engagement with Finch, Bochner began to emphasize thought process over product, and thus aligned art making with intellectual activity, while never abandoning aesthetic experience entirely.

After reviewing where Conceptual Art and process overlap in the critical scholarship of Benjamin Buchloh, this chapter then contrasts how Varian's exhibitions defined process in art. Exhibitions at Finch helped shape some Conceptual strategies through an emphasis on thought process and development, but this crucial dimension of Conceptual Art is often denigrated when examined from Buchloh's formalist perspective (i.e. an interpretative framework that assumes the physical object and its perceptual effects are the privileged site of meaning). Such a formalist framework rooted in the object risks excluding process and social contexts as part of the material conditions for the work and ignores the way that artworks themselves can act as interpretations of meaning. Next, I discuss the strategy of seriality as it was defined by Bochner and exhibited at Finch. The use of predetermined processes or systems clearly complicates the reading of art objects alone, but something like John Dewey's art as aesthetic experience, discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, does not completely explain the situation either. By examining the exhibitions and key works that passed through Finch College, I argue that some conceptual strategies (using statements, information, and systematic procedures) provide yet another model of how intellectual activity can be aesthetic activity. Visual artists like Grace Hartigan, Roy

Lichtenstein, Jo Baer, Hanne Darboven, and Mel Bochner (to mention only the ones touched on here) began to approach art as a decentralized aesthetic experience, distributing it across visual perception as well as mathematical concepts and textual modes of communication. As artists engaged with meanings that could be expressed in language, the thought or the idea behind the artwork—not artistic intention but information and knowledge—became central to art practice. The thought or idea behind a work could become the thought in front of the work in the mind of the viewer, and thus knowledge in art practice became the work of making and interpreting meaning.

Meaning does not simply exist in these practices to be discovered by others. Meaning can be a puzzle, but it is not a principle to be found in nature, as scientific knowledge and research in the university have often been defined. Furthermore, making and interpreting meaning is not a creative solution to a problem, as approaches to artistic research discussed in the previous chapters have formulated it. Nonetheless, the way Conceptual Art practices both create *and* interpret meaning in the world is a form of research. In the last section of this chapter, I argue that Conceptual strategies reconfigured aesthetic experience as intellectual activity through a discussion of Bochner's *Measurement* series. From this discussion, I conclude that it was crucial that artists engage with the university and academia. While Buchloh's assessment of Conceptual Art faults artists for becoming critics, scholars, and academic practitioners, it is *because* they have taken on these roles that their practices have maintained social relevance.

PROCESS IN ART

To talk about process in postwar art has often meant to talk about how something was made and to give importance to the production procedures in interpreting the meaning of the work. In his 1952 essay, “The American Action Painter,” the critic Harold Rosenberg writes, “The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.”⁴ Without using the word, Rosenberg describes the defining characteristic of action painting as a *process*. Furthermore, he distinguishes what he saw, for example in the work of Jackson Pollock’s drips on canvas, from the traditional idea of painting as the creation of pictures. Rosenberg’s description of action painting leaves room for some traditional features of painting, like the use of sketches or studies, so long as these are treated as prolonged or repeated actions. In other words, an artist might perform one action in a drawing on paper, and then decide to repeat that action on a larger scale with paint on canvas. He explains, however, why artists might be moving away from sketches to work directly and spontaneously on the canvas: “To work from sketches arouses the suspicion that the artist still regards the canvas as a place where the mind records its contents—rather than itself the ‘mind’ through which the painter thinks by changing a surface with paint.”⁵ The distinction between traditional painting and action painting, in Rosenberg’s view, rests on the relationship between the artist’s thoughts and the art object, where action painting located thoughts and ideas *in* the act of painting and traditional painting held the idea and the artwork apart. Conceptual artists like Kosuth, LeWitt, and Bochner would come to work against this formulation of a merged art idea and

art object, but not before the notion that the process of creating art was about acting with one material upon another had become dominant in American painting.

Furthermore, the material upon which artists could act was described differently by critics such as Clement Greenberg as an undifferentiated or all-over field (i.e. the surface of the canvas).⁶ For Greenberg, the defining characteristic of Modern painting was drawing the eye's attention to the flat surface of the canvas and the visual properties of painting (e.g. line, color, texture). Later critics like Benjamin Buchloh would argue that this all-over field was expanding with each new art movement: from the two-dimensional surface of the painting, to the three-dimensional object bounded in space, to an unbounded space that was more loosely defined. Within this framework, process was an important concept when Buchloh wrote about the sculpture and films of Richard Serra.⁷ In the late 60s, Serra had begun to make sculptures with lead in which he scattered sheets of the material around the room (*Scatter Piece*, 1967), heated up and splashed the material onto the floor (*Splashing*, 1968) or used it to make casts of the corner of the exhibition space (*Casting*, 1969). His film *Hand Catching Lead* (1968), whose title also describes what one sees, used the moving image to show the action upon the material (a single shot of a hand catching square lead pieces as they dropped from above, off-screen). In his assessment of Serra, Buchloh claimed that process (as in procedure or action) was central to American art in the late 60s, arguing that Serra's sculptures and films followed and built upon the logic of an expanding field. In other words, artists were still acting with materials in an undifferentiated or all-over field, but the field in which artists could act was now extended into the temporal dimension. Action would no longer be thought of as the procedure that created the final work, but it would be the work itself. He calls this shift in attention to process a "dematerialization of

sculpture,”⁸ echoing a phrase that Lucy Lippard and John Chandler had used to describe Conceptual Art in their seminal essay from 1968.⁹ The question then becomes, what makes this type of process sculpture different from the kinds of practices that Lippard and Chandler wrote about as Conceptual Art? As I will endeavor to show below, the difference is in the definition of process and whether or not the materiality and meaning of the work can be found in the language, text, and information around the art object.

First, we should dwell for a moment longer on the underlying premise of Buchloh’s argument and make explicit some of his assumptions. His account puts a lot of importance on the temporal dimension in Serra’s work because he argues that works like this were the only way artists could address the fact that the culture industry—which he also frequently calls the spectacle—was threatening to corrupt art’s institutions. The culture industry, first theorized by Adorno and Horkheimer or the spectacle theorized by Debord, was the name for the mode of capitalist production as it began to encroach upon the production of modern art, music, literature, and other aspects of culture.¹⁰ The mode of production is the term Marx gives to the complex interaction of productive forces—such as machinery, human labor, knowledge, skills, and natural resources—and social relationships that divide people along axes of class, race, gender, sexuality, and so on. In Buchloh’s view, avant-garde artists had to continue to push the boundaries of the field of action in order to remain socially relevant at a time when industrial production and scientific innovation under capitalism were encroaching upon the freedom and autonomy of individuals (not just their physical freedom, but their freedom of thought). Artists and intellectuals are tasked, in the theory of the avant-garde taken up by Buchloh, with maintaining art and culture as a place to experience freedom and autonomy, even if art and culture don’t equal real freedom in the social order.

For Buchloh, then, experience becomes an important term that can be likened to the idea of *subjective* experience, or consciousness. It is at the level of the subject, as a theoretical figure of the socialized individual, and the subject's consciousness that Buchloh tries to maintain a place for alternative cultural values to appear. The task of avant-garde art, for Buchloh and his theoretical sources, is to offer experiences that will either maintain a pre-capitalist kind of subject or pre-figure a new one with more freedom and autonomy than that which is dominant under capitalism.

To do this, Buchloh assumes that artists had to critique the commodity status of the art object, or at least be reflective about it, through a continued engagement with the physical art object and its perceptual effects (I will return to this assumption in a moment). In being turned into commodities with surplus value, so Marx observed, material objects and social relationships were imbued with a special fetishistic quality.¹¹ In his earliest essay on Serra, Buchloh focuses on the way temporal procedures or technologically reproducible media like film made it difficult to maintain the fetish quality of art objects, though still engaging with what Buchloh thought was the most meaningful part of any artwork: the physical materials and its perceptual effects. It becomes clear that the term "dematerialize" in Buchloh's essay on Serra does not mean that process sculptures and films literally were disappearing, but rather that they were resisting commodification while remaining visually legible and materially tangible artworks. In a later essay on Serra from 2007, Buchloh maintains his position vis à vis Serra's resistance to the culture industry and spectacle but focuses more on the way Serra's process sculptures represent (figuratively speaking) a subject and experience that is different from the alienated, commodified, or reified kind under capitalism.

Although Buchloh does not fault artists who pushed the definition of art and the boundaries of their medium, he would go on to claim that Conceptual Art had gone too far by turning to technologically reproducible language, text, and information as the “material” for their work. In a 1990 essay, Buchloh argued that Conceptual Art had become “an aesthetics of administration,” meaning not only that the works looked like the work of bureaucrats, but also that the works had lost their critical power by abandoning visual experience as the privileged epistemic register through which to understand art.¹² Buchloh’s strong repudiation of Conceptual Art reads,

Not only did they [Conceptual Artists] destabilize the boundaries of the traditional artistic categories of studio production, by eroding them with modes of industrial production in the manner of Minimalism, but they went further in their critical revision of the discourse of the studio versus the discourse of production/consumption. By ultimately dismantling both along with the conventions of visibility inherent in them, they firmly established an aesthetic of administration.¹³

Here, Buchloh assumes that works of Conceptual art were an attack on the more traditional idea of art process where the work had meaning and was appreciated because of the artist’s talent or skill. He adds that their works favored processes of meaning-making that were not reliant upon the traditional idea of craft, a feature shared with Minimalist sculpture; however, Conceptual artists set their work apart by completely abandoning the visual experience. They began to use statements and information—all modes of working that are not strictly dependent upon the visual and can enter more readily into other systems of meaning. Buchloh argues that the most conceptual Conceptual works (for instance Lawrence Wiener’s statements) could not possibly offer an alternative picture of a free-thinking subject or experience because they no longer offered the kind of experience that Buchloh saw as paradigmatic to art (visual and perceptual). Furthermore, Buchloh views this negatively not

because he is a traditionalist (he is not), but because, as he claims in his introduction to *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, Conceptual art disrupted the institutional paradigm that allowed art to keep the culture industry at bay.¹⁴ By using language and linguistically communicable content, they had inadvertently stepped on the territory of the critic, whose job it is to interpret and supply the work with meaning. Although he saw Conceptual artists within a lineage of avant-garde practices that resisted the commodity status of art, he ultimately saw their work as having “enacted a crucial structural transformation” that eroded “the division of labor, or rather we should say the traditional separation of powers.”¹⁵ That is, Conceptual Art so disrupted the division between artist, museum, critic, and scholar, that the forces of the culture industry were able to penetrate the art world and turn it into nothing more than an extension of the ideological apparatus that justified the capitalist mode of production, with all of its constraints on freedom and unequal distribution of resources.

Because Buchloh’s assessment has been so influential in reading Conceptual and process art of the 1960s, it is important to question some of his underlying assumptions about the nature of this work. First, Buchloh assumes that Conceptual artists were engaged in dismantling the traditional mode of art production by working with language and information. If what he means by “traditional” is that objects or works of art had meaning because they were carried out thanks to the artist’s technical skill, then his assessment has a degree of truth; however, by contrasting the traditional with industrial modes of production, he leaves untouched the crucial distinction that Rosenberg’s essay makes clear. In the quote above from Rosenberg, he suggests that traditional painting separated the art idea (“the mind of the artist,” as he calls it) and the art object, while Modern painting treated the idea and the object as one and the same. If LeWitt could claim that “all the steps in the process are of

importance” and that “the idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product,” then the idea and the finished product are clearly two separate entities.¹⁶ Conceptual Art shared something in common with the traditional painting in this regard, but Buchloh’s assessment leaves the distance between idea and execution unexamined, favoring instead an implicitly Modernist notion of processes (à la Rosenberg and Greenberg) where idea and action were one and the same.

Second, he narrowly reads Conceptual Art as an attempt to oppose the status of the art object as a commodity, whose value comes from its uniqueness, through an abandonment of visibility and materiality. But Conceptual Artists were not necessarily abandoning visibility, so much as they were putting it in conversation with other epistemological registers, such as mathematical and linguistic systems of meaning. Third and most significantly, Buchloh assumes that artworks (and the interpretation of artworks) must be limited to the physical object and its perceptual effects in order to fend off objectionable aspects of capitalist modes of production (i.e. forces and relations of production that limit freedom and oppress human beings). By not sticking with the purely visual and materially tangible form of knowledge in art, Buchloh argues, Conceptual Artists foolishly entered into the practices of communicative meaning-making that were easily corrupted by capitalism (exemplified for Buchloh by the market-driven art world of the 1980s). An alternative way to read the work of Conceptual Art, as well as other art movements of the 1960s, would be as an intellectual activity and a picture (speaking figuratively again) of the alienated subject under capitalism. This is no less material in the sense that it is delimited by real forms and institutions, but whose opposition to the modes of production came in the act of making *and interpreting* meaning. This would be the major contribution of Varian’s exhibitions: to read

the practices of the 1960s as a process of thought and execution, where meaning is not embedded in the artwork or experience—only to be deciphered by the critic—but consists of a process of development that precedes the execution and continues on afterward. This reframing would happen in the context of higher education, and it would have consequences for the practices of art as a scholarly pursuit that could engage in social criticism as part of its intellectual activity.

ART IN PROCESS

The first “Art in Process” exhibition in 1965, subtitled “The Visual Development of a Painting,” featured sixteen American painters, ranging from various types of abstraction to Pop and Op art that was popular at the time.¹⁷ The press release announced the show as the first in a series and established its purpose. Elayne Varian writes,

This and subsequent exhibitions in the proposed series are not designed to judge artists or their work or infer that one type of development is better or more important. The purpose is to delineate the steps that these artists have taken to develop their work. Other artists work directly in their medium, some of them making several drawings and changes in the painting on the canvas before the final image. Many painters work quickly and directly to maintain the spontaneity of their idea. In either case, the mental or physical process does not exist to be exhibited.¹⁸

As the press release announces, Varian set out to look at “process” defined as the steps that artists took to create their work. She elaborates the idea of “process” with the word “development” to mean all aspects of preparation. Varian exhibited finished paintings alongside their source images, in some cases photographs or magazines, and she also included several drawings, rubbings, prints, and other works that were meant as studies for the final paintings. The artist Grace Hartigan, for example, sent covers from pornographic

magazines that inspired her oil painting *Jolie* (1963), alongside a collage and watercolor study done in preparation. The final painting can only be described as abstract, bearing no resemblance to the magazine cover, and yet the inclusion of source material suggests that the painting is in some way a response to the sexualized depictions of women on the covers. The title of one of the magazines is also the title of the painting (*Jolie*), and thus the two are further linked by the name given to both. The inclusion of the watercolor and collage study suggests that the work was not a spontaneous response, but a carefully considered composition. As the above quote from the press release points out in its last few sentences, her exhibition excluded artists whose process was spontaneous, or included drawing first directly on the canvas. In short, Varian excluded certain types of painting where the material remains of the process were not visible because they were one in the same with the final painting, a crucial difference between Varian's definition of process for the early Finch shows and the attention to process in action painting or later process art.

Finally, Varian included statements from the artists about the paintings and their inspiration; these statements, however, are noteworthy as information or context for the work, not as revelations of the artists' intentions. For example, Grace Hartigan's statement tells the story of how she came to acquire the pornographic magazines and adds a paraphrased quote from Marilyn Monroe to her collection of source material.

My present studio is an old loft building on Baltimore's waterfront. Baltimore is a seemingly conservative city with staggering contrasts. Near me is the "Block" where you can buy anything—sex, dope, pornography. I chose a day when one of the many bookstores was empty and bought the girlie magazines 'Joy', 'Jolie' and 'Salome'. Their titles seemed ironic to say the least. My protest (if that is the correct word) in these paintings is against the depersonalization of sex. As Marilyn Monroe put it, when she was a sex symbol she felt like a 'thing' and she didn't want to be a thing.¹⁹

While the critic John Canaday, writing in the *New York Times*, derided Hartigan for interpreting her own work as “an exorcism” and “a protest,” he entirely missed the significance of the statement for the context it provides.²⁰ Hartigan’s statement may very well abuse “the romantic idea of the artist as a peculiarly sensitive spirit,” as Canaday bemoans, but her statement also offers *information* that would soon become the stuff of Conceptual Art.²¹ In this case, the information that Hartigan provides—the location of her studio next to a neglected area of Baltimore and the statement from a Hollywood sex symbol—contextualizes her painting within a system of sexual objectification that is played out in the urban environment and represented in the media. To describe the kind of information contained in Hartigan’s statement and others, the influential Conceptual Art dealer Seth Siegelaub would use the term *secondary information*. The term was a way to distinguish these kinds of materials—like the statements, studies and source images that Varian exhibited—from the final works. Siegelaub, however, would go one step further in exhibiting only the secondary information as *primary information*, or finished pieces. Essentially, Varian had taken one step in this direction by exhibiting statements, studies, and source material in the interest of showing the artist’s process, as in development, even when that pointed away from the physical object or the visual experience it provided.

Thus, the types of preparatory material exhibited included images alongside statements delivered as text, establishing not only the fact that some artists “study” before they produce a final work, but that they also mobilize language and ideas in their development. As self-evident or unremarkable as this may sound, the kinds of work she carefully excluded suggests that there is reason to take note. Not only did she exclude artists whose process was not visible, she evidently excluded artists whose process was not

communicable, since even artists who worked spontaneously or directly on the canvas could presumably make a statement about their work. This refusal to communicate suggests that, in the case of painters who seek to capture the “spontaneity of their idea,” the idea is ostensibly only to be found in the final painting. Although Varian had a rather broad definition of process, steps in development had to be discernible so they could be exhibited separately—either as source imagery and preparatory studies, or as information, statements, and ideas. This emphasis on separate steps that exhibited a developmental process is yet another important distinction for thinking about how Varian’s exhibitions and Conceptual Art differed from the kind of process art that Buchloh and others value.

For most works in the first “Art in Process” show, the notion of process or steps in development only extended to the studies and thoughts that preceded the work of the artist; however, Roy Lichtenstein’s work pushed the limits of what counted as the artist’s process. Alongside his painting *Vicki* (1964-65), Lichtenstein exhibited a stencil and a photo of the factory process that produced the materials (enamel on steel). Process, in this case, was seemingly extended beyond the activity of the artist alone. The question then becomes, if Lichtenstein’s photograph of the factory where his enamel was produced could be exhibited alongside the final painting, why couldn’t a photograph of oil paint production suffice for artists who worked directly and spontaneously? Furthermore, why couldn’t a photograph of the artist at work, such as Hans Namuth’s photographs of Jackson Pollock in the studio, serve as evidence of the artistic process? Varian’s curatorial framework for “Art in Process” was not really about displaying *every* possible step or piece of “secondary information” around the development of a final work, but only those that were deemed relevant to the work’s meaning. Certainly what counts as meaningful information is up for debate, but in

Lichtenstein's case, the factory production process was relevant to the meaning of *Vicki* because, through its use of comic-book imagery and its simulation of newspaper printing, the work commented on mass production, romance and desire in consumer society. Information in the form of a photograph about how the enamel was produced, in this case, framed the painting as part of a larger system of industrial production and consumer objects. But more importantly for the "Art in Process" exhibitions, the photograph offered information about the mental or meaning-making process that surrounded the work, just as Hartigan's statement had included important information that Canaday completely dismissed. In other words, information deemed meaningful was considered part of a thought process, without being located in the physical work of art or its perceptual effects. Thus, Varian's interest in process located meaning in the thoughts and ideas around the work. It would not be long before the thought behind the work would become the work itself in Conceptual Art, and thought process would displace aesthetic experience as an important location of meaning.

The second "Art in Process" exhibition, "The Visual Development of a Structure" (1966), directly contributed to the historical turning point from Minimalist sculpture to Conceptual Art. The series of events that linked the two is well recounted by the art historian James Meyer. While the "Visual Development of a Structure" was only a shadow of the similarly titled Minimalist exhibition "Primary Structures" at the Jewish Museum (1966), the Finch show brought to light the meaning-making procedures that went into the creation of Minimalist art objects.²² Moreover, the exhibition elicited questions about the art idea versus the art object, as Meyer writes, "For in revealing the disjunction of conception and realization integral to minimalist technique, 'Art in Process' exposed a previously

unexamined aspect of the work itself.”²³ As Meyer claims here, a rift became evident thanks to Varian’s shows between the work as a conception or idea and the production of the physical object. Included in the exhibition were a series of drawings by Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson and others, along with a catalog with statements from the artists. Just like all of the “Art in Process” shows, these were not proposals for unrealized projects, but sketches and ideas for works exhibited alongside the works themselves. After reviewing the show in *Arts Magazine*, Mel Bochner offered a response in the form of an exhibition in the form of a work of art. *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art* (1966) was a small exhibition at the School of Visual Arts’ Gallery where Bochner compiled four black binders of Xeroxed diagrams, notes, a receipt from Donald Judd’s studio floor, an article from *Scientific American*, and other things Bochner had collected from the studios of artists. Presented as Bochner’s work, the exhibition became an icon of Conceptual Art. The image of Bochner standing amongst four pedestals with identical black binders makes it easy to see why Buchloh would later claim that, by giving attention to the ideas separate from their execution, artists had gone too far in opposing final products. If notes and statements were raised to the level of art objects and together these things made equal reference to a preceding art idea, then aesthetic experience was thrown into crisis. As a result of the emphasis on different steps in an intellectual process, it was no longer clear that aesthetic experience was *an* experience bounded by an encounter with an object or circumscribed by the structure of an event, as still remained true of a Minimalist sculpture or Serra’s process works. To look at process—as in the process of developing thoughts, ideas and meaning—was crucial to the way that intellectual activity became artistic activity.

ART IN SERIES: SERIALITY, SYSTEMS, STATEMENTS, AND OTHER IDEAS

Following the second “Art in Process” show and Bochner’s *Working Drawings*, Varian organized an exhibition titled “Art in Series” (1967-68) at Finch with help from Bochner, who had been working with the concept of seriality. In lieu of a catalog essay, Bochner's article “The Serial Attitude,” published in *Artforum*, outlined the serial strategies that made it into the show.²⁴ Bochner's notion of seriality differed from what Varian had initially set out to exhibit. While Varian had set out to show works that artists had done as part of a series, as in a group of paintings with the same subject matter or theme, Bochner convinced her to let him work out some of his ideas on seriality. Shifting the focus of the show entirely, Bochner suggested works that were executed according to a predetermined process or system. Process, in this case, was taken to mean a set of procedures that an artist could deploy in the production of their work, no matter the medium. These were not material procedures then, but more like plans that could be expressed through language or mathematics. In some ways Bochner’s idea was similar to Jack Burnham’s system aesthetics, but seriality was focused more on simple progressions, rather than communication between interrelated parts or self-regulating systems.²⁵ “Art in Series” and “The Serial Attitude” also seemed to avoid any overt comparisons to technological systems, although mathematical progressions played an outsized role. Counting or permutating sets of numbers, for example, would be considered a simple, predetermined process or system. Furthermore, so Bochner thought, the final product or work of art should draw out the system as far as possible by minimal means in order to put the system itself on display. In a work that involves arrangements of numbers, for example, every possible arrangement

should be given. But more than an aesthetic appreciation of mathematics and systems, I would argue, seriality emphasized a dialogue between visuality and other systems of meaning. By entering into new systems of meaning, the works and the practices of art (including steps leading up to the production of artworks) opened new doors for artists to act as the makers *and* interpreters of meaning.

We can add dimension to seriality by comparing some of the works in the show. Jo Baer's seriality, for instance, is distinct from the seriality of Donald Judd, also exhibited in "Art in Series" but whose call for "specific objects" to replace the media of painting and sculpture was committed to the phenomenological experience of the art object. Baer's paintings, in contrast, did not reject the use of traditional media (painting), nor did they use traditional principles of composition. Although they might appear to draw attention to flatness and thus fit within a Greenbergian idea of the all-over field in the manner of Modernist painting, this reading of the work misses the way Baer's paintings engage with ideas and meaning outside of the art object. The work exhibited at Finch was called *Primary Light Group: Dark* (1967), from a series titled *A Circular Series of Six Named Stations of the Spectrum*, and it was a selection of three large canvases each with a band of black on the outer edge and a field of white in the center with a smaller band of color separating black from white. The scale of the paintings also puts them in the realm of Abstract Expressionism, and the mostly white surface with clean dark bands around the edge puts them in conversation with Hard-edge painting that came after. Baer's canvases worked as a set to refer to the scientific measuring system that quantified the visible light spectrum. In this set of paintings, each canvas is exactly the same, except for the band of color that separates the white in the center from the black around the edge. The title of the set, A

Circular Series of Six Named Stations of the Spectrum, begins to supply key secondary information, but the statement on the exhibited audio guide reveals the importance of looking outside the work itself to gain access to important aspects of the work and Baer's practice.

After repeating the title of the work and the title of the set, Baer's statement enlightens the listener about the visible spectrum of light wave radiation. Explaining the spectrum in terms of a hierarchy of energy content and referring to Planck's constant, she argues that the spectrum should not be understood as a movement or progression at all, not "one thing after the other," as Judd had written of his objects, but as stationary quantities. She seemingly returns to the artworks when she suggests that paintings, in general, should be understood in the same way—stationary—ending her text with a list of words that share a common etymological root with the concept of standing: "stem, system, stool (both of bowel and seat), still, stay, static, station and stationary, state, statement, static, statistic, stall, stable, stallion, stale, stalemant, statutory, stud..."²⁶ The tutorial that Baer gave listeners and the paintings that hung on the wall both made reference to the color spectrum, and specifically to fixed quantities of light, but the idea was further analogized by the curious list of words. The standouts are "system" for its use as a variant of Conceptual Art and "statement" for its appearance (in plural form) as the title of Lawrence Weiner's seminal Conceptual work of 1968.²⁷ The referent of Baer's work, then, which seems to escape both conventions of representation, neither word nor painting, was an idea circumscribed by her statement and her canvases. Between the three paintings in the series, only the band of color was different. Thus, as a set or series, the paintings functioned in a way that they could not individually, drawing attention to the band of color between black and white. Baer wanted

color to be seen as a quantity of light, or at least a quantity of something, between nothing (black) and all (white). While the statement makes this clear by drawing an analogy between the idea of “some-ness” and the visible light spectrum, Baer refrains from explaining how the visual properties or the experience of the work should itself be read. In other words, her statement only provides secondary information, but not explanation.

Although Baer’s statement, as with the others, was not being presented as art, and so it would be going too far to claim her for Conceptual Art or to draw too close a comparison with those who worked expressly with text and language, her works don’t fit within the dominant interpretive framework of Modernist painting that suggests a painting must only be read through its object or visually perceptible qualities. Even as she declared paintings to be static and fixed, her use of titles and sets of paintings aligns her in an important way with Conceptual Artists who engaged more directly with language. “Art in Series” came on the heels of Baer’s “Letter to the Editor” in the September issue of *Artforum*, and one year after Baer’s inclusion in the “Systemic Painting” (1966) exhibition at the Guggenheim.²⁸ In her letter, Baer launched a defense of painting against Judd and Robert Morris, who both had rejected painting for its illusionistic qualities. Baer brushes this off with the biting observation that “if not all sculptures are statues, and not all cubical specific-objects boxes, then not all paintings are pictures.”²⁹ Reading between the statement at Finch and the *Stations of the Spectrum*, the alternative was that paintings mediate ideas, functioning in relation to ideas but not identical to them. I take this to mean that Baer’s (small “c”) conceptualism was one in particular that did not abandon visibility, and even the most traditional of means, but nonetheless worked on the relationship between visibility and

competing systems of meaning, like the scientific language invoked in her statement for Finch.

The seeming aporia of the fixed painting and a relationship to other systems of meaning is analogous with the relationship between physical object and idea (or primary and secondary information) that was being opened up by the conceptual strategies of Bochner. In fact, Bochner's review of the Guggenheim exhibition "Systemic Painting" (1966) was dominated by observations about Baer's work and thought process, distinguishing it from the work of Frank Stella and Ad Reinhardt (both Hard-edge painters) because it was determined by a conceptual system. Bochner describes Baer's work as "the least penetrable by thought" and yet he seems intrigued by the way the work makes reference to the conceptual systems (naming and measuring conventions) borrowed from the discipline of science.³⁰ This observation suggests that, although Baer's paintings appear to have more in common with Minimalism or Hard-edge abstraction, something else is going on in her use of conceptual systems. Bochner's review connects this to his developing idea of process, where he writes, "Phenomenon are impenetrable by thought and exist non-ambiguously as they exist preceding definition. But a work of art is the product of thought which precedes the actual work. Now that art has freed itself from both referential and abstract burdens artists face a new paradox."³¹ In other words, Baer confronts the incommensurability of thought and phenomena because her paintings have "a presence," and yet take part in a conceptual schema. This paradox, as Bochner calls it, is exactly that between the visuality of the work and another system of meaning that it comes into contact with. Drawing on Baer's catalog statement, Bochner begins to articulate the foundation for a decentralized experience implied by Baer's sets. The more works in the "Art in Series" show brought statements and

systems in tension with their visual or perceptual counterparts (i.e. the drawings, paintings, and sculptures in this case), the further the boundaries of aesthetic experience were stretched to include the types of intellectual activity and meaning-making that were involved in producing and deciphering the work.

The paradox or tension to which Bochner refers raises new questions about the importance of materiality and the location of aesthetic experience in works that went further in abandoning categories of painting and sculpture. For example, Hanne Darboven's work for "Art in Series" *Model 21 x 21 1a* and *Model 21 x 21 2a* (1967) were drawings on graph paper of hand-written numbers on square grids, a conceptual system of multiplying, counting and indexing number systems that would lead her to devise larger systems. Her drawings were perhaps the works in the "Art in Series" exhibition that most closely overlapped the process of production and the finished product. What looked like notes on graph paper, and in fact were called "models," were both the preparation for future work and the culmination of what came before. Furthermore, because the works used counting and multiplication, they referred to a system that Darboven had chosen as a readymade. The readymade quality is what supplies Darboven's work with a moment of conception that must have preceded the material process of the drawings themselves. In choosing to work on graph paper, Darboven chose not only an industrially produced object, but also a predetermined conceptual system: the Cartesian grid, and perhaps a whole body of knowledge associated with it. She does not use the graph paper to plot coordinates, however. Instead, she writes numbers out as words (in German) and in Arabic numerals, playing out different number arrangements.

Of this early work, Darboven said in her Finch statement that “a system became necessary; how else could I in a concentrated way find something of interest which lends itself to continuation?”³² The implication here is that any system of meaning she generated herself would not be worth continuing. This statement would have pleased the critic John Canaday for its humble appeal to a system and its distance from the romantic language of abstract painters like Hartigan. At the same time, unlike the statement of Baer, it does not stick to secondary information in the form of information about the work’s conceptual system—because that has now gone into the work itself—but veers into the territory of explanation. Darboven reflects generously and sincerely on her own experience and thought process, stating, “In my work I try to expand and contract as far as possible between limits known and unknown. The meaningful experience for me is the exploration of negative or positive avenues.”³³ In a later version of her statement, she adds, “At times I feel closer [to the limits] while doing a series, and at times afterwards. But whether I come closer or not, it is still one experience. Whether positive or negative, I know it then.”³⁴ While her statement remains rather vague, she describes producing the work as having an experience and an exploration. That is to say, Darboven maintains a connection to the process of carrying out the drawings, which distinguishes her conceptual approach from that of Minimalists like Judd, but also those Conceptual artists who were considered her closest cohorts, like Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Weiner. While LeWitt’s wall drawings were carried out by others and Weiner’s *Statements* did not have to be carried out at all, Darboven’s works relied on the experience of writing out each system in her own script. The question remains, then: how does the experience of the artist in creating the work through conceptual systems become the experience of the viewer?

Lucy Lippard's description offers a viewer's perspective. She wrote in 1973 of her first experience with Darboven's work that she could not help being overwhelmed by the process that the artist must have gone through to painstakingly write out the tables and grids and pages of numbers, commenting that the conceptual systems are "the least interesting part of the work. What I come away with is a sensuous imprint on my experience and a provocation to think about what produced it..."³⁵ Lippard's description of her first experience with Darboven's work shows little interest in the conceptual system; the sensual experience instead provoked her thought. With the experience of the senses at the forefront of her reading, a contradiction emerges around the claim that conceptual strategies were an attempt to dematerialize the art object, a proposition which Lippard in her article with John Chandler was instrumental in perpetuating.³⁶ Darboven's statement at Finch could have been the source for Lippard and Chandler's term, where she writes, "I like the least pretentious and most humble means, for my ideas depend upon themselves, and not upon material. It is in the very nature of ideas to be non-materialistic."³⁷ Lippard and Chandler would run with this formulation, claiming that Conceptual Art was in a process of dematerializing; but it would be wrong to suggest, however, that the material support was somehow vanquished, as Darboven and Lippard's statements both attest to their experience with the drawings as material things. Both the artist's experience and the viewer's experience remained important allies, but Darboven's and Lippard's insistence on the "non-materialistic" and "dematerialization" seemed to be an ill-fitting choice of words.

Responding to the claim of "dematerialization" in the pages of *Artforum*, Bochner commented, "I find that it contains an essential contradiction that renders it useless as an idea."³⁸ In 1970, Bochner was still defending the way serial procedures rendered the idea

and object *equal terms* in a decentralized aesthetic experience. He historicized this position, outlining the shift he had witnessed in the intervening years: “Suppression of internal relational concerns opened the way for the involvement with ideas beyond the concentricity of objects. It became apparent that the entire foundation of art experienced from a ‘point of view’ was irrelevant to art of attenuated size or total surround, i.e., works without experienced centers.”³⁹ Bochner clearly saw the point of thinking beyond the object and its perceptual effects, which he suggests began with a suppression of composition, and he contrasts this new kind of work with work for which there is only one “point of view.” While he puts this in terms of size or scale, it applies equally well to works that aren’t meant to be seen from a “point of view” simply because they do not privilege the visual as the only site for aesthetic experience. What Bochner had described as a paradox in the work of Jo Baer became a new way of conceiving experience, sustained between the idea and the object, without an experienced center. He offers the idea of a decentralized experience instead of a dematerialized art object, and it is from this perspective that Darboven’s work should be understood. Although Lippard was provoked to think about what produced the object, she also had no interest in the conceptual system. Her interest in what produced the object is not a reference to action, but a reference to thought or consciousness behind the work. While the consciousness of the artist is not in the artwork, it is represented, in a way, as a consciousness that is concerned with systems of meaning outside of bodily and material production alone.

Thus the use of predetermined systems, in this case, should be read as a dialectic of consciousness and materials that displays a new way of thinking about the aesthetic experience. Furthermore, the engagement with outside systems of meaning allowed these

artists of the late 60s to show what experience was like, that is, how it was changing during the postwar period. They did this not through literal representations of experience, but through forms that thematized or ironized experience. The use of seriality by those that veered away from Minimalism and towards an emerging Conceptualism suggests that the experience engendered was still essential; however, that experience was a breakdown of stable systems of meaning as they came into conflict with others. This tension in aesthetic experience (articulated by Bochner as a de-centering) was essential in opening up possibilities for artists as they began to ask questions about meaning and to interpret the meanings around them.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROCESS

In the next “Art in Process” show, subtitles were dropped and organization around a specific medium abandoned. “Art in Process IV” (1969-1970) was a show that included painting, sculpture, film, text, and installation. Without any media-specific focus, “Art in Process IV” was based on what an article from *Art in America* (found in Varian’s research files) called “impossible art.”⁴⁰ The catalog essay and press release emphasized the ubiquity of ideas as the force behind contemporary art, whatever the medium. As the wall text for the show put it, “With this type of art work, knowledge of the process becomes indispensable.”⁴¹ If the show had been given a subtitle along the lines of the previous “Art in Process” shows, it may very well have been “The Visual Development of a Process,” for the process had become the artwork as much as the objects exhibited. The preparatory materials and the statements from artists became essential to an understanding of the work. The wall text again reads, “This manner of presenting works is a positive overture to contemporary art

without being, for practical purposes truly sufficient: art becomes a science, developing several specific theories, the works of which are but exemplary materializations.” The wall text strongly links this kind of process-oriented work to the work of scientific or theoretical research. The physical objects themselves are treated as merely “exemplary materializations” or secondary to the research that produced them. They should not be regarded as secondary information turned into primary information (as in Siegelau exhibitions), but as secondary information in the exhibition that referred or pointed to the primary research practices that produced them. However, it is important to keep in mind that these research practices are in fact material sites of the work, too.

In 1969, “Art in Process IV” was the third show in which Bochner would come to play a part, if only as one among many exhibiting artists. Other artists in the show included Carl Andre, Lynda Benglis, William Bollinger, Rafael Ferrer, Barry Flanagan, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman, Richard Van Buren, and Lawrence Weiner. Richard Serra was invited to participate but had to decline for scheduling reasons. Reviews of the show suggest that the standout pieces were Bochner's *Measurement: Group C* (later renamed *Measurement: Plant*, 1969), a film by Robert Morris appropriately titled *Finch Project* (1969) that harkened back to his earlier *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961), and Eva Hesse's *Contingent* (1969).⁴² Varian's research for “Art in Process IV” overlapped with research for an article titled “New Dealing” on the changing relationship between artists and dealers, and for an article never finished titled “Patented Art.” If there was any territory being taken over by artists at the end of the 60s, it was the territory of intellectual activity and research. In that sense, Buchloh was right in identifying a new role that artists were claiming for themselves with these strategies. However, I would like to

examine how Bochner's works retain an oppositional stance towards the oppressive aspects of capitalist modes of production, even though they do not remain completely loyal to the logic of Buchloh's interpretative framework.

To do this, I will start by framing Varian's "Art in Process IV" show as an indicator of a new "mode of development," a concept I borrow from the media theorist Manuel Castells; however, I will follow another media theorist, Michael Wayne, in grounding this concept within the larger category of the mode of production. The mode of development refers to the way the forces of production and social relationships are used to extract surplus value, i.e. through constant "development" of technology and the social relations involved in using it. While the mode of production includes all of the ways that human beings sustain life, the mode of development refers to that particular subset of ways that human beings extract surplus value with the help of technological tools. Castells uses the term "informationalism" to describe a mode of development distinct from industrialism. Industrialism extracts surplus value mainly through the production and consumption of goods, while informationalism, on the other hand, extracts surplus value mainly through turning information and knowledge into a commodity by rendering it increasingly complex. To be clear, the production of goods and the commodification of knowledge happened historically under both modes, but the difference hinges on the *main way* that technology has been used to extract surplus value from human labor and natural resources. Castells suggests that the switch from one mode to the other happens at historically different times in different places. Technology is crucial to the mode of development since it greatly increases the extraction of surplus value in both industrialism and informationalism. Who owns the technology, and who possesses the knowledge of how to use it, are crucial factors under

both; however, under informationalism, symbolic or cultural meaning becomes even more important as a source of surplus value. By grounding the mode of development within the mode of production, Wayne suggests that informationalism allows for certain problems within capitalism to come to the surface since the added importance of symbolic meaning makes it harder to extract surplus value efficiently. This makes evident a contradiction in the capitalist mode of production between the value of commodities and the social relationships that produce them. An understanding of the contradiction is important for maintaining, as I seek to do, that Conceptual practices and some of those other “impossible art” forms of the late 60s, were able to hold an oppositional stance to the capitalist mode of production as they increasingly engaged with knowledge and systems of meaning. The site of my critique is still the material aspects of knowledge and meaning production; however, under informationalism, one must look to the material contexts and social relationships that produce objects for key glimpses of the larger social totality.

In 1969, as Varian was preparing “Art in Process IV,” she was also working on an article for *Art in America* about art dealers and galleries, titled “New Dealing.” Interviews with dealers such as Martha Jackson, Leo Castelli, Virginia Dwan, Howard Wise, and Seth Siegelaub all help Varian sketch a picture of a changing landscape, or a changing mode of development, where by and large traditional relationships between artists and gallerists were upset. For example, dealers frequently commissioned work that was dismantled if not sold, and young galleries could no longer float artists financially for six or seven years until their work was collected. The mode of development concept applies here since the changes that Varian’s research tracks mostly relate to works that were creating meaning (and hence cultural and economic value) by using secondary information (often about the means of

production, as in Minimalist sculptures or Lichtenstein's use of enamel on steel, but also Conceptual works created from instructions). In the case of Robert Morris's works, Leo Castelli explains in his interview with Varian that sculptural installations could be recreated from diagrams if sold or exhibited, and thus a sale might conceivably precede the existence of the physical object. Of course, this was the very situation that Sol LeWitt's wall drawings or Lawrence Wiener's *Statements* drew attention to. Seth Siegelaub, on the other hand, might not sell anything, since the works exhibited might not exist after an exhibition, though he still had to get collectors to underwrite the costs. By and large, the cultural and economic value of the works was no longer tied to the production of objects, but to the production of meaning (a material process nonetheless). In other words, Varian's interviews show that the value of the works was no longer tied *primarily* to the production of objects with meaning, but to the production of meanings, first and foremost, given object-form only once they needed to enter the market. Hence the value of the works is not reliant on the use of knowledge and technology to produce goods (as under the industrial mode of development), but on the use of knowledge and technology on information in the form of meaning (as under informationalism).

The use of knowledge on the production of meaning, rather than on the production of goods, extended to the other ways that artists were making a living from their practices at this time. Varian interviewed artists for her article, including Lichtenstein and Bochner, about their relationships to selling work. Lichtenstein's regular teaching gig at Rutgers University from 1960 to 1963 meant that the Castelli gallery did not provide financial support in those years before his work was lucrative, as they did for others. Similarly, by the time Bochner's work was shown and sold through Sonnabend Gallery in New York, he had

been teaching at the School of Visual Arts for six years and supplementing his income by writing art criticism with no monetary help from the gallery. This early instance of post-Fordism and neoliberal market logic does not originate with the art market or artists, but rather comes straight out of the post-war research paradigm of the universities and commercial laboratories. Producing meaning was like basic research, but it was a troubling logic that would have to be critically disclosed before it could be reconfigured.

Nothing of what Bochner had to say in his interview with Varian made it into the “New Dealing” article, but Bochner’s *Measurement* series (1968-1969), which I will discuss in a moment, was part of the changing mode of development Varian examined. In addition, Varian’s research for another article (never completed) was based on the work of Isamu Noguchi, whose designs for playground modules had been patented as a way to make a living without selling the artwork outright, and Sue Fuller, whose patented *String Compositions* (1965-1969) did something similar. The artists she examined most closely were thinking of their work as having meaning, and hence economic value, beyond the gallery context in the form of intellectual content. Thus, the use of knowledge on the production of knowledge-as-commodity began with the universities and corporations in which artists also worked. Varian’s research files show that her interest in artists’ process (or development, as she continues to refer to it) was increasingly related to her interest in the economics of supporting an art practice. Providing this historical context is an important first step in reassessing Buchloh’s claim that works that dismantled the logic of production/consumption were responsible for the encroachment of the culture industry or the spectacle, and not, in fact, reconfiguring a changing mode of development that was taking place on a larger scale.

In addition to Varian's two articles and the "Art in Process IV" exhibition, her research files from those years show a piqued interest in the relationship between art and science, specifically the program Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) initiated by Billy Klüver, Robert Rauschenberg, Fred Waldhauer, and Robert Whitman. E.A.T. was a non-profit organization that put artists in touch with engineers so they could get technical support. This included, most famously, a series of performances called *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering* in 1967, and the Pepsi Pavillion at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan, in 1970. This group would become instrumental in the work that Bochner would produce for "Art in Process IV," *Measurement: Plant* (originally named *Measurement: Group C*, 1969).

Through his acquaintance with Robert Rauschenberg and E.A.T., Bochner took up residence at the Singer Corporation, a company known for manufacturing sewing machines that began diversifying its investments by branching out into telecommunications research in the mid-1960s (an appropriate example of the shift from industrialism to informationalism). There, Bochner insisted on being given a salary as a researcher so he could make full use of the lab and be treated on par with those carrying out intellectual work. Bochner's piece for "Art in Process IV" was part of the work that began at the Singer Lab, and it represents a culmination of his interest in systems and procedures, in this case, the U.S. system of measurement. It also represents yet another material context or set of relationships, the corporate research context, that is easily missed once the work is manifest as a physical art object.

The interviews and research that Varian collected suggest that, at the level of the gallery context, the wider industrial context, and even in the context of state-regulated institutions like museums and universities, a shifting mode of development internalized the

basic contradiction of the art object as commodity. The contradiction involved is an appearance of inherent value (in this case located in a physical art object or its perceptual effects) that represses the actual human labor and social relationships that went into creating an artwork. Under informationalism, an artwork's development primarily amounted to the production of meaning (i.e. the development of an idea), but its physical production or manifestation was less important. The trope of "dematerialization" reflects this particular internalization at the end of the 1960s, as do several moments in Varian's interviews where gallerists insist that a lot of labor and money go into producing artworks that are not sellable.⁴³ That is, there must be *something* to sell if there is something to labor over and spend money on, even if it is not clear where the limits of that *thing* should be. In this formulation of the contradiction, the labor and relationships that ultimately enable the production of the art experience—from the gallery to the factory to the university—were even further obfuscated by the value and meaning of the artwork, which derived from contextual knowledge or secondary information about the system used to create it.

Meanwhile, artists began to reconfigure aesthetic experience as a cognitive/intellectual activity to such a degree that the meaningful parts of the artistic practices were much harder to separate from the human labor and social relationships that created them. While Kosuth may have wanted to abandon the term "aesthetic experience" altogether, Bochner took a revisionist approach toward aesthetic experience with the idea of decentering. For Bochner, the art work is not meant to be seen or experienced from one point of view, but emerges from a set of meanings, contexts, and relationships and enters into others. The idea of "decentering" aesthetic experience is important for seeing how the capitalist mode of production is mediated (and not simply expressed) by these new kinds of "impossible art"

forms that Varian wrote about and exhibited. The twin terms of dematerializing and decentering neatly exemplify the dialectical mediation of the capitalist mode of production, in which a contradiction is sustained and yet reconfigured by new practices. In this case, mediation describes the dialectical way that Conceptual and process-oriented works could hide certain aspects of their production while highlighting others, and concurrently hide certain material and social contexts while highlighting others. To be sure, even the most Conceptual artworks (Lawrence Wiener's *Statements*, for example) entered readily into the market once they were physically produced, but it was no secret that the meaning and value of the work was due to its confounding of the usual market relations, even as it relied on them for its materialization. In contrast, Serra's lead pieces highlighted the artist as a laborer/producer, while hiding the labor that went into mining the raw industrial material. All of this is to emphasize that the primary way that artworks could mediate the mode of production was changing under the new mode of development that Castells called informationalism, which relied on producing knowledge, meaning, or symbolic value through knowledge, research, and technology. It is for this reason that Buchloh identified Conceptual Art as the movement that ceded too much ground to the capitalist mode of production and its effects on human consciousness, but which requires closer examination from the perspective of the reconfigured, decentralized aesthetic experience. In contrast to Buchloh's reading, I would propose that the decentralization of aesthetic experience does not cede the critical power of art to the culture industry. Rather, the decentralization of aesthetic experience was a mediation of alienated or reified consciousness under capitalism.

MEL BOCHNER'S *MEASUREMENT* SERIES

Bochner's *Measurement* work, exhibited at Finch, performs just such a mediation of reified consciousness. The *Measurement* series began by designating sets of objects, and giving each set the name Group A, B, or C. The sets would function as the pre-determined system that produced the works. The three groups, respectively, stipulated that Group A would consist of "Any stable object, material or place oriented to a system outside itself," and Group B would be "Any stable object, material, or place with its dimensions marked directly on it," while Group C would include "Any stable object, material, or place related to a pre-determined standard."⁴⁴ The *Measurement* pieces have been read by others in relation to two distinct media practices—both drawing and photography—but I read them here as a diagram of decentralized aesthetic experience, and hence a mediation of consciousness.⁴⁵

Early in 1969, Bochner had completed *Measurement: Room* (1969), which might fall under Group B, as a place with its measurements marked directly on it, and works like *48" Standards* (1969) or *72" From the Corner* (1969), which might fall under Group A. These two pieces marked the dimensions of pieces of brown wrapping paper directly on the wall. The paper was then removed or displaced to show the measurement itself as the focus of the work. Bochner's interview with Varian centers around these works as she was preparing her "New Dealings" article and her show for Finch. Bochner's piece for "Art in Process IV" fell under Group C since it used a stable object (a potted plant) set in front of a square area marked off on the wall resembling a mugshot backdrop or police line-up. The potted plant was placed directly in front of a nine-foot-by-nine-foot square with horizontal lines marking every foot. Instructions for the piece preceded the actual installation and stipulated that the size of the area marked on the wall could vary, so long as it remained square and rounded to

whole feet. Lights in the room were to be arranged to cast a shadow of the plant against the horizontal lines as if to measure the height of the plant by its shadow. Because *Measurement: Plant* was created from instructions, the piece is hypothetically possible to execute without the presence of the artist and without concern for material “originality.” The plant and the tape used to mark lines on the wall are simply discarded at the end of an exhibition, and new ones are used when the work is to be re-exhibited. In one sense, the *Measurement* series as a whole also used the logic of instruction in basing each group on a set of rules that Bochner had created. In using text-based rules and instructions Bochner’s *Measurement* pieces are diagrammatic, functioning somewhere between text and image in order to point to an experience that is not fully accounted for by either.

Measurement: Plant stages and re-presents the reification of consciousness, or the alienation of the subject from itself and others, which is ultimately at stake in Buchloh’s critique of Conceptual Art. However, while the piece depicts reified consciousness, that is not to say that it reproduces it. Gyorgy Lukàcs theorized reification from his reading of Marx on commodity fetishism as the process that turned human knowledge and thought into an object through rational mechanization (i.e. Fordism or Taylorism) and scientific rationalization. Furthermore, Lukàcs drew an analogy between the fetishistic character of commodities (that which makes them appear inherently valuable) and the laws or principles sought by science in order to find reason and order in nature. The similarity, for Lukàcs, is in the way that the valuation of commodities and the valuation of scientific discoveries overlook the larger social relationships or totalities that are inscribed in each. What is left out is the human being, human labor, and human relationships.

Reification is thematized and disclosed in Bochner's piece, on one level, because a part of nature (a plant) has been subjected to an external system of measurement and rationalization. By placing a slightly-larger-than-human-sized plant in front of the square grid on the wall, the plant becomes a stand-in for the individual, only now this individual seems out of place. Similarly, Marx described alienation, understood here as another term for reification, as a process of distancing the individual human being from its relationship to the rest of its species.⁴⁶ The potted plant is separated here from its "species-being," or its context within nature, as it is given a new purpose external to itself. In this reading, the plant is first denatured by its indoor setting and then by the conventions of measurement, which could be the kind of anthropometrics used in criminal identification or the design of office furniture. The potted plant, like the human being it replaces, could be read as a piece of nature brought in for inspection, or equally, brought in for office decor. The plant itself could be a piece of office furniture, like one found in the open office plans that began to take over American and European companies in the postwar period. In these new office designs, workers and furniture were treated like little ecosystems of efficiency, carefully manicured to facilitate the exchange of labor, commodities, and capital, with the appearance of pastoral serenity.⁴⁷ If the plant is a stand-in for the human subject, then, it is not only the human subjected to measurement, or mechanized rationalization as in a factory line, but subjected to the more quotidian kind of alienation of office drudgery. Thus the kind of reified consciousness thematized is that which appears under informationalism, where labor is not just physical labor in a factory but knowledge work in an office.

In Bochner's piece, the measurements on the wall are a central signifier around which ideological contests can play out. Literally, the lines and numbers represent a certain

number of units in the U.S. system of measurement. Derived originally from the British system, the U.S. system uses units historically based on parts of the human body, and so the absent subject figures again as metaphoric “feet” on the wall. Already tension or a false equivalency arises from this metaphor, where certainly one can protest that not all feet are the exact same size, despite any system’s claim to standardization. Furthermore, using feet and inches, these measurements cannot be a strict reference to those used in the natural sciences, which use the metric system; however, keeping in mind that the *Measurement* series was derived from Bochner’s time in the Singer Lab, these numbers refer generally to the use of measurement as an attempt to standardize communication in a commercial research context. The U.S. uses this system most widely in the manufacture of goods and consumer products, and the fact that the U.S. continues to stick to its own system indicates its economic dominance and ability to drive the production of knowledge for commercial purposes. Thus the simple use of measurement in Bochner’s piece contains a number of problematic social relationships, historical conflicts, and false equivalencies that arise from the actual context (or material practices) of the work’s conceptual development. Not only is the U.S. system of measurement a product of its former colonial relationship to Great Britain, its continuance is a product of its contemporary relationship to global trade. By using feet instead of meters, the piece also mistakes scientific standards for standards used in the production of commercial goods, thus linking, as Lukàcs did, the commodification of labor and objects with the scientific search for rationality or principles in nature. Most consequentially, then, the measurements on the wall falsely suggest some knowledge or meaning to be gained from the application of a measuring system to nature or to the plant as a stand-in for the subject’s consciousness. In other words, the measured grid on the wall

clearly fails to capture anything meaningful about the plant set before it, even as it provides information about its height and places it within a standard system of measurement.

So far, I have provided a reading of the work as if it were a discrete object or product of Bochner's research, but the decentralization of aesthetic experience that reconfigures reified consciousness means we must look beyond the conventional boundaries of the work. First, *Measurement: Group C* was accompanied by a set of ten index cards plus instructions for installing the work. The index cards offer some statements concerning measurement and the tensions that play out around this term. For example, one card reads:

CAN BECOME
RELATIONS ARE ↗ PROPERTIES OF OBJECTS TOO.
MEASUREMENT IS AN OPERATION
AS SUCH IT DOES NOT TELL ANYTHING
(OPERATIONS ARE DIS-CONNECTIVE) ↓
BUT AS AN ASSUMPTION ACROSS
THE SITUATION IT DOES
TELL _____
SOMETHING (IT JUST ISN'T
CLEAR WHAT) – OR IT
MIGHT BE SOMETHING
LIKE SAYING “ALL”⁴⁸

This note gives a visitor to the Finch exhibition further reason to pay attention to the system of measurement employed as a key signifier in the work. Bochner questions the usefulness of this signifier where he notes that it “does not tell anything,” but he also clarifies how measurement signifies by calling it an operation, “like saying ‘all’.” In that sense, measurement does not represent the concept of *all*, but it represents the act of saying or declaring *all*. Bochner's notecards try to get at the way this declaration of encompassing everything is represented in the use of measurement. In these index cards and his installation at Finch, Bochner seems to use measurement as a signifier of ideology, or a system of

beliefs about the world and one's role in it. In this case, the measurements on the wall seem to suggest that everything is subject to a measurement of height in feet. This rather absurd proposition draws attention to other ideologies at work in systems of measurement that might be equally absurd: most specifically, scientific objectivity, or the claim that an objective system might encompass, account for, or apply to everything. Bochner's index cards were another instance of this absurdity—as if one might find answers to the meaning of the work in the sloppily scrawled notes. In fact, a close reading of the cards would show that Bochner was just as skeptical of language as he was of measurement systems, if not more so. In providing these note cards, a visitor to the Finch exhibition is sent to another location in order to reconstruct the meaning of the work, but what they find is yet another system (language) equally filled with inscrutable layers of meaning and contexts.

Furthermore, *Measurement: Group C* reconfigures aesthetic experience where its life extends beyond the exhibition at Finch. As the rules and the instructions for laying out *Group C* suggest, this piece can be dismantled and reassembled in various ways. The instructions read:

MEASUREMENT: GROUP 'C' / LAYOUT (WITH PLANT) FOR ALL
PIECES IN GROUP 'C' USING OBJECTS / BLACK TAPE ON WALL
WITH NUMBERS / SIZE OF LAYOUT CAN VARY AS LONG AS
SQUARE FORMAT IS MAINTAINED (10'X10'), (5'X5') etc / IF
POSSIBLE, LIGHTING SHOULD BE ADJUSTED TO CREATE
MAXIMUM SHADOWS ON WALL / M.B.⁴⁹

From these vague instructions, one could re-create the piece in an infinite number of ways, not only with different kinds of plants in different sizes but also with variations in the way the numbers mark the square format on the wall. Perhaps to limit the potential confusion, a small photograph appears with the instructions and has informed subsequent iterations of the

piece.⁵⁰ What Bochner called the decentering of experience can be thought of as the work's performativity, or its open character.⁵¹ In that sense, the work applies a Cagean strategy to sculptural objects. That is, the textual instructions and the physical, sculptural components of the piece constitute a fragmented and plural experience of text/object similar to the text/performance provided by some of Cage's works (as well as Allan Kaprow's, George Brecht's, and others'). Experience is fragmented in this dual structure of text/object not only because the piece operates with two different epistemological modes (one based in language and one based in phenomenological experience), but because the meaning of the work mediates the material and social contexts that surround the piece on various levels (its signification, its physical production, the gallery context, and so on). On one side, meanings are buried or covered over: the artist's intention, the means of production, Bochner's relationship to the university and the gallery, etc.). On the other side, there are the various and infinite contexts into which the piece may enter and be reproduced. One might also think of Bochner's piece, particularly the written rules and instructions, as a writerly text, leaving much up to interpretation when encountering the instructions.⁵² The openness or writerly character is exactly why Buchloh faults Conceptual Art—for opening the door to reification—but which seems rather to thematize the way the subjective experience of consciousness appears under informationalism as reified consciousness in order to reconfigure it or open it up to new non-alienating iterations. This consciousness is no longer made equal to a thing but made equal to a formula, an algorithm, or a function that can be performed or applied in a variety of circumstances, no less material although inscribed in social practices and institutions.

The piece not only depicts a new kind of experience under informationalism, it empties experience of any inherent meaning outside of its inscription in social institutions, relationships, and practices. The instructions supply so little and are subject to such variation as to virtually include any object (even the use of a plant appears in parenthesis as if it were just a suggestion or a possibility). Such openness and variability—the claim to encompass “any stable object, material, or place related to a pre-determined standard”—requires that meaning be filled in with new social contexts and relationships at the moment of reception. The physical, sculptural components of the object alongside the textual components of rules, notes, and instructions all mediate the experience of the work in two directions. First, the experience from which the work came is buried, and second, new experiences at the point of reception are enabled or released. Variations on the piece potentially allow for new meanings to arise from new contexts. While the latter aspect of the piece does not live up to its full potential lying dormant in collections, it is nonetheless made available as a key strategy in art under informationalism. Utilizing this dialectical process of mediation, the work internalizes the contradictions of the commodity fetish once taken to market, and yet reconfigures the socialized individual’s experience as the site of freedom and autonomy. While Buchloh recognizes that this kind of experience (the subject’s consciousness constructed through social institutions and practices) is what’s at stake, he fails to consider that it is also the location of meaning and the level at which artworks might struggle in opposition to undesirable aspects of capitalism (alienation and exploitation).

In his earlier review of “Art in Process: The Visual Development of a Structure,” Bochner had expressed his disinterest in technology for thinking about the new industrially produced materials that Minimal sculptors employed. He writes, ambivalently, “Technology

is merely a tool. Artists use tools,” adding, “For that matter, the brain is a technology.” Reinforcing his lack of concern for the materials used to produce experience, technological, artistic, or otherwise, Bochner sets up an analogy that ultimately leads to readings of his work as a pillar of Conceptual Art, where the idea *is* the material, where systems of knowledge and processes of thought become the medium itself and the object to be looked at. In an interview with James Meyer, Bochner describes his project as “a kind of research based on bracketing,”⁵³ which Meyer has used to align Bochner’s process with strategies of estrangement, distancing, or laying bare the device.⁵⁴ One way to understand Bochner’s work, then, appears in Meyer’s reading as a new kind of formalism that works on the process of thought instead of through the concerns of a specific medium. This is perhaps how Buchloh saw Conceptual Art within a Duchampian tradition of the readymade. In other places, Meyer and others have continued to read Bochner’s *Measurement* works in relation to the tradition of painting, just as they could be read in relation to drawing and photography.⁵⁵ The contradiction of a dematerialized art returns again as Bochner’s oeuvre is read through a variety of different media and traditions, but this is a contradiction that Bochner’s work reconfigures. In the interest of *experiencing* thought as aesthetic, Bochner’s early explorations (from which his body of work continues to draw) cover over the logic of production, consumption and the studio; however, his work is not legible through the objects alone. In other words, he internalizes certain contradictions while reconfiguring others. While Bochner may indeed have been showing the flaws in systems of knowledge—like measurement—or holding accountable various media—like painting, drawing, or photography—the more significant achievement is in the way his early practice staged, disclosed, or thematized the vapidness and alienation of experience under the mode of

production that began to shape society in the 1960s. The potential for art to cultivate alternative subject positions, allowing others to situate themselves within a set of social relationships and contexts, relied on the way experience was being reconfigured as an intellectual activity with multiple entry points.

CONCLUSION

Arriving at his body of work through a series of articles, exhibitions, and one stint as a researcher, Bochner began his career in the multifaceted art world of the late sixties. While Conceptual Art did take on the logic of the market and the material manifestations of the art object, there is more to the story that emerges from the process-focused exhibitions at Finch. The *Measurement* series, in particular, was the culmination of an inquiry that began with the *Working Drawings* and his exhibition reviews. His role at Finch was limited, but through the pedagogic interests of Elayne Varian emerged the opportunity for inquiry into the expansive reach of aesthetic experience, the role of technology, and the disappearing concern for the physical art object and its perceptual effects.

Lurking below the surface, however, was the broader context of the 1960s. Speaking about Eva Hesse after her death, Bochner noted, “I always felt there was something ‘haunted’ about Eva’s work. Maybe it’s haunted by all those lost ‘contexts’ of the 1960s...”⁵⁶ The context Bochner refers to is the plethora of artists from the 1960s who often go unmentioned, but there is even more that haunts the work of Hesse and others at Finch College. In exhibitions at the all-female school on the Upper East Side, civil rights, feminism, and a booming middle class were scarcely directly addressed. In combing the exhibition records of Finch College, another setting, one familiar to most but not often

discussed by art critics, emerges from the correspondence and research files: a symposium on destruction art canceled to honor the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.; A letter from a colleague at an historically black college asking for help cataloging the college's holdings of African art; a catalogue of a Conceptual Art exhibition in Chicago in response to the assassination of Fred Hampton. These are the contexts overlooked by a narrowly formalist interpretive framework. These documents leap from the files but go unmentioned in examinations of conceptual strategies. As artists began to participate in interpreting meaning, they would be able to engage with these larger contexts that extend beyond the locus of the art object and its perceptual effects. As the socialized individual thematized by these conceptual practices was pictured as a reified, alienated consciousness, attention shifted to social systems of representation and the construction of a new socialized individual that could be addressed by the research of visual art.

¹ Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," [1967] in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 12-16.

² Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 31.

³ In reality, early

⁴ Harold Rosenberg, "the American Action Painter," *ARTnews* (January 1952): 22.

⁵ Harold Rosenberg, "the American Action Painter," *ARTnews* (January 1952): 22.

⁶ Clement Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting" in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 208-229.

⁷ Benjamin Buchloh, "Process Sculpture and Film in Richard Serra's Work" [1978] in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 405-428.

⁸ Buchloh, "Process Sculpture and Film," 420.

⁹ Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art" [1968] in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 46-50.

¹⁰ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Blackwell Verso, 1997 [1994]); Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

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- ¹¹ Karl Marx, "Section 4: The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof," in *Capital, Volume I* [1867], reprinted in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1972), 319-329.
- ¹² Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions." October 55 (Winter 1990): 105-43.
- ¹³ Buchloh, "Conceptual Art," 133.
- ¹⁴ Benjamin Buchloh, "Introduction" in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, xvii-xxxii.
- ¹⁵ Benjamin Buchloh, "Introduction" in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, xxxi.
- ¹⁶ LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, 12-16.
- ¹⁷ Artists in the show were Richard Anuskievica, Paul Brach, Elaine de Kooning, Daniel Dickerson, Jim Dine, Grace Hartigan, John Hultberg, Robert Indiana, Ellen Lanyon, Roy Lichtenstein, Babette Newburger, George Ortman, Roland C. Petersen, Jack Sonenberg, Reva Urban, and Jack Youngerman.
- ¹⁸ Elayne Varian, "Art in Process: The Visual Development of a Painting," news release, 1965. Accessed in the *Exhibition Records of the Contemporary Wing of the Finch College Museum of Art*, Series 4, Box 9, Folder 5. Further references to these records are abbreviated *Finch College Records*.
- ¹⁹ Statement from Grace Hartigan, 1965, Finch College Records, Box 9, Folder 4.
- ²⁰ John Canaday, "Sometimes You Feel Sorry," *New York Times*, March 21, 1965.
- ²¹ John Canaday, "Sometimes You Feel Sorry," *New York Times*, March 21, 1965.
- ²² The "Primary Structures" exhibition, curated by Kynaston McShine, brought attention to Minimalist sculpture, especially artists like Donald Judd, who would become a key face of the movement, and was also included in the exhibition at Finch. See James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
- ²³ James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 175.
- ²⁴ Mel Bochner, "The Serial Attitude," *Artforum* 6, no. 4 (December 1967): 28-33. Reprinted in *Solar System and Restrooms: Writings and Interviews, 1965-2007* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008).
- ²⁵ See Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 30-35. Reprinted in *Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art* (New York: Braziller, 1974), 15-26. See also chapter one of this dissertation.
- ²⁶ Typed statement by Jo Baer, 1967, Finch College Records, Series 4, Box 10, Folder 27.
- ²⁷ See Jack Burnham "Systems Esthetics," *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968). Baer was also part of Lawrence Alloway's exhibition titled "Systemic Painting" at the Guggenheim in 1966.
- ²⁸ "Systemic Painting" was organized by the critic Lawrence Alloway and included works from Frank Stella, Kenneth Noland, and Agnes Martin, and consequently grouped works from color field to hard-edge abstraction, along with more conceptually-oriented works like Baer's.
- ²⁹ Jo Baer, "Letter to the Editor," *Artforum*, 1967," in *Broadsides and Belles Lettres: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. Roel Arkesteijn (Amsterdam: Roma, 2010), 47. Originally published in *Artforum* 6 (Sep. 1967): 5-6.
- ³⁰ Bochner, "Systemic Painting" *Arts Magazine* 41 (November 1967): 58.
- ³¹ Bochner, "Systemic Painting" *Arts Magazine* 41 (November 1967): 57-58.
- ³² Hanne Darboven, Statement for "Art in Series," 1967, Finch College Records, Series 4, Box 10, Folder 27.
- ³³ Darboven, Statement for "Art in Series."
- ³⁴ Quoted in Lucy Lippard, "Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers," in *From the Center: Feminist Essays on Women's Art* (New York: Dutton, 1976), 193.
- ³⁵ Lippard, "Hanne Darboven: Deep in Number," 195.
- ³⁶ Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," in *Conceptual Art*.
- ³⁷ Darboven, Statement for "Art in Series," 1967, Finch College Records, Series 4, Box 10, Folder 27
- ³⁸ Mel Bochner, "Excerpts from Speculation," in *Conceptual Art*, ed. Ursula Meyer, 50-57 (New York: Dutton, 1972), 56.
- ³⁹ Bochner, "Excerpts from Speculation," 54.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas M. Messer and David Shirley, "Impossible Art—Why It Is" *Art in America* (May-June 1969): 30-47. The article was amongst Varian's research materials for "Art in Process IV," Finch College Records, Box 10, Folder 14.
- ⁴¹ Wall text for "Art in Process IV," 1969, Finch College Records, Box 10, Folder 16

⁴² See Philip Leider, "New York" Reviews, *Artforum* 9 (February, 1970): 70; Grégoire Müller, "Art in Process IV," *Arts Magazine* 44 (December 1969-January 1970): 55-56; John Perreault, "Art in Process IV" Review, *The Village Voice*, (accessed in *Finch College Records*, Series 4, Box 10, Folder 10; Bitite Vinklers, "New York," Review, *Art International* 14 (March 1970): 91-94.

⁴³ See "New Dealing" interviews, 1969, Finch College Records, esp. "Interview with Arnold Glimcher and Mr. Mueller of the Pace gallery," 1969, interview by Elayne Varian, Finch College Records, Box 5, Folder 19.

⁴⁴ Mel Bochner, "Statement," in *Art in Process IV*, exh. cat, unpaginated.

⁴⁵ See Brenda Richardson, *Mel Bochner: Number and Shape*, exh. catalog (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976); Luke Skrebowski, "Productive Misunderstandings: Interpreting Mel Bochner's Theory of Photography" in *Photography after Conceptual Art*, ed. Diarmuid Costello and Margaret Iversen (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 86-107.

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978).

⁴⁷ See Nikal Saval, *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* (New York: Doubleday, 2014), 202-205. In the 1957 film, *The Desk Set*, the character played by Katherine Hepburn works in the research department of a television network. In keeping with my reading of the plant in Bochner's work, Hepburn's character keeps a plant in her office that has grown long with the many years she has worked there. The plant becomes symbolic when the character's labor is threatened to be made redundant by a computer brought in for efficiency.

⁴⁸ Handwritten notecards, 1969, Finch College Records, Box 9, Folder 78. I have tried to convey some typographical features of the notecard, like the use of capital letters, punctuation and spacing. Underscores indicate text that was blocked out.

⁴⁹ Instructions for "Measurement" Group C," 1969, Finch College Records, Box 9, Folder 78

⁵⁰ One version of the piece was purchased by the Carnegie Museum of Art in 1997, and titled *Measurement: Plant (Palm)*. Other versions of the piece have been exhibited, such as *Measurement: Plants* with three potted plants and a fourteen-foot square grid exhibited at Peter Freeman, Inc. in New York (2013).

⁵¹ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989).

⁵² Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

⁵³ Mel Bochner interview with James Meyer, "Mel Bochner: The Gallery is a Theatre" *Flash Art* 27 (Summer 1994): 100.

⁵⁴ James Meyer, "The Second Degree: Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art" in *Thought Made Visible: Mel Bochner 1966-1973*, ed. Richard S. Field (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995).

⁵⁵ James Meyer, "How Can You Defend Making Paintings Now? A Conversation between Mel Bochner and James Meyer" in *As Painting: Divisions and Displacements*, ed. Philip Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, and MIT Press, 2001), 74-79, 199-204.

⁵⁶ Mel Bochner, "About Eva Hesse: An Interview Joan Simon" in *Solar System and Restrooms*, 155.

CHAPTER 4 — A CRITICAL PROGRAM: CALARTS

While research in support of the cold war was a driving force for the growth of universities in the immediate aftermath of World War II, a growing middle class, the civil rights movement and the student movements it inspired also had their effect on the university by the 1960s. In addition, opposition to the Vietnam War mobilized student movements further, as the draft touched the lives of college-aged males. This was the social and political context that made Gyorgy Kepes's Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT feel out of touch. Meanwhile, at the end of the 60s, Allan Kaprow was recruited to help launch what was supposed to be the "Cal Tech of the Arts," and his model of aesthetic experience found a new institutional home.¹ In one sense, this chapter is about what happened to aesthetic experience as an epistemological alternative once the social issues of the day could no longer be ignored. One new art school in particular, which would only briefly be Kaprow's institutional home, tried to embody the counter-cultural spirit at the end of the 60s with mixed results. The California Institute of the Arts, borrowing the naming convention from the California Institute of Technology, would be known as CalArts. In an interview about the early days at CalArts, the artist Suzanne Lacy noted that Allan Kaprow, the Feminist Art Program, and John Baldessari represented the three main strains of experimentation within the visual arts curriculum at CalArts (other influential figures, such as Michael Asher and Charles Gaines, would join later).² In this chapter, I also take this range of practices as representative of the visual arts experimentation at CalArts in its founding moment, although there were certainly others. By comparing these three artistic and pedagogic practices, I will point to the ways in which artists could be socially

transformative in and through higher education, despite the overwhelming fact that higher education was transforming, i.e. professionalizing and co-opting, avant-garde art.

Born out of a merger between the Chouinard Art Institute and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music, CalArts was meant to be unique in combining various art forms: music, visual art, film, theater, and design. Part of the CalArts vision belonged to Walt Disney, who had been financially supporting Chouinard since the late fifties and sending his animators to classes, but a crucial detail, inspired by the technology institute, came from one of the Los Angeles Conservatory's board members, Lulu May Von Hagen.³ CalTech served as a model for combining related disciplines under one roof, and the merger with Chouinard was the perfect start. In 1961, the California Institute of the Arts was officially born, although Chouinard and the Conservatory would continue to operate separately until 1970. In the intervening years, CalArts would be re-designed from the ground up with the intention of creating an interdisciplinary community of artists. The idea of a "community" was meant to de-emphasize the disciplinary or authoritarian nature of schools and colleges, while the idea of an "institute" was meant to suggest that the pursuit of art was like research—like the research done at CalTech. Although Walt Disney died in 1966, the plans for CalArts went forward and the board of trustees hired all new administrators in 1968. In 1970, CalArts re-opened as one program on a temporary campus in Burbank, California, and the following year moved to its newly built facility in Valencia.

The sociologist Judith Adler's study of higher art education, based on her fieldwork at CalArts, points out some of the contradictions that one must bear in mind. On the one hand, Adler claims, artists were seeking out higher education for economic, social, and cultural capital (that is, for financial support, for the prestige of the university, and for

occupational training). Meanwhile, there was discomfort with aspects of schooling and professionalization. This discomfort contributed to the ideological tension between art as something that was “academic” and art as something that couldn’t be taught (because it required freedom and transgression rather than prescribed methods and disciplined training). This is a position that is echoed in more recent historical studies, such as Howard Singerman’s look at the development of MFA programs.⁴ While studies such as Adler’s and Singerman’s account for some of the practices at CalArts, they clearly overlook the pedagogic and artistic practices that did more than symbolically or flippantly align themselves with the counterculture. It is evident from Kaprow’s correspondence with the Provost, Herbert Blau, for instance, that his attraction to CalArts was based on the possibility that CalArts might allow him to pursue his experiments with public education in primary and secondary schools as a kind of social engagement.⁵ His Project Other Ways for Berkeley Unified School District brought artists in contact with educators, and students.⁶ In addition, the Feminist Art Program moved to CalArts from Fresno State College in an earnest attempt to change the culture of higher art education. The Feminist Art Program was started by Judy Chicago with the purpose of giving female students the tools they needed to succeed as women and as artists, something the male-dominated art world found contradictory. While these practices would not remain permanent fixtures at CalArts, they did converge between 1971 and 1973. Here, they exemplify the way aesthetic experience began to merge with a mode of experience that would serve as a basis for social action.

The primary site of this merger was a transforming notion of the self and identity. Construction of one’s self and identity was no longer entirely private but not entirely co-opted by emerging neoliberalism either. The figure or idea of the artist, meanwhile, often

served as a model for a kind of idealized self-expression and self-realization, something authentic that was missing from mass culture. While the dictum of self-realization and creativity was complicit in the new shape of inequality under capitalism, there is a counter-history to be discovered in some response to the CalArts project. Following a line of argumentation from Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello that has recently been picked up by art historians and critics, what they call “the artistic critique” of capitalism was by and large incorporated into the organization of labor so that it would be more autonomous and flexible.⁷ The critical force of art practices that were no longer focused narrowly on the production of objects can be seen as neutralized in this light. However, there is something to be redeemed from practices that took a more decentralized or displaced aesthetic experience to critique and transform the role of the artist. For example, the practice and pedagogy of Allan Kaprow and Judy Chicago’s Feminist Art Program found common ground in the way the self was constructed through experience. The collision of these two practices can be read in tension with the attempt at CalArts to eschew all institutional or disciplinary mechanisms typically associated with the academy or university. John Baldessari’s early Conceptual text paintings and photo-text works—in addition to strategically depicting the artist as displaced, effaced and distanced from the sensual, emotional, and physical aspects of aesthetic experience—critiqued formalized education and the institution, a critique of schooling that undoubtedly others shared. Kaprow’s influence at CalArts and the Feminist Art Program, however, took a slightly different tack through experience that could be framed as aesthetic and political at the same time. This argument is not so much about the effect these artists had on CalArts or the effect CalArts had on the nature of higher education, but about how the work of these artists was framed and made legible by the institutions that they were

situated within. It is necessary and worthwhile to see the transformative and constructive aspects within these practices, even as they are bound up with the contradictions of academic institutions and the changing mode of development under neoliberal capitalism. Although not always sustained in the art and related programs at CalArts, at stake here is a notion of experience organized around the self that emerges with art in the university.

JOHN BALDESSARI: THE ARTIST EFFACED

John Baldessari had been thematizing and disclosing attempts to formalize art education ever since he began to move from abstract painting to photography and text in 1966. For that reason, Baldessari's irreverent teaching appears as a fitting outgrowth of his practice. In fact, his work and his teaching developed in tandem while he was living in National City near San Diego, and thus some discussion of his work will help to show how his practice pictured the artist-subject not just as an alienated one, but critically distant and removed from established art world institutions. The consequences of this representation for the intersection of art and academia are significant. In representing the artist as untrained and as one who did not *express* so much as *stand-in for* an effaced and alienated subjectivity, Baldessari's practice thematized the disciplinary nature of schooling and staged a critique of the artist-subject that was being constructed there. In contrast to constructions of the artist by Kaprow and feminist artists at CalArts, Baldessari's practice represented the artist as beyond epistemological frameworks, as un-teachable. This is not a blanket condemnation of Baldessari's work or teaching practices, however. This aspect of his work is subversive when read at the textual level, that is, at the level of the art objects and texts produced; however, a problematic appears at the level of how such representations transform

or construct the artist's role in society or social institutions like academia. In other words, by representing the artist as outside any constructible framework of knowledge, one finds the limits of Conceptual Art's critique (Baldessari as well as Bochner, for that matter).

Baldessari's work can be deciphered in terms of its displacement of the artist-subject and its critique of the formalized rules and structures of art education, but it remains limited in its ability to transform the relationship between the two. In other words, Baldessari's early works dealing with the figure of the artist and education succeed in disclosing the figure of the artist as an empty construct—and they represent it as such through strategies that efface or negate any self-realization or identity—but they stop short of constructing the artist-self as a stand-in for an autonomous and unalienated subjectivity. Instead, Baldessari's early works displace that possibility at every turn.

Baldessari is known for his own mode of Conceptual Art on the West Coast. His location outside of New York was significant given his style of commenting on or making reference to conceptual strategies of the time. After graduating from San Diego State College, he briefly took classes at the Otis Art Institute and continued to paint out of his studio in National City. In 1968, two years after he began to experiment with photography and text, he was invited to teach at the new Visual Arts department at the University of California San Diego. Paul Brach, who was brought on as the first department chair, hired Baldessari and would later bring him to CalArts. Shortly after that in 1970, Baldessari cremated all of his paintings before 1966 in a work called *Cremation Project* (1970). The piece originally consisted of an ash-filled urn that looked like a book, a bronze plaque with the dates of the works that were cremated (May 1953-March 1966), and an affidavit publicly announcing the cremation.⁸ Before the iconic Conceptual gesture of *Cremation Project*,

which helped to bolster the myth that Conceptual Art was in a process of “dematerializing,” Baldessari had already begun to experiment with conceptual strategies. His use of photography to stage and document ephemeral gestures and his use of text (sometimes printed ink on canvas, other times simply typewritten on paper, and eventually painted with acrylic on canvas) earned him recognition by critics and curators of Conceptual Art.⁹

John Baldessari’s well-known class at CalArts was titled the “post-studio” class, so-called because the class was not really about traditional or stale methods of art practice, but about moving artistic practices outside of the studio. However, this was not necessarily about producing art on-site or in situ. The class could have simply been called “Conceptual Art,” by Baldessari’s own admission, but the name “post-studio” was inspired by the Minimalist sculptor Carl Andre.¹⁰ Andre himself was not a Conceptual Artist, strictly speaking, but had been using industrially manufactured materials and arranging them in the exhibition space for visual and phenomenological effect. The “post-,” then, refers to a situation that ostensibly superseded the practice of producing art objects in the studio. One might consider this part of the new mode of development in Europe and North America during the late twentieth century, i.e. the use of knowledge, information, and technology on the production of new knowledge, information, and technology, as discussed in the previous chapter. No longer would the studio define the artist’s practice; artists would neither produce paintings or sculptures from scenes of everyday life as once defined Modernist painting nor treat the process of art production as an encounter between mind and material as Rosenberg described action painting.¹¹ Rather, the studio might be thought of as the place to conceive the rules, recipes, sentences, instructions or other prescriptive and information-based elements that would prompt the artist to produce actual works elsewhere and by other

means. At CalArts, Baldessari had the chance to institutionalize this new mode of artistic production through codifying an instructional methodology.

Included in his *Catalogue Raisonné*, and thus treated somewhat like an artwork in itself, a typewritten text titled *CalArts Post-Studio Art: Class Assignments (Optional)* (1970) offers a glimpse at the sort of text that might precede an artwork. In most cases, the entries on the list are instructions that could be carried out in various ways (and thus point to a Fluxus influence), but in others, questions are posed that could be uniquely interpreted by each student. One example reads, “How can plants be used in art? Problem becomes how can we really get people to look freshly at plants as if they’ve never noticed them before.”¹² One answer could have been Mel Bochner’s *Measurement: Plant*, discussed in the previous chapter, while another might be any one of Baldessari’s own photo or video works with plants, such as *The Mondrian Story* (1973), *Palm Tree in the Wind* (1973), or *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1972). Baldessari’s teaching method and his work both present an image of the Conceptual Artist in training and thus of the new professional after studio art production had become outmoded.

The unofficial and informal curriculum of the “post-studio class” consisted of bringing visiting artists to show their work, taking students on field trips to locations around Los Angeles, and simply being available for large blocks of unstructured time (something not unusual, but worth noting). Being available and bringing artists to CalArts served to provide role models for young artists. This was something Baldessari’s teaching method shared with the Feminist Art Program, but without the explicit recognition that the professional artist was usually a gendered one.¹³ Also in common with the Program, Baldessari had developed a way to get students to develop new content for their work that

would not be arrived at by the usual methods. Students might take cameras to a completely random location, for instance, based on throwing a dart at a map, and make art in that location with the equipment they brought along. Photo and film cameras might be used to stage and document ephemeral or performative acts, gestures, or scenes. By using random methods to select a location, the class tried to remove personal expression, or even any personal touch, from the work produced. In some cases, locations for field trips and tasks to be carried out might be suggested by the students. As one student, David Salle, writes, “This often meant finding ways to keep John amused on field trips to the bounty of kitsch art palaces that was Los Angeles.”¹⁴ The field trips must have subverted both the traditional classroom hierarchy between teacher and student, then, by having students supply the day’s program and continued the tradition of elevating kitsch or mass-produced culture to the status of cutting-edge art. These two features can be added with the use of randomness to the array of methods used to move beyond studio art production. Salle shares a story from the post-studio class field trips to give a general impression. He writes,

One class found us at Farmers Market in Los Angeles, where someone had the idea to buy a freshly plucked chicken and kick it around all the stalls so that we could “document” the “process” before the poor scraped-up bird was deposited in a Dumpster next to a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant. You get the idea: irreverence veering off into smart-assedness with occasional glimmers of high surrealist poetry.¹⁵

Salle seems to be suggesting that the mixture of absurdity with what must have been a grotesque and, perhaps to some, an offensive act of publicly abusing a dead chicken for the purposes of art had at least some resemblance to avant-garde precursors, whether it be Surrealism, Dada, Fluxus, or Kaprow’s Happenings. In Salle’s statement, the use of scare quotes to ironize the terms “document” and “process” points to an awareness that these were

the key terms that were emerging with the “post-studio” mode of artistic production.

Together, “process” and “documentation” also seem to imply that there was something “academic” going on, even if that, too, would be said ironically.

In addition to thinking about how Baldessari taught Conceptual strategies, one can look to his works to see how they foreground and thematize alienated subjectivity by effacing the artist, both as student and teacher. Baldessari’s early works clearly overlapped with his list of class assignments for CalArts. His *California Map Project* (1969) and his *Ghetto Boundary Project* (1969), for instance, both done with George Nicolaidis, played with cartographic systems of representation by contrasting information on maps with their actual locations, drawing attention to the disconnect between cartographic knowledge and what might be called the experiential knowledge of actually being there. The *California Map Project* was an attempt to inscribe the letters C-A-L-I-F-O-R-N-I-A in the landscape in the location where each letter appeared on a map. Temporarily staged—with rocks or chalk or other ephemeral means—each letter was photographed and presented with explanatory text. In the *Ghetto Boundary Project*, small stickers with the word “BOUNDARY” and a definition that read, “A section of a city, especially a thickly populated area inhabited by minority groups often as a result of social or economic restrictions,” were placed around the perimeter of what the San Diego Planning Commission deemed the ghetto. Five photographs and explanatory text were exhibited in the gallery space. These projects shared something with the strategy of throwing a dart at a map to determine where learning and art-making might take place, although the locations are not determined by throwing darts, but by the constraints of map-making and the socially, historically, and institutionally determined boundaries of a place that is defined by social relations. On the one hand, these working-

and-teaching methods pointed to the incommensurability of certain forms of knowledge (in this case, cartographic knowledge and the experiential knowledge of a place). But on the other hand, these working and teaching methods may not thoroughly uncover the social and historical reasons for San Diego's "ghetto" in the south-east side of the city, even if it points to the existence of such determinants.¹⁶ These works and others just begin to indicate the ways in which Baldessari's art-making strategies translated into his teaching at CalArts; however, in throwing darts at a map—or otherwise harnessing randomness to determine "any place" for learning and making art—the post-studio class was limited in its ability to do more than point to the social and historical context (such as redlining and racial segregation, in the case of *Ghetto Boundary Project*). This represents the limit of some Conceptual Art practices that don't adequately construct the artist's role so much as they critique or displace the existing models.

Other works from Baldessari during this time period point to the academic context and present a similarly effaced subjectivity through the figure of the student-artist. Some of these works thematized the institutional and disciplinary aspects of academia embodied in the idea of "schooling." For example, in the video piece *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1973), the artist shows a small houseplant flashcards of the alphabet and repeats the sound of each letter. In *Police Sketch* (1971), Baldessari makes teaching a crime, so to speak, by asking students to describe the teacher to a police sketch artist, documenting their descriptions on video and exhibiting them with the final drawing. In *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, an installation at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Baldessari sent instructions to the school's gallery to have students write the titular phrase on the gallery wall, repeatedly, in an act of self-punishment transferred to the students. These

works and others take the alienation and reification of educational institutions and put them on display. Students are made the subjects of the schooling apparatus in a way that is generalizable to many educational settings, and the critique contained therein is worth noting given that it echoes critiques happening across a broader context.

A few earlier works, however, thematize the artist-student more specifically through supposed rules, advice, or admonitions to young artists who are on their way towards professionalism. These works, I would argue, provide the key to Baldessari's subsequent work and teaching. Between 1966 and 1968, Baldessari produced several such text and photo-text paintings that would place him amongst other Conceptual Artists of the period. In *Painting and Drawing* (1966-68), text painted by a professional sign painter reads, "This painting contains all the information needed by the art student. Told simply and expertly by a successful, practicing painter and teacher. Every phase of drawing and painting is covered." The text for this painting and many others in this body of work was taken from an art instruction book. Other works from the same years use photo-emulsion to print photographs onto canvas, accompanied by text with similar instructional language. In *The Spectator is Compelled...* a photo printed with wide margins in the middle of the canvas shows a man (Baldessari) from behind standing in a suburban street looking towards the end of the road. The text underneath reads, "The spectator is compelled to look directly down the road and into the middle of the picture." The text seems to describe the "rule" that is on display in the picture. Similarly, *Wrong* (1968) demonstrates what not to do when composing a photograph, showing a man (Baldessari again) standing directly in front of a tree so that the tree appears to grow out of his head. One word underneath indicates, "WRONG."

Baldessari pictures the artist as a product of these types of rules, whether or not they are to be heeded or scoffed at. In emptying his canvases of his own touch—that is, in having the works prepared and painted by others—Baldessari actually removes himself and his own training as an artist while pointing at the mechanisms of instruction and training themselves. The act of removal and distancing is what signals to Baldessari’s art audience (not to the imagined reader of the instructional text) that this is, in fact, a work of Conceptual Art, and thus claims the legitimacy of “high art.” Jane Livingston’s review of Baldessari’s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles recognized his paintings as an answer to Joseph Kosuth and as an attempt to rid the work of visual ‘high-art’ cues—a defining feature, paradoxically, of the most recent avant-garde artists in New York.¹⁷ One of Baldessari’s text paintings exhibited in the show, *For Barbara Rose* (1966-68), makes this referential loop as small as possible; Barbara Rose was a prominent critic associated with Minimalism, and the painting reads, “A work by an artist who is aware not only of the cycles of styles, but of levels of meaning, of influences, of movements, and critical judgments.” In her 1967 book, *American Art Since 1900*, Rose offers a history of American art as a series of attempts to break from previous styles through various strategic moves. Rose was also an art critic for *Studio Art International* and *Artforum*, and so Baldessari’s painting makes a bald play for critical attention by showing awareness of the critic’s criteria for successful works. Wearing this explicit critical awareness on one’s sleeve, so to speak—or on the surface of one’s canvas—just happens to align with the content of the text: that one must attend to “levels of meaning, of influences, of movements, and critical judgments.” Paintings like *For Barbara Rose* interrogated the explicit and the hidden curriculum of what it takes to be an artist, a curriculum defined in the textbooks as well as art magazines and reviews. Pointing to the

hidden and explicit curriculum seems appropriate when minding the contradictions of a critical art education, but how might this work move on from critiquing representations of the artist to constructing them anew through teaching?

Baldessari initiates his students into a position of critical distance by representing the artist as a product of rules and subject to discipline. In his iconic work, *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, students from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and visitors to the school's gallery were invited to write the phrase on the gallery wall, mimicking a kind of school-house punishment. Written repeatedly on the wall, the phrase "I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art," speaks with the "I" of the subject. In this case, the "I" in Baldessari's sentence is both himself and the students who fulfill the task. In an interview, Baldessari tells a story about how the phrase, "I will not make any more boring art," was taken from his own personal notebook where it was initially written as a reminder.¹⁸ What Baldessari considered "boring" at the time was the "very academic" use of language, but also the continued predominance of abstract expressionism.¹⁹ Although the students who carry out the work are made into *a student* par excellence by the schoolhouse punishment, the artist as genius-craftsmen has been rendered unrecognizable by outsourcing both technical skill and the authenticity of the artist's touch. The double maneuver that turns the artist's apprentice into the subject of a disciplinary mechanism while renouncing the artist's authenticity and skill critiques schooling while removing the artist-subject from the equation. The piece invites an alliance between artist-teacher and student, metaphorically assuming the position of the disciplined artist and student, a product of training and the educational apparatus in total. This attempt to efface the artist while reproducing *the figure* of the artist as a product of training and set of critical references prompts my reading of his work as pointing to the

limits of and staging a problematic for Conceptual Art. On the one hand, Baldessari's early works represent the artist, not in their overt messages but in their hidden one, as an observer of previous avant-garde movements, a purveyor of multiple meanings, a reader of art criticism, and most importantly as unteachable within the educational apparatuses.

Paradoxically, Baldessari not only taught in these institutions and literally wrote his own list of rules, but has also made the question of how to teach conceptual strategies a central theme of his work. For example, in his *Advice to Young Artists*, he recommends that there are no rules in making art, but “if you find any, break them as soon as possible,” (precisely what is on display in *Wrong*). Some earnest attempt to supply instruction comes through in this list and in Baldessari’s life-long career as an artist-teacher. This limitation and problematic should drive, not stifle further analysis: how might the artist, student, and teacher displaced in Baldessari’s works be reconfigured within the spaces and structures attached to education? For this, I turn now to the Feminist Art Program, Allan Kaprow, and a shared framework for aesthetic and political experience.

POLITICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE SELF

The Feminist Art Program began at Fresno State College in 1970 and moved to CalArts in 1971. It was a radical school-within-a-school that saw itself as part of a larger movement to challenge patriarchal forms of knowledge and institutional structures that had been exclusionary. When Judy Chicago was hired as faculty at Fresno State College in 1970, she agreed on the condition that she would be allowed to start her own program for women artists. Miriam Schapiro—who was on the faculty at CalArts and the University of California San Diego—joined forces with Chicago when the program was invited to move to

CalArts in 1971. The curriculum of the program at Fresno was organized around groups dedicated to activities such as photo and film techniques, art history research, reading and discussion, autobiographical writing, studio work, performance and play acting, group critiques, dinners, and most importantly consciousness-raising. Participants in consciousness-raising shared stories of personal experience with a group of women in order to raise awareness or consciousness of those experiences that were in fact shared among women. Teaching in the Feminist Art Program was concerned with providing strong mentorship for female students, expectations of ambition and success for women, inverting traditional hierarchies of media and method, and deflating the myth of (male) mastery and genius.²⁰ Because of the role that consciousness-raising played in promoting experience, and because of the pedagogical strategies instituted by Chicago and Schapiro, the concerns of the Feminist Art Program offer yet another way to understand experience. Ultimately, the Feminist Art Program ran into its own critiques and contradictions while at CalArts, but it achieved a degree of success in bringing experience and reflection on one's self to bear on the professional roles of artists.

It is important to place the meaning of this type of political experience within the context of civil rights in order to understand the central role of self-construction. In their analysis of racial formation in the United States in the twentieth century, Howard Omi and Michael Winant describe the civil rights movement as a “politicization of the social” because of its emphasis on the personal, lived experience of race in America as a key locus of political agency.²¹ Beginning with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955—although inspired by earlier “freedom rides” through the segregated south—the civil rights movement set itself apart from an earlier generation of black activists by focusing on local instances of

racial segregation that could be challenged in the overlapping spaces of private and public life (for instance, public services where segregation was in effect), as well as in the traditional political sphere of legislative and judicial battles. By this means, political power became a matter of top-down rule and bottom-up social activity that could challenge the underlying hegemony—or the taken-for-granted cultural practices—that propped up racial and other forms of domination. While many critical-theoretical traditions focus on the importance of subjective experience in resisting hegemonic culture, Omi and Winant's socio-historical study places this in the context of the U.S. civil rights movement, which is better suited to the time and place in question. Importantly, Omi and Winant point out that the movement was reliant upon self-reflective action in the form of its own bottom-up structure. They observe that, in addition to the movement's leaders, the key to the successful transformation of social life was the fact that the movement encouraged and responded to groups such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).²² Omi and Winant conclude that because so many of the traditionally political gains of the civil rights movement have been rolled back or undermined, the most lasting effect of this heterogeneous but self-reflective movement was its politicization of social identity. In other words, the realm of politics was extended to include the personal, perhaps even routine, experiences and interactions in one's private life.

The "politicization of the social," as Omi and Winant label it, had its parallel in the feminist slogan, "the personal is political."²³ Indeed, second wave feminists often gave credit and drew parallels to the black civil rights movement, even as they drew valid critiques for being a white, middle-class movement. The sphere of personal experience was a key site for the feminist consciousness-raising groups that sprouted up across the country

and was taken up by the Feminist Art Program from its earliest days at Fresno State College. The origins of consciousness-raising are disputed, but by 1970 various programs and methods for consciousness-raising were circulated as papers, delivered at conferences, and even broadcast over the radio waves.²⁴ Carol Hanisch, who coined the phrase “the personal is political,” was a member of the New York-based group Redstockings and an organizer of a major protest at the Miss America pageant in 1968. She reflects in her writing on the successes and failures of the movement and stresses the value in making consciousness the primary site of a feminist politics. She lists two clear goals of the movement as “1) awakening the latent consciousness of women about their own oppression, and 2) building sisterhood.”²⁵ Consciousness-raising as a form of reflection and group theorizing, so Hanisch argued, should help to clarify what kind of action the movement should take, and what action women could take in their lives, without imposing a singular program on all women. Acknowledging that the movement may have alienated some women who didn’t feel represented, she also insisted that the movement recognize the thoughts and experiences of all women, even those not a part of the movement, as the site and stakes of struggle. While Hanisch’s insights come from her own political practice, the lessons she draws resonate with other models of social action that look carefully at the problem of how the socialized individual gains political purchase within a democratic society, through reflective action and establishing an expanded territory, perhaps what Hanisch calls sisterhood, from which to act.

At the same time, a move towards a more participatory situation for visual art was paralleled in theatre by Anselma Dell’Olio’s founding of the New Feminist Repertory and Experimental Ensemble in New York.²⁶ Likewise, feminist classrooms were beginning to

work on creating a participatory learning environment that worked for all. The Feminist Art Program should be seen in this conjoined context, pushing visual art towards a decentralized, more deeply contextualized, and thus newly politicized aesthetic experience, while at the same time shaping what feminist critical pedagogy could be in academic institutions. In 1977, Faith Wilding outlined what she saw practiced in the Program as a student, noting that consciousness-raising, building a female context, having female role models, and giving authority to make art from one's own experience as a woman were the most important aspects of a feminist pedagogy. In later years, Wilding updated this list to include aspects of feminist art practice, combining research and teaching as integral to feminist art. In her updated reflection, she adds strategic separatism, collaboration, research, interdisciplinarity, practice over end-products, having high expectations of success for women, and a non-rational element of being part of something groundbreaking.²⁷ Summarizing her experience, Wilding writes, "We began with issues of self-representation, self-exploration, using our bodies and lives as our research materials. This interrogation of our experiences as female bodies and selves—'becoming-women'—politicized us, and led us to expand our inquiry to political and social justice issues affecting women and their bodies."²⁸ Wilding suggests that inquiring about, exploring, and researching women's experience was a central part of a feminist art education.

Some might find the positive assessment of these movements to politicize the social and the personal-as-political overly sanguine from a twenty-first-century perspective. In 1999 Boltanski and Chiapello argued that the "artistic critique," which began in the 19th century and culminated in 1968, had been incorporated into management practices and used to justify the exploitation and alienation of capitalism. The "artistic critique," according to

Boltanski and Chiapello, focused on the inauthentic and alienating aspects of life under capitalism, and the practices of capitalism changed in response to include more flexibility and autonomy. This is an argument that grows more convincing with every new mechanism developed for turning individuals into entrepreneurs, with various "projects" meant to give the illusion of a more autonomous, fulfilled, and self-realized subject (what Gary Hall has referred to as “uberfication,” in reference to the ride-sharing company that now competes with conventional taxis). It suggests that, in critiquing the alienating experience of life under modernity and capitalism, art has once again failed to escape commodification, only now commodification reaches into the deepest parts of our self and our identity, capitalizing on the desire to live a self-directed and fulfilling life. Moreover, “experience” and “authenticity” have both been turned into sellable commodities, even in the art world, as art historians such as Lane Relyea and Erika Balsom have recently pointed out.²⁹ Art practices that eschew traditional objects certainly do not escape commodification; however, this should not forestall an understanding of the transformative aspects of process, experience, and practices over end products.

In establishing a critical framework for “dialogical” art practices, Grant Kester has argued that efforts in the 60s and 70s to “dematerialize” the art object should not be understood as a failed response to the encroaching commodity form—an attempt to avoid commodification that was bound to fail and which critics like Benjamin Buchloh have continued to pin on Conceptual Art—but as a positive moment in the direction that art practices could take. While Kester focuses on collaborative interaction, on the possibility “that the work of art can enact community here and now through the process of physical and dialogical interaction,”³⁰ I would like to shift attention to the construction of the artist-self in

these aesthetic experiences, and to the relationship between present experience and future goals. In contrast to the notion of a distant *sensus communis*, a shared public spirit, or an ideal viewing subject that remains a promise at best, aspects of pragmatism and Zen adopted by Kaprow and others brought the far-away or utopian aspect of the *sensus communis* within reach while still retaining some aspect of future-oriented action. The practices that coalesced around Chicago and Schapiro's Feminist Art Program, similarly, worked through personal experience as well, orienting events, performances, textual forms, and installations towards near-term goals. Working through situated and corporeal experiences, new understandings of oneself, new social groupings, and new actions could be oriented towards an end-in-view: a new social order that made aesthetic experience more widely available, and aesthetic experience that moved toward a more just social order.

The concept of an end-in-view is posited by Dewey in *Democracy and Education*.³¹ These ends-in-view are not external or fixed, but change in response to the chosen means and fluid circumstances. Experience, in Dewey's account, is not made up of a series of means and ends, but rather movement towards an uncertain future state, which directly shapes action in the present, via what Dewey refers to as "intelligent action."³² Dewey posits that this type of experience is what constitutes both the individual's pursuit of knowledge and society's pursuit of social order through democracy. This broader understanding of experience helps us understand his later writing on aesthetic experience as well. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey writes that experience has an aesthetic quality when it is whole in some way, but this wholeness is neither an anticipated future state nor one that can only be recognized in retrospect. Dewey calls this the "consummatory character" of aesthetic experience, but he does not use the formulation of a consummated experience in the past

tense. Both aesthetic experience and the experience that makes democracy possible are in the present, but oriented and even structured by an end-in-view (be it a more justly ordered society or an aesthetic wholeness). Hans Joas has described Dewey's theory of "creative democracy" as the basis for a unified theory of social action, that is, a theory that can be used to understand aesthetic production as well as collective social movements and macro-level social order.³³ The politicized social experience practiced in feminist consciousness-raising groups and the Feminist Art Program linked up with the kind of aesthetic experience deployed in the work of Kaprow and Fluxus artists who were well-represented at CalArts. Thus, the convergence of these two types of experience, the kind implied by the politicization of the social and Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, suggests that it might be helpful to consider how aesthetic production and the collective action of social movements can be brought together under one unified framework of social action, as Joas proposes.

Both pragmatism and Kaprow's approach to art practice, as expressed in his works and writings, treat aesthetic production and the production of an ideal social order as guided by the same underlying creative action (in which individuals and social collectives work in congruent ways). When scholars such as Meiling Cheng have written about the confluence of practices between Kaprow, the Feminist Art Program, and their student Suzanne Lacy at CalArts, Kaprow's work has often been written off as apolitical. Cheng reads Lacy's practice as a simultaneous exploration of self-identity and community but fails to see the full extent of the similarities between Lacy's practice and Kaprow's. However, their commonalities extend beyond an "anti-elitist tendency for the democratization of art," as Cheng writes.³⁴ First of all, in their shared use of the body and its labor as the location of meaning/value and in their unwillingness to allow for this meaning/value to be extracted

easily by capital. Second, both reconfigure the artist and the self through play or role taking, both public and private, which is more consequential than the phrase “anti-elitist” implies. This will be the basis for my reading of Lacy’s work and the Feminist Art Program in the next section.

While scholars such as Jeff Kelley have focused on the concept of play in Kaprow’s work, some qualification is necessary to understand the shared framework between Kaprow’s work and that of the Feminist Art Program. Play in the sense that is shared between Kaprow and artists like Suzanne Lacy is better understood as role-taking, in which individuals test out the perspectives of others and come to see themselves in new ways. As a result, a social self emerges from interaction with others. The pragmatist and social psychologist George Herbert Mead is best known for elaborating this philosophy of the social self, describing the way he thought the self was constructed. An individual explores different attitudes of the people around them, taking up these attitudes and reflectively trying them out on themselves.³⁵ Through this reflection, which Mead describes as taking place internally (in inner experience) and externally through “significant symbols,” one recreates the specific and general attitudes of others in relation to a “me” and responds as an “I.” This interaction between the “me” and the “I” constitutes the self. Because the “me” is always an object of others’ actions (or the general expectation that others will call upon the “me” to play some role or another), the construction of the self always has a social dimension to it. The social dimension of this self-construction, furthermore, is rooted in the individual’s communication with others. Having communicated with others and being able to imagine that communication when others are no longer present necessarily precedes any development of a self in Mead’s sense. However, the individual is not only a product of

society. Mead writes, “the reaction of the individual in this conversation of gestures is one that in some degree is continually modifying the social process itself.”³⁶ In other words, there is some interface between society and the individual that gives them a small amount of agency. Mead describes this reflective process as both a right and a duty of the individual to respond to the socially determined situation, but he also defines it as an act of self-expression, a process of thought, and a process of collective social change.³⁷ The process that Mead attributes equally to creative and social activities, thought and action, individual and collective, allows for his theory of the social self to be the shared cornerstone for both aesthetic and personal-as-political experience.

Crucially, this construction of the self as a socialized individual can be mapped with Kaprow’s to unlock a meaningful socio-political aspect of his work. Recall Kaprow’s retrospective speech at the University of Texas (discussed in Chapter 2), where Kaprow described the self as disappearing and re-appearing “only in the act (of doing something).”³⁸ Where Kaprow describes the meaningless self created by the public, he describes one form of the “me” in Mead’s philosophy. Where he describes the re-appearing self in action, he describes the “I.” If the “me” is worth negating or critiquing—perhaps because it is complicit in forms of domination or control—it is the “I” that must rise to the occasion. The “I” in response to the “me” is where social change comes from. Furthermore, while Kaprow cites Johan Huizinga’s theory of play in “The Education of the Un-Artist,” there are important similarities with the way Mead and Dewey describe the function of play in the process that constructs the social self. Although Mead and Dewey both drew on research into the developmental psychology of children to theorize play, it serves mostly as an analogy in Mead’s work on the self to describe the importance of role-taking in the

reflective process. For Mead, the example of playing a game was useful to describe the way the individual must take into account all of the other roles of those playing. On the other hand, Kaprow draws a distinction between games and play because one does not play to win, but rather engages in play for its own sake.³⁹ Meanwhile, Dewey defines play as “a name given to those activities which are not consciously performed for the sake of any result beyond themselves: activities which are enjoyable in their own execution without reference to ulterior purpose.”⁴⁰ Despite the distinction made between games and play in Kaprow's writing, the salient point about play for all three of them seems to be that play allows one some pleasure in the act for its own sake, however, the question remains as to whether or not Kaprow saw, as Mead did, the social dimension of the self even when one plays alone.

Given the types of games and motivations for playing that one can enter into, role-taking—even when one is by oneself—is a better way to understand the underlying political stakes of Kaprow's interest in play. In a joint interview Moira Roth conducted with Kaprow and Lacy, Kaprow points to the sociologist Erving Goffman to explain that performance is an everyday occurrence. He says to Roth, “we all perform scenarios that our culture provides, and which we personally modify.”⁴¹ Goffman and other's symbolic interactionism has its roots in the “significant symbols” of Mead, and while neither Kaprow nor Lacy ever describes their work in terms of Mead's philosophy, it is clear from the interview that both see their work as sharing a concern for how the self is constructed in relation to others. At one point, Lacy tells Roth, “I guess performance for me, the reason I do performance is that it's really a self-creating.”⁴² Moreover, the self is seen for both Lacy and Kaprow as the site of a social transformation. In the same interview Kaprow and Lacy discuss the question of whether or not their work is meant for an “educated” audience, that is, participants who

know something about Happenings, art, or other quasi-ritualistic performances. Kaprow draws a distinction between his own work and Lacy's, but only as a matter of degree, when he says,

I have a more skeptical and probably patient view than Suzanne does about the issues in the world feeling that few of us can change them, and if we try to change them, as John Cage says, we'll make them worse. But, nevertheless, and I say this with a big underline, nevertheless, I think I would find it impossible to accept myself if I didn't think I had something to share with others, rather than something to teach them.⁴³

In the very notion of being able to "accept myself" Kaprow points to the kind of fragmented I-me relationship of Mead. Furthermore, this split self is called on to share something with others as the only meaningful social act. Once again, as in his earliest lecture-performance at Rutgers, action and participation are proffered as more worthy of attention than attempts at overt political engagement. Kaprow's politics doubles down on the interactions with others and the demands we place on ourselves in light of others. Participation and self-creation are not idle consequences of anti-elitism, but rather the reason for the artist's presence on college campuses, which in Kaprow's own words, "represents a lifetime investment of society in the artist and, in turn, the artist in society."⁴⁴ Although Kaprow was not an idealist about democracy, it hardly seems accurate to describe him as apolitical when he so doggedly sought to understand, if not unite, the field of aesthetic and social experience, art and life, through interactions with others.

THE ARTIST AS TRANSFORMATIVE INTELLECTUAL

The Feminist Art Program engendered (in the sense of giving birth to *and* giving a different gender to) a new type of artist. In the university and professional art world Chicago

and Schapiro had both known, gender roles overlapped with professional expectations and career trajectories. As a student at UCLA, Chicago observed male students who took notes extensively whenever technical demonstrations were given, knowing that they would someday have the opportunity to teach or set up their own sculpture studios. For these men, being a professional artist was a very real possibility, and not, as Chicago would later say of her female students' career ambitions, "only an idle fantasy, like wanting to go to the moon."⁴⁵ The kinds of skills that women would have to learn to become artists included overcoming the gender norms around them, whether it be at the hardware store or the real estate office. One of the first tasks for students in the Program both at Fresno and later in Los Angeles was to secure studio space and build it out to suit their needs. In Fresno, the students secured a lease agreement for a studio and learned to frame and hang dry wall. In Los Angeles, the Program took on the collaborative Womanhouse project, in which the students managed to procure a house on a temporary basis that could be fixed up and used for installation and performance works. The public exhibition of Womanhouse (1972), and the move of the Feminist Art Program to Los Angeles more generally, was described by Chicago as an attempt to bring Feminist practices back into the male-dominated world of professional artists.⁴⁶ One aspect of Chicago and Schapiro's pedagogy, then, was to bring the professionalizing features of art school to the surface as a means of feminist practice, so that women could more easily break into the male-dominated art world of galleries and exhibitions.

The Feminist Art Program did not belong to its teachers, Chicago or Schapiro, alone. Their investigations produced tangible practices in the form of new methods and subject matter for the production of art, but they did not necessarily produce the kind of professional

artists that Chicago or Schapiro first had in mind. Artists in the program like Faith Wilding and Suzanne Lacy, as well as others not touched upon here, produced new practices of research and pedagogy that represented and structured artistic work in consequential ways. Thus, the work produced and the practices engendered cannot be distinguished along the lines of art activity on one side, and academic activity on the other because pedagogic activities and art activities so often overlapped. Rather, by addressing the gendered formation of the artist-figure, the professional status of the artist was similarly reconfigured as the members of the Feminist Art Program resisted assimilation into the role of a professional artist. One conception of the professional artist in the mid-twentieth century was, for the most part, one who made objects in the studio and sold them in the gallery to collectors. As Adler's study of CalArts has touched upon, professional status for the artist was complicated by the university, given that the professional field of art relies on cultivating authenticity and bucking forms of systemization. Prestige was conferred by critics and artist colleagues, but increasingly teaching supplemented careers and offered another form of recognition. This was the situation that Baldessari's work played upon—and the problematic that his work staged—but the students of the Feminist Art Program, in contrast, reconfigured the artist-self from the bottom up as a self-construction in interaction with others.

Judy Chicago's approach to teaching in the Fresno Feminist Art Program was based on her own pursuit of a feminist practice. At first, a feminist art practice simply meant reconciling the socially enforced contradiction between one's identity as a woman and one's profession as an artist. In her autobiography, she recounts how a friend, the critic and co-founder of *Artforum* John Coplans, suggested that she needed to choose between “being a

woman or an artist.”⁴⁷ Throughout her story, she recalls the way she felt that she could not “be herself” and be a professional artist. In the Feminist Art Program, Chicago would try to pass knowledge on to her students about how to succeed as a woman within a profession that was mostly administered by men and that failed to equalize the structurally embedded ways in which men were favored. Miriam Schapiro also addressed this particular challenge in recounting her involvement with the Program. Schapiro writes, “We dealt with our young women students, as artists. It required work for them and for us; and we were reminded again and again that it is indeed the responsibility of all older, ‘established’ women artists to serve as role models to their young women students: models as productive, integrated artists, as well as women.”⁴⁸ Notably, the skills of male-centered professionalism were part of the hidden curriculum in university education, but Chicago and Schapiro would make them explicit in the Feminist Art Program since those skills contained a gendered dimension that was structurally exclusionary. More crucially, the Feminist Art Program would challenge the very idea of the professional artist by changing the way *he* (traditionally gendered male) had been thought of, represented, and culturally signified. That is, by re-gendering the artist-figure as female they would transform what social role *she* would be capable of taking on. In short, while tackling the roles available to women, they were also changing the role the artist was able to play in society. The students of the Feminist Art Program, even more than the instructors, had to mediate the contradictory ways the artist and society were being constructed in the institutions of higher education. In other words, after interrogating the roles imposed upon them as women, they managed to re-negotiate the roles they wanted to play not only as women but also as artists. This mediation would ultimately be part of

transforming the roles that women, men, professional or otherwise, could play as artists in society.

Moreover, the result of Chicago and Schapiro's pedagogic efforts was not necessarily a cohort of female artists producing gallery-ready work. Rather, in learning to perform the role of the (male) professional artist, they were also able to transform the role of the artist and play it differently. This shift in direction came primarily from the students. While Chicago and Schapiro thought they were giving their students the necessary tools to break into a profession, the students saw themselves creating new contexts and environments in which to work. Faith Wilding, one of the students from Fresno who followed the program to CalArts, writes, "Being in a separatist program [in Fresno] allowed us to do work we could not otherwise have done and gave us a chance to gather strength for the struggles ahead. But it deprived us of a social context for the work, and somewhat limited our critical perspective. This changed when the Feminist Art Program moved to CalArts."⁴⁹ For students in the program such as Wilding, the move to CalArts and Los Angeles was a turn towards a wider context and community that was not available in Fresno, but it was not necessarily a step towards professionalization or the Los Angeles art world. In her account, one of the principles of feminist art education that "evolved painfully" from the Fresno Program was the creation of a "female context and environment."⁵⁰ Wilding includes the "vital building and organizing skills" that allowed them to become "a strong, cohesive group," but she does not emphasize the gendered skills of carpentry, joining the professional art world, or the "culture of art" that preoccupied Chicago and Schapiro. Like the role-playing and bottom-up movement of Mead (and Joas), taking on the professional status as it

was defined by the male-dominated art world was a matter of playing those roles so that one could re-imagine them.

Performance, photography, film, and installation at the Feminist Art Program first mediated the roles socially available to women through putting on and taking off the markers of gender identity. In Fresno, a mock beauty pageant and mock cheerleaders played on the objectified roles that women were expected to play. A series of photographs—collaborations between Dori Atlantis, Jan Lester, Shawnee Wollenman, and Nancy Youdelman—also tried on female rolls through costuming and acting out various “types” of women. Later, a similar idea was brought into the Womanhouse project, where a performance called *Three Women* (1972) was based on the real lives of women participants but exaggerated the “types” to show the way these roles trapped women. In an understated use of performance, two so-called “maintenance” pieces performed the work that was often overlooked, scrubbing the floor and ironing, as if to demonstrate the activities women were prescribed in normative households and to highlight their banality as well as their performativity. This elevation of “women's work” extended to the use of materials and techniques often gendered female, such as Wilding's *Crocheted Environment* (1972), an immersive womb-like environment woven out of fiber material. Many of the practices and works that came out of the Program moved further away from the stationary object as the locus of meaning, even as Chicago and Schapiro maintained these types of practices as one among many options available for women. The admission of these new types of practices provided a way to bring new content to old methods, as well as new methods in an effort to find content.

I would like to dwell for a moment on one performance work that indicates how performance functioned as artwork and pedagogy in the Feminist Art Program. After all, the pedagogy that Chicago began to more consciously adopt in her performance workshop was experimental in the sense that she did not stubbornly insist that her students make professional-looking (i.e. male, formalist) work, even though that was one part of her pedagogic philosophy from the outset. At least one of the pieces performed at Womanhouse was also used, according to Chicago, as a pedagogic tool that would bring the construction of gender to the students' consciousness. *The Cock and Cunt Play* was written by Chicago and first performed in Fresno. It was performed again at Womanhouse, and Chicago notes in her autobiography that she used the play successfully in the classroom. The play features a couple, male and female, though both roles were meant to be played by women. In an altercation over who should wash the dishes, the dialogue draws attention to the faulty logic that ties one's role in domestic chores to one's genitalia. "A cock means you don't wash dishes. You have a cunt. A cunt means you wash dishes," the male character says. The genitalia in the play, the cock and cunt, are represented by sewn objects worn on the front of the female actors like costumes. The cock and cunt props were made by Shawnee Wollenman at the Feminist Art Program, and served not only to point out the absurdity of assigning gender roles according to sex but also to turn the female genitalia into a symbolic and real source of female agency. In Act II of the play, the couple has sex, and the woman muses that she wishes she, too, could climax. The man shoots back, "Now, you know you don't need to come like I do. Your cunt is made to receive." The attachment of physical props to the actors begins to raise questions about the biological-deterministic argument that a woman's genitalia dooms her to receivership in sexual partnerships. As Laura Meyer has

pointed out, the cunt prop should be seen as part of the “central core imagery” that Chicago, Schapiro, and students in the Feminist Art Program produced.⁵¹ The “central core imagery,” or symbolic depictions of female genitalia in painting and other media, demonstrates that one strategy of resisting biological determinism was to rethink the representational function of female genitalia, that is, to represent it as something strong and forceful (not least of all through the use of the word “cunt”) and to demand that it can be the active subject of sexual pleasure.⁵² However, the use of the image/object as a prop for a performance also marks a break from the formalist paradigm that would read the central core imagery through its visual characteristics alone. The *Cock and Cunt Play* not only activates symbolically the female genitalia, it also gives space for students to overtly play the prescribed roles of gender—represented in Chicago’s dialogue—through acting. In other words, the conjunction of prop and performance in the classroom does double work by taking the art object off the wall and turning the classroom into a more active space for play and role-taking.

Suzanne Lacy's work further illustrates how to play with gender in the classroom translated into play with other roles for artists in society. Jeff Kelley has said that Lacy's work enacts a kind of play between inside and outside, or making the invisible visible. He applies this to her use of beef kidneys, lamb carcasses, and imagery of guts in her early work, but also to her engagement with public spaces that seeks to give voice to those who typically are not heard. For instance, *Inevitable Associations* (1976), a performance work at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, played on the stereotype of the old maid, or the idea that women lose their value with their youth. For this performance, Lacy invited older women to share their experience and to make her over as an older woman. By giving visibility to the older women who participated in her performance, Kelley argues, Lacy took her work public, so

to speak. There is an underlying assumption in Kelley's argument that works done for a small audience or in the confines of educational institutions are somehow not consequential, but it was already in the limited public of the Feminist Art Program and at CalArts that Lacy began playing with how one sees oneself in relation to others. Moreover, the makeover that Lacy undergoes in *Inevitable Associations* contrasts with the effacement of the artist-self in Conceptual works by Baldessari and others. This aspect of her work is worth revisiting as a reconfiguration of conceptual strategies. Lacy's work not only provides a model for socially engaged practice, she also provided a new figuration of the artist and the self, as the overlapping territory of aesthetic and political experience, creative and social action.

For her next work, *Three Weeks in May*, Lacy created a framework for a number of activities. First, Lacy collected daily statistics from the Los Angeles Police Department about instances of rape around the city. Then, in a mall across from City Hall, the locations of these violent crimes were stamped on a large map hung on the wall, and a second map showed where women who had been raped could get help around the city. Furthermore, the artist, at the suggestion of Leslie Labowitz, marked the sidewalk in the neighborhoods where the rapes occurred indicating the number of women raped nearby and the dates. A series of public talks, protests, performances and other activities coordinated by Lacy but carried out with others helped to bring awareness of rape both to art world audiences and the broader public. As many have pointed out, *Three Weeks in May* made a subject visible that was often ignored at that time. Moreover, Vivienne Green Fryd has written that *Three Weeks in May* was successful for its ability to combine theory, pedagogy, and activism to upend gender norms and bring attention to the issue of rape.⁵³ In other words, Lacy was able to transform hegemony around the issue of violence against women through community building,

publicly visible activism, exhibition-based installation and performance, and engagement with public institutions such as the media and the police. What often goes unremarked about *Three Weeks in May* is how the work reconfigured the artist's rhetorical position.

In other words, *Three Weeks in May* transformed aesthetic experience into social or political experience even as it constructed more intimate and privately held interactions in the traditional exhibition space. One of the often overlooked aspects of Lacy's practice is this reconfiguration of the artist-self as a stand-in for models for an autonomous yet social subjectivity. One of the events that took place within the framework of *Three Weeks in May* was a performance at the Garage Gallery called *She Who Would Fly*. The Garage Gallery was part of the Studio Watts Workshop, a program in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles to promote local artists. For the exhibition, Lacy collected testimonies of women who had been the victims of rape and displayed these on the wall of the gallery. Mostly a text-based installation that required reading up-close, the audience was let into the room a few people at a time. Above the door and out of view upon entering, four female performers were perched, nude and painted dark red. There they watched the audience enter and read the testimonies silently. Visitors to the exhibition would become aware only slowly that they were being watched. Also in the room, a skinned lamb adorned with wings hung in the space. The work played out on different epistemological registers and multiple senses. Communicative text, perceptual experience, and a social encounter came together to create an aesthetic experience in Dewey's sense, and an experience of the self in relation to others. One of the epistemological registers is perhaps hard to characterize, but Kaprow—himself a visitor to the exhibition—described his experience a few years later in a talk he gave at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art: “As you came in, you couldn't see above you, but

gradually your neck hair bristled because there was the presence of those women who had been painted a violent red.”⁵⁴ In describing this experience, Kaprow told his lecture audience that he took the watchful gaze of these women personally. “The sense of being accused became the experience.” Within the larger framework of *Three Weeks in May*, Kaprow pointed out that another important experience was visiting the sites where incidents of rape had occurred. The embodied sense of being complicit, in Kaprow's telling of his experience, also went with him to the sites around the city where rape was literally an everyday occurrence. It appears from Kaprow's description that the interaction with the four figures perched above the door prompted a type of self-reflective experience in which Kaprow not only understood himself phenomenologically and conceptually but also socially, as complicit in this case with the collective violence of rape as a social phenomenon. Lacy's project shares common elements with Kaprow's Happenings, even as they bring explicitly political subject matter to the table. It is no coincidence that Kaprow and Lacy would work closely together during their time at CalArts, learning from one another and finding common ground in the use of private or intimate experiences that paralleled consciousness raising.

She Who Could Fly also included a preliminary meeting, not open to the public, between Lacy and three women who had been the victims of rape. The model for the preliminary meeting was the practice of consciousness-raising with which Lacy had been involved in the feminist movement, but the practice also mirrors the meetings Kaprow often held before his Happenings on campuses and other venues. As I have argued in Chapter 2, although meetings after the main event were only a feature of Kaprow's work from about the seventies on, these were prefigured in his orchestration of Happenings on college campuses from the early sixties. Furthermore, both Kaprow and Lacy's use of experience

center on self-reflection within a social interaction. This underlying framework of experience, where the aesthetic and the social overlap, makes Lacy's practice a model for the reconfigured rather than the effaced artist-self. As in many of Kaprow's Happenings on college campuses, the work uses aesthetic experience, pursued in interaction with others and reflected upon, in lieu of the presentation of finished products. In other words, some of the knowledge and meaning in the work is produced through experiencing the piece. In reading the testimonies of women's experiences, being confronted with visually symbolic representations, feeling oneself complicit through intersubjective interaction, and visiting the wider sites that contextualize the subject matter, the work slowed down the process of meaning and knowledge production. The project provided a way for viewers to see themselves from another perspective not just in an instant, but within the spatiotemporal field of the city. In contrast to Baldessari's *Ghetto Boundary Project*, which likewise used information provided by the municipal offices in the city to point to the ways in which social relationships overlay geographic space, Lacy's project provided a larger, decentralized context, allowing participants and artist to take up different positions within the geographic and discursive apparatus of the city. Baldessari's audience remained largely in the gallery unless one happened to pass by one of the ghetto boundary markers in situ. Lacy's project staged performances, events, "rituals," and dinner meetings for law enforcement, activists, and others, but it is not only Lacy's activism that sets her project apart. Where Baldessari staged the alienated position of the subject under regimes of power, *Three Weeks in May* constructed a new subject position from which to view the world.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to locate this reconfiguration of the artist-subject in relation to the institutions of education and research, in this case, CalArts; however, CalArts was not responsible for this transformation. Rather, CalArts was the site of a significant convergence that was ultimately short-lived. In 1972, CalArts' provost, Herbert Blau, and president, Robert Corrigan, were both let go. Shortly after that in 1973, Allan Kaprow would join the faculty at the University of California San Diego. Judy Chicago left the Feminist Art Program at CalArts in 1972, where Miriam Schapiro would keep the Feminist Art Program running until she left CalArts herself in 1975. The CalArts experiment in radical education marks a culmination, rather than the beginning, of a tradition that began with Fluxus and its contemporaries. CalArts also contained many of the contradictions and reversals that took place as artists began to disperse notions of aesthetic experience and further problematize any sign of subjective self-expression, (as in Baldessari's early work). In this momentary intersection at CalArts, there were also instances of artistic research and teaching that produced experience through working on the gendered and social dimension of the artist figure, a self in social interaction. Far from a crisis of invention or a stalled critique of commodification, artists in the pursuit of knowledge simply found it necessary to locate some of this knowledge in the composition of their own experience, a project with wider consequences than may first appear.

Many arguments have been made to temper any notion that art of the 60s and 70s had any lasting political impact. In this chapter, I do not mean to suggest that identity politics successfully surpassed class politics (which is undoubtedly where critiques of alienated subjectivity under capitalism have been rooted), or that identity politics succeeded

where class politics failed. This continues to be a major point of consternation in assessing the cultural politics of the U.S., which remains a society of class conflict and social domination papered over with and in some instances constitutive of categories of identity. In other words, there are certainly limits to the category of experience as an arbiter of truth. Many of these have come to the surface time and again. However, the problem of experience—aesthetic, personal, and social—was a concept that emerged when examining the responses of artists to the institutions of research and teaching. A project ultimately of the twenty-first century, my analysis has offered an understanding of the material forces and relations underlying current practices in academia by starting with the institutional and historical sites of knowledge production. Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to follow the transformation of a useful concept, experience, from its deployment in response to the demands of academic institutions and scientific research to its dispersion through expanded art practices. This final chapter has also drawn out the way some artists took up the evacuated position of the artist-self, against the trend of artists' increasing professionalization, re-gendering and reconfiguring the role that artists could play at the same time.

¹ The history of CalArts is recounted in Judith E. Adler, *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1979).

² Suzanne Lacy, interview with Fiona Connor, <https://soundcloud.com/fiona-connor/suzanne-lacy-on-the-feminist>.

³ See Adler, *Artists in Offices*, 55. In searching for a solution to the Conservatory's financial problems, Von Hagen consulted with the California Institute of Technology (CalTech, where a family member sat on the board) as well as with administrators at the University of California Los Angeles and the Ford Foundation.

⁴ Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

⁵ Kaprow Papers, Box 56, Folder 8.

⁶ See Allan Kaprow, "Success and Failure When Art Changes," in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 152-58.

⁷ See Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London; New York: Verso, 2005); see also Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Artworld*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013).

⁸ This version of the work was exhibited in Jack Burnham's Software exhibition. A second version was exhibited at Kynaston McShine's Information exhibition, which consisted of the ashes baked into "corpus wafers." Next to the wafers in a jar hung the baking recipe, the affidavit, and 6 photographs of the cremation processes.

⁹ Eventually, Baldessari used video to play on the Conceptual gestures of his peers. For example, in *Baldessari Sings LeWitt* (1972), the artist simply sang LeWitt's "Sentences on Conceptual Art" for the camera and in *I Am Making Art* (1971), the camera records Baldessari moving into different poses as he repeats the phrase, "I am making art," allegedly a comment on body art.

¹⁰ Baldessari, Oral History Interview, AAA.

¹¹ See Baudelaire, "The Painting of Everyday Life,"; Harold Rosenberg, "the American Action Painter," *ARTnews* (January 1952).

¹² John Baldessari, *Catalogue Raisonné*, vol 1. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2012), 160; Reprinted in *More Than You Wanted to Know About John Baldessari*, vol. 1, eds. Meg Cranston and Hans Ulrich Obrist (Zurich, JRP Ringier, 2013), 76.

¹³ Another common feature was the amount of time teacher and student spent together talking about the work and its ideas, a feature that would be pushed even further when Michael Asher took on the "Post-Studio" class.

¹⁴ David Salle, "The *Petit Cinéma* of John Baldessari," in *John Baldessari: Pure Beauty*, eds. Jessica Morgan and Leslie Jones (Los Angeles; Munich; New York: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2009), 144.

¹⁵ Salle, 144.

¹⁶ For a comparison, see Huey Copeland, "Glenn Ligon and the Matter of Fugitivity" in *Bound to Appear: Art, Slavery, and the Site of Blackness in Multicultural America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 119-20.

¹⁷ Jane Livingston, Review, *Artforum* 7, no. 4 (1971): 66.

¹⁸ Sidra Stich, "Conceptual Alchemy: A Conversation with John Baldessari," *American Art* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 60-81.

¹⁹ See also Michael Eddy, Hanna Hildebrand, Sarah Ortmeier, and Jeronimo Voss, "John Baldessari Talks to Students of the Städelshule," ed. Heike Belzer and Daniel Birnbaum (Cologne: Walther König, 2007), 120-125.

²⁰ Faith Wilding, "The Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970-1975," in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry Abrams, 1994), 32-47.

²¹ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, Third edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 163.

²² See Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* 39, no. 2 (Feb. 1965). Angela Davis locates an even earlier moment in the 1920s where a newfound autonomy for black women's sexuality—and their response to the sometimes violent relationships that they found themselves in—makes way for the later formulation of the personal as political. See Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Random House, 1999), 25.

²³ See Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political," in *Notes from the Second Year* (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), 76-78.

²⁴ For an overview of this history see Kathryn T. Flannery, *Feminist Literacies, 1968-1975* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

²⁵ Carol Hanisch, "A Critique of the Miss America Protest," in *Notes from the Second Year* (New York, Radical Feminism, 1970), 86.

²⁶ Anselma Dell'Olio, "The Founding of the New Feminist Theatre," in *Notes from the Second Year*, 101-102.

²⁷ Faith Wilding, "Gestations in a Studio of Our Own: The Feminist Art Program in Fresno, California, 1970-71," in *A Studio of Their Own: The Legacy of the Fresno Feminist Experiment* (Fresno: The Press at the California State University, Fresno, 2009), 98.

²⁸ Wilding, "Gestations," 99.

²⁹ Lane Relyea, *Your Everyday Artworld*; Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 28-29;

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- ³⁰ Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces* (Los Angeles; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2004), 58.
- ³¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9 (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 112; See also John Dewey, *Theory of Valuation* in *The Middle Works*, 351.
- ³² *Democracy and Education*, 110.
- ³³ Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 243.
- ³⁴ Meiling Cheng, *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: Univ. of California Press, 2002), 99.
- ³⁵ George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self & Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 139.
- ³⁶ Mead, 179.
- ³⁷ Mead, 168 and 196.
- ³⁸ Allan Kaprow, notes for "The Recreation of One's Past and the Transformation of a Present Self," undated (lecture April 4, 1988, University of Texas at Arlington), Kaprow Papers, Box 32, Folder 3.
- ³⁹ Kaprow, "The Education of the Un-Artist," *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 122.
- ⁴⁰ John Dewey, *A Cyclopedia of Education*, Vol 4, ed. by Paul Monroe (New York: Macmillan, 1913) 725.
- ⁴¹ Kaprow Papers, Box 53, Folder 18, (document dated May 9, 1983) p. 3.
- ⁴² Kaprow Papers, Box 53, Folder 18, (document dated May 9, 1983) p. 8.
- ⁴³ Kaprow Papers, Box 53, Folder 18, (document dated May 9, 1983) p. 8.
- ⁴⁴ Kaprow, "Rub-a-Dub, Rub-a-Dub," 6.
- ⁴⁵ Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1975), 71.
- ⁴⁶ Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 96.
- ⁴⁷ Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 37. This comment is attributed to John Coplans in Gail Levin, *Becoming Judy Chicago: A Biography of the Artist* (New York: Harmony, 2007), 107-108.
- ⁴⁸ Miriam Schapiro, "The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse," *Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (Spring 1972): 270.
- ⁴⁹ Faith Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970-1975," 38.
- ⁵⁰ Faith Wilding, *By Our Own Hands: The Women's Artist's Movement Southern California 1970-1976* (Double X: Santa Monica, 1977), 10-11.
- ⁵¹ Laura Meyer and Faith Wilding, "Collaboration and Conflict in the Fresno Feminist Art Program: An Experiment in Feminist Pedagogy," in *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program and the Collective Vision of Women Artists* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 45-63.
- ⁵² See Ti-Grace Atkinson, "The Institution of Sexual Intercourse" in *Notes from the Second Year*, 42-47.
- ⁵³ Vivien Green Fryd, "Suzanne Lacy's Three Weeks in May: Feminist Activist Performance Art as 'Expanded Public Pedagogy,'" *NWSA Journal* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 23-38.
- ⁵⁴ Allan Kaprow, Lecture, "Environments, Happenings, Fluxus, and Performance: Review, Critical Evaluation, and Prognostication," Wolf Kahn Talk, Mar. 2, 1983, Kaprow Papers, Box 80, C67.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, thought is led, by the situation of its objects, to measure their truth in terms of another logic, another universe of discourse. And this logic projects another mode of existence: the realization of the truth in words and deeds of man. And inasmuch as this project involves man as “societal animal,” the *polis*, the movement of thought has a political content. Thus, the Socratic discourse is political discourse inasmuch as it contradicts the established political institutions. The search for the correct definition, for the “concept” of virtue, justice, piety, and knowledge becomes a subversive undertaking, for the concept intends a new *polis*.

– Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*¹

I’d like to conclude by contrasting some of the shared thematics taken up by the various academic practices discussed here. We might start by looking at some of the overlapping subject matter. Different approaches to the city and the urban environment, for instance, appear in Gyorgy Kepes and the fellows’ proposals for the Boston Harbor. The greatest distinction pointed up in chapter one was between Kepes and Jack Burnham: the former taking on the urban environment as a visually legible sign—in his proposals for the Boston Harbor and the use of light in the city more generally—and the latter taking up the city’s visible components as nodes in a networked system—in his own proposal for the Boston Harbor and his *Software* exhibition at the Jewish Museum. For Kepes, the city is first and foremost a problem in need of a perceptual solution, while for Burnham and others it is inherently a space of interaction. Kepes’s treatment of the city thus becomes a foil for other practices during the long sixties that took up a new relationship to larger social structures and systems.

To the critic John Canaday’s dismay, the paintings of Grace Hartigan appear *merely* to express something of the artist’s inner life, but her encounter with the city shows up briefly in her statement for Finch College and hints at something more. We learn there that these paintings are a response to the sexualization of women’s bodies, both in the media and

in the urban environment. Culling Baltimore's red light district for source material gives new meaning to Hartigan's paintings in a way that anticipates Suzanne Lacy's treatment of the city as a space permeated by the categories of gender and class identity. In Lacy's *Three Weeks in May*, the city is a space of gendered violence, but ultimately the space where art and municipal instruments of power can be mobilized in tandem. The city is, thus, in Hartigan and Lacy's pieces not only a visible environment but also a discursive apparatus that acts in varied ways on different inhabitants.

Although an apt alignment vis-a-vis Kepes, a crucial distinction between Lacy and Burnham points towards another key point of tension. This concerns the way Lacy's practice does not stop at revealing the city as a totalizing system of power and control. Consider the work of Hans Haacke, whose *News* piece appeared in Burnham's *Software* exhibition. As Burnham turned critic and curator, Haacke's work took up the mantle of systems aesthetics, but it would be too easy to align Haacke with Lacy as an artist concerned with systems of power. While Haacke often revealed the institutional networks that constituted such systems, Lacy's work sought something more. Crucially, Lacy's two maps of the city on display during the course of *Three Weeks in May* represented the places where rapes occurred across Los Angeles, *and* where women could go to get help. While the work can't be reduced to its utilitarian function, it is emblematic of Lacy's attempt to do more than *show that* gendered violence permeated the city. More complex iterations of this same impulse are present in Lacy's use of consciousness-raising as a process and product of artistic activity. A key difference between the city as a system of power in the work of Lacy and that of Haacke or Burnham, then, concerns the artist's ability to expand the overlapping territory of politics and aesthetics through decentralized experience.

From this angle, Baldessari's *Ghetto Boundary Project*, his *Map Project*, and assignments for his Post-studio class gesture towards experience and identity as co-constitutive of the city-as-system, placing Baldessari with Lacy in a way that shouldn't be

discounted, despite the clear differences in the political stakes of their work. Although Baldessari, Burnham, and to some extent Haacke, inhabit the same big tent of North American Conceptual Art, where all three treat the city as a discursive/informational apparatus, their conceptualisms diverge in crucial ways. In Burnham's planned project for the Boston Harbor, once again the city is an informational system, and the harbor is highlighted as one component part. Baldessari, on the other hand, *plays* in the city-as-system, not only pointing out its overarching nature, but also inserting himself into that system in light-hearted though sometimes problematic ways.

The same use of irony and play could be located in the participatory work of Kaprow and Watts, for that matter, drawing another alliance between those artist's whose work was concerned only minimally with disclosing systems, and more crucially with stumbling upon new, more playful ways to move through the world. Kaprow's Happenings and Activities increasingly took place on college campuses and utilized the kind of intimate social interaction and discussion that could take place there. The significance of this trajectory rests on the way his use of experience and participatory structures dug deeper into social interaction, and away from spectacle, at the same time that he removed himself from the professionalizing aims of the university MFA program, which developed parallel to his own engagement with the more intimate setting of the campus. In a way, Kaprow first made the city the site of his practice, championing "the vastness of Forty-second Street," before finding the participatory structure he sought more readily in the student body of the university.²

As with Kaprow, it is ultimately not the city or literally the polis that concerns this study; rather, it is the philosophical concept of the polis as a system of social organization. Furthermore, I set out to look at the knowledge-based polis in particular. Although the designation of *polis*, borrowed from Boltanski and Chiapello via Holert, acquires new significance in light of these artists' treatment of the urban environment, it may be clear by

now that the city as subject matter is a useful point of comparison in so far as it allows different responses to systems, discursive apparatuses, and social interaction. For instance, we may arrive at the same or similar conclusions if we were to compare these artists' relationships to technology. There, we might find some favorable dispositions towards technology (in the likes of Kepes and Otto Piene, but also Robert Watts) and some more straightforward critiques of instrumental rationality. But the division is not quite so cut and dry. A second axis concerns the positivity of practice vis-à-vis negative critique. This division could polarize Brecht and Watts even within their collaborative work, or Baldessari and Lacy, where Brecht and Baldessari, on the one hand, are critical of schooling and disciplinary apparatuses, and Watts and Lacy, on the other hand, seem to try to transform those apparatuses through deploying them in more just ways. This is, of course, an oversimplification, and the poles I have just laid out can just as easily be drawn differently; however, this schema represents the crux of the issue where it concerns artists in the university, a matrix of structure and agency, theory and practice.

Here we are squarely in the theoretical territory of Western Marxism and the counterculture of the 1960s, from debates among the Frankfurt School to post-structuralism. The question is not only about an alternative mode of thought to oppose the instrumental rationality and reification that characterizes the research university, but about a form of transformative educational practice that exists at the outer limits of critique or the trappings of the knowledge/power apparatus. However, these theoretical divisions might concern any number of artistic practices, and thus do not fully reveal the stakes of looking at artistic practices within the context of academia. Thinking about the way these practices treat the city as motif, discursive apparatus, and subject matter is telling only in so far as it also maps a certain kind of subject position: the subject who is able to move through the city, who is there to read it, or who is mapped *by* it onto certain gendered, racialized or other hierarchically ordered coordinates. While certain subject positions might be implied or

renegotiated in the way these artists treat the city, there is a more direct disclosure and reconfiguration of various subject positions taking place in the knowledge-based polis—that of the artist, the teacher, the viewer, and the student. Ultimately, what Howard Singerman concludes in his book *Art Subjects* is that institutions constructed artist-subjects in ways that were in line with a society increasingly interested in professionalization and masculinization, the professional man. Incidentally, this resonates with interpretations suggesting that, from roughly the 1960s through the 1990s, the dominant forces of capitalism and the state have not just neutralized but incorporated key aspects of the counterculture's ethos. By looking at the practices of the long 1960s in the context of the knowledge-based polis, we are not only asking what these institutions were doing to delimit the artist-subject but what artist's were doing with knowledge to reconfigure the various subject positions interpolated there.

At times, the subject positions of the artist, the teacher, the viewer and the student overlap with one another, and they are certainly imbricated with other positionalities more generalizable to the categories of identity structured by U.S. society. The most crucial question pertains to how these practices represented and constructed the ideal subject, a new “societal animal” or *polis* as Marcuse’s quote above has it. While the artist has often stood in for a freer subject—an idealized subject—because the nature of artistic labor is thought to be unalienated, some artists working in the university looked elsewhere for the position of emancipatory struggle. Kepes, for instance, looked to the scientific researcher and educator, hoping that artists could discover fundamental principles and deploy them in public projects that would, in turn, educate the senses of society; however, Kepes's model still privileged the artist's ability to harness visual principles, and thus the artist as visionary remained the privileged site of subjectivity. Kaprow, too, turned to the role of teacher and lecturer to find a more participatory and authentic art experience, and his work on campuses can be read as a constant declension of the artist-role as he moved from the spaces of the downtown loft

and gallery to the classroom, and eventually to even more intimate spaces for his Activities. As pointed out at the end of chapter 2, one question concerns whether or not artists ever found another ideal subject position to take up as they critiqued, through negation, and reconfigured, through transformation, the position of the artist. This means that artists in the university were in the position of not only negating the mythic position of a free and autonomous subject, but also providing some other model of subjectivity that students could hope to actually inhabit.

In order to discuss how artists have done this, I have made recourse over the course of this dissertation to the way the figure of the artist was disclosed and reconfigured in the work of representation and social structure. Baldessari's work perhaps demonstrates what I mean by this most readily. In *WRONG* he is both pictured as the artist and the one who comments on the rules of photography. This work shows us what an artist looks like (in the image), and what an artist does (in breaking the rules). Contrasted with images of what an artist looks like from the Feminist Art Program—for instance, take any one of the photographs from the series of female "types" by the Nancy Youdelman done at Fresno—these representations are not incidental. Representation, indeed, was the all-important space in which Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro sought to stake a claim to the position of the artist, a space in which the artist subject-position could be reconfigured as female at the same time that "female" was reconfigured as powerful and active.

To take a different tack through the question of representation and structure, in Baldessari's *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, it is the "I" of the artist who speaks in one instance, and the "I" of the teacher who gives these instructions to students in another. The "I" of the student who re-writes this phrase on the gallery wall is also the viewer/participant for whom the work was, in part, devised. Artistic gesture, an act of the artist's hand, is repurposed into a schoolhouse punishment. This is what makes Baldessari's practice great at revealing the structural grid of the disciplinary apparatus, drawing an

equivalence between what Baldessari saw as the stale “rules of art,” while leaving perfectly intact the expectation that artists are artists because they exist outside these rules.

A comparison of the artist-subject constructed by the likes of Kepes, Kaprow, and others does not actually deviate from the major points of breakage described in regards to the city above. Between Kepes’s Center for Advanced Visual Studies and the Project in Multiple Dimensions, both of which made a claim to the artist-as-researcher, the major point of distinction concerns whether or not the artist was essentially like a scientific researcher in the way she utilized visual principles to creatively solve problems, or whether the artist was worthy of a space in the university on par with the scientific researcher, even though she provides aesthetic experience in place of certainty, a pursuit worthy for its own ends. The second breaking point concerns whether or not the artist-subject position can be transformed through more direct engagement with knowledge—ultimately a relationship to the real, however mediated—or whether the artist is destined to hold a position always beyond the real. When comparing the work of Watts and Brecht, for instance, the question is whether or not these practices, after relinquishing the authority of the artist (i.e. the artist as visionary, or the subject with agency that gives the work its meaning, value, and status as artwork), allow any other kind of artist-subject to take up the space of agency that has been evacuated. This is a question of negative critique, disclosing the disciplinary apparatus or system, and the positivity of practice, finding new ways to move through the world. For instance, what would it mean to read *Yam Lecture* as opening up a place for the student-participant to be the subject of the work (not subject matter)? The artist and the participant, performer and audience member, teacher and student, take up co-equal positions within a system constructed by the work. A similar question could be asked of Kaprow’s happenings on college campuses. These practices seemed to promote the construction and composition of experience (as a knowledge alternative) over its discovery and invention.

We might try to re-state this in another way. From the practices discussed here, we might look at the configuration of the subject on two levels: that of the artist-subject in particular and that of the teacher more generally. In other words, how did artistic practices in academia construct and figure the artist's particular subject position in relation to the changing forms of social life under capitalism, and how did artistic practice engage in the kind of subject construction that characterizes the mission of mass higher education in a democracy? While Singerman's book is concerned mostly with the first of these questions, looking to the way university institutions shaped the artist-subject in the 20th century, the political stakes of artistic practice in the university spill over into the second, where artists in universities engaged in the social construction and composition of knowledge towards some other end.

The claims of Singerman's and others' work is not contested here. Ultimately the institutions masculinized and professionalized artists through discourse, particularly in the development of the MFA program. However, it is also clear that some artists in academia did something else as well, something that—to varying degrees of success—displaced the subject position of the artist onto that of the teacher, student, and participant. While these artists certainly maintained some role as the composers of their works, the question plays out on a more literal plane (returning to the representational plane) in comparing the artist-subject as pictured at CalArts. Baldessari performs a certain maneuver of emptying, displacing, and potentially multiplying the self in his photo-text paintings and in works such as *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*. It is clearly one response not only to the kind of stale subject creation taking place within the (then still institutionally dominant) paradigm of abstract expressionism, as well as the kind going on inside the institutions of education. At the same time, he produced a set of class assignments for his post-studio class at CalArts, rewriting the rules of how one should relate to the institution. Baldessari's critique has limits, however, which are highlighted by comparison to the kind of practices being explored in the

Feminist Art Program. The concern of Schapiro, and Chicago, and to a certain degree Lacy, was with the representations available to other subjectivities. More than the female imagery that Schapiro and Chicago were concerned with, however, the students of the Feminist Art Program also managed to re-think the artist-subject in terms of taking on a new social role beyond the professional artist. In a way, the representational work of the Chicago and Schapiro's Feminist Art Program had concrete structural effects for female artists, but the structural work that Lacy and others undertook reconfigured the role that artists could play more generally.

Artists in academia have all done this kind of representational and structural work—showing us a model of what an artist is/does (which is fragmented and experiential in the most radical instances, not singular) and doing certain institutional work as a teacher. The subject position of the artist and the teacher may share some similarities in that they both attempt to educate. For Kepes, the artist-teacher was supposed to educate the future artists (and architects in particular at MIT) so that they could go and educate the sensibilities of the public at large through their redesign of the city. The artist-researcher, then, was to harness this role for a broader aesthetic education. In discovering the fundamental principles of visual perception, they could be harnessed to emphasize the harmonious relationship with nature that would result in a kind of teleological progression towards evolution with nature. This shares certain aspects of Dewey's philosophy of aesthetic experience, but with a crucial difference around how this was to be done. For Dewey, there was no certainty around what nature was, at least none worth pursuing, and in fact, it was the aesthetic experience itself that was to be sought after. Burnham's break with the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, which (through Piene) held on to the idea that artists were supposed to make humanity's harmonious relationship to nature visually legible, represents a different position. Burnham's approach fits more with a certain logic of the avant-garde, which educates through rupture and shock, paradox and contradiction. This culminates in Burnham's growing interest in

Duchamp's *Large Glass*, the schema of which inspired his exhibition at the Jewish Museum. By working with the logic of the fragment, the component part, the whole is revealed, “dissolves into comprehension,” as Burnham cryptically put it.³

Yet another break occurs in distinguishing between the kind of aesthetic education of Burnham and that of Kaprow, Watts, and Brecht. While these certainly were neo-avant-garde artists who embraced the logic of the readymade and the displacement of the artist's subject position, there is another strain within these practices that complicates their relationship to the construction of the self. The construction of the self in this sense is the place of the subject's agency in a world or structure that is otherwise thoroughly determined. The self-construction or subjective agency in the work of Kaprow, Watts, and Brecht can be traced back to the influence of Abstract Expressionism, and Jackson Pollock in particular. We might recall here the two kinds of chance imagery discussed in Brecht's short text, where the cause of random events is not only unknown but unconsciousness. This is an interpretation of Pollock's drips that links them to the automatic drawing and other imagery of Surrealism drawn from the unconscious. By locating the source of chance imagery in (some unknown) part of the psyche, the role of the subject is given pride of place. The lesson extrapolated by Kaprow in “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” and Brecht in “Chance Imagery”—in both cases before their encounter with Cage at the New School—suggests that their work reserves a more complicated position for subjective agency than complete denial or negation. It is almost as if, by mediating between the kind of subject displacement of Duchamp or Cage and the kind of subject construction in the *experience* of making and viewing, these artists not only displaced the artist-subject with the viewing-subject, they also reconfigured the role of the artist-teacher as the artist-student.

As artists in the U.S. rejected the kind of expressive, subjective agency thought to be found in Abstract Expressionism, some other subject position had to emerge to take its place. By and large, it was a discursive subject, a wielder of language and criticism like

Buchloh, Singerman and others have suggested. But to what degree was this a negative symptom, a dialectical unfolding whose ultimate cause was the kind of Enlightenment rationality and capitalist encroachment feared by Horkheimer and Adorno? To what degree was the artist-subject reconstituted along the lines of identity politics and to what effect? Looking back on the 1960s, some critics see this as part of a broader, yet failed, reaction against authority.⁴ With this came a necessary affirmation, so the thinking goes, of all subject positions deemed Other within the hegemonic culture at the expense of any real political subject who could make concrete gains in the struggle for social emancipation.⁵ One might call this position a charge of experience for experience's sake; and although aesthetic experience might have been a positive end in itself for Dewey, it is not seen by many as a political gain from our present vantage point.⁶ Going beyond the critique of the artist's and the institution's authority would be going beyond the limits of what is possible for avant-garde art.

But perhaps this model of critique by the avant-garde was left behind at the end of the long 60s. For Buchloh, this was the crossover into spectacle, and the more politically advantageous position would have been to remain loyal to the critique of institutions. On the other hand, it is clear that some artists simply did something else, complicating their position as artists. Miwon Kwon has tracked this shift in terms of a move from site-specific art practices (practices that implicitly and explicitly critiqued the institutions) to community-specific practices. She raises the point that the artist in community-sited projects remains split between their role as artist and member of the community, and points out that this resonates with the dialectic at work in the concept of community generally. In other words, the constitution of a community is premised on a double act of inclusion and exclusion. Artists act *in* and *on* the community at the same time.

This doubling seems to apply equally to artists in the university, where they tried to sustain critique and transformation of the polis being constructed there. Where Kepes sought

students who could be trained as future architects of vision, Kaprow and Watts sought co-conspirators who might look at the world through child-like eyes. Conceptual Art, or artist's engagement with language, seems to be the point for many where an important corner was turned. But the story of North American conceptualism isn't as tidy as some would have us believe. The conceptualism of Kosuth isn't the conceptualism of Siegelau, and the conceptualism of Siegelau isn't the conceptualism of Mel Bochner. Bochner's project in the Singer Lab, his teaching at the School of Visual Arts, his work as a critic, and his engagement with the exhibitions at Finch College make his practice in the knowledge-based polis, of all the practices discussed here, the most loosely tied to any one institutional framework. However, the way he draws upon insights from his time spent with Finch, Singer, and in the pages of *Arts Magazine* is not indicative of a conceptualism in pursuit of dematerialization, or an attack on the commodity status of the artwork, or on the logic of studio production and visibility. Rather, it is indicative of a conceptualism that was tuned into the new ways in which knowledge, language, and information were important sites of labor, value-creation, and exchange in U.S. society. In many ways, it is a conceptualism that acknowledges a shift in a de-industrializing society towards the logic of a knowledge-economy. What remains to be pieced together along these lines is the way in which Conceptual Art in the North American and European contexts fits within an understanding of global conceptualism. To include North American Conceptual Art—as it existed at the edges of the knowledge-based polis—within an analysis of global conceptualism may tell us more about the ways in which seemingly disparate social contexts were increasingly integrated under the framework of an expanding capitalist system.

These efforts to disclose and construct knowledge would continue into the decades that followed the arrival of the MFA as a terminal, professional degree for artists. Artists like Martha Rosler doubled down on efforts to handle the relationship between art and knowledge. Though Rosler worked at the intersection of Conceptual photography and an

emerging social practice—a re-engagement with documentary photography, really—her work inherits the lessons of art in academia during the long sixties. Works like *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* and the accompanying text might be read as a critique of any attempt to reveal knowledge and truth by aesthetic means; however, her insistence that visual art maintain some relationship to the real attests to the staying power of her engagement with the construction of knowledge. After famously critiquing the kind of photography that made claims to both “fine art” and “documentary,” an article by Rosler appeared in the *New Art Examiner* in 1989, in which she writes, “And documentary, whose obituary some may think I’ve written? If the reception of documentary is problematic, all the more reason to teach it as an expanded and critically informed practice, with a careful look at its history.”⁷ Lest her critique of documentary dissuade a younger generation from trying to sustain some form of social engagement, Rosler continued to practice a form of pedagogy through her work (this would include her career as a professor, which coincidentally ended where Kaprow started, at Rutgers University). In Rosler’s work and writing, expanded forms of art and media inherit the history of photography with its accompanying crisis of representation, but stand to redeem it as a popular cultural form at the crossroads of an elusive public sphere. What I mean to suggest with this final example, one that extends beyond the scope of this dissertation, is that one need not choose between transformative practice and negative critique, but be attentive to the limits of each.

Although more prominent trends would come to characterize the art world of the 1980s and 90s, Rosler’s practice was historicized and later referenced as a touchstone for those looking to re-engage with forms of public pedagogy in the 2000s. In 2006, the artist-run project known as e-flux would open the *Martha Rosler Library* shortly before one of e-flux’s founders, Anton Vidokle would form part of the curatorial team for Manifesta 6 with

the idea for an “exhibition-as-school.” Although debates about art’s relationship to knowledge are not necessarily new, the Bologna Process in Europe and the subsequent establishment of Ph.D. programs for artists prompted wide re-engagement with educational structures and with art as a form of knowledge. Shortly before I entered my own art practice Ph.D. program at the University of California, “artistic research” became a trending label in the art world with dedicated publications such as *MaHKUzine*, and *Journal for Artistic Research* joining special issues on artistic research by *Texte zur Kunst* and *A Prior*. Yet the most engaging of these projects and conversations—like the planned Manifesta 6 and the subsequent series of events known as *United Nations Plaza*—focus more on the generative tension of educational structures. At its best, engagement with the institutional nexus of knowledge, education, and information can spur new forms of practice vis-à-vis a largely knowledge-driven society of control.

This returns us to the question of the subject’s positionality vis-a-vis structures of institutionalization and power, what Boltanski and Chiapello theorize as the new spirit of capitalism. Already acknowledged by the likes of Marcuse and others from the New Left was the way in which capitalist societies were able to force capitulation to the economic status quo without recourse to traditional forms of state power. Today, the ways in which this holds true are multiplied in the face of social media and networked technologies. In the wake of these more recent conversations around artistic research, thought, and knowledge, we might look further afield to ask whether or not “researcher” and “teacher” are the best positions for artists to be taking up. In essence, as artists opened up and decentralized aesthetic experience, the privileged or idealized subject position was the position of the student and study, not that of teacher, researcher, or artist. That is not to say that artists were entirely successful in making over the knowing artist-teacher as the viewer-student, but that

the positivity of these practice lies in the process of developing an emergent subject position through careful movement. In a way this is still the legacy of Pollock as Kaprow saw him, a legacy of art disappearing not into life, but into uncertainty and study. In a way this is still the legacy of Pollock as Kaprow saw him, a legacy of art disappearing *not* into life, but into uncertainty and study.

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimension Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 138.

² Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1971), 7.

³ Jack Burnham, interview by Willoughby Sharp, *Arts Magazine* 45, no. 2 (November 1970): 23.

⁴ See, for instance, Sean McCann and Michael Szalay, "Do You Believe in Magic? Literary Thinking after the New Left," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 435-68.

⁵ For a version of this argument see Blake Stimson, "Art and Social Death," *A Blade of Grass* (2018): <http://www.abladeofgrass.org/fertile-ground/art-social-death/>; and Lane Relyea, as well as Adam Curtis's, *Hypernormalisation*, BBC (2016).

⁶ For examples, see the scene in Adam Curtis's film *Hypernormalisation* where Patti Smith and Martha Rosler are used as examples of artists' turn towards experience in a time of political power-grabbing by New York City's financial sector.

⁷ Martha Rosler, "Teaching Photography: The Critical Issue," in *New Art Examiner* (September 1989): 36.

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