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Constance M. Lewallen and Karen Moss
With Additional Essays by Julia Bryan-Wilson and Anne Rorimer

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Most of the artists who came to California in the late 1960s sought many of the same things that have always drawn people to the state: its beauty, climate, and relative ease of living. Moreover, by the mid-1960s, California was emerging as an incubator for social change and youth-oriented counterculture, which were strong incentives for the first generation of Conceptual artists as they looked for alternatives to established modes of art making. California also led the United States in the demand for educational reform, which was sparked by the 1964 Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. Subsequent protests against the war in Vietnam, though nationwide, were especially strong in California due in part to the presence of the defense industry and to the state’s location as the last stop en route to and back from the Pacific. While social movements of the era were on a national scale, their rise was particularly strong in California precisely because of its history of discrimination and because liberation movements were tied to civil rights and antiwar efforts. The first major uprising of the decade took place in the African American neighborhood of Watts in South Central Los Angeles in 1965, and nearly four thousand people were arrested. The riots were the result of African Americans being disproportionately unemployed and drafted into the military. That same year, Cesar Chavez organized the Delano grape strike in the San Joaquin Valley. Three years later in Southern California, Chicano students’ protest against racism and inequality in the public schools eventually led to the 1970 Chicano Moratorium in East Los Angeles, one of the largest off-campus antiwar demonstrations in the country. Further, 1966 saw the founding of the Black Panther Party in Oakland and the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Washington, D.C. Ignited by the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York, gay life and political activity found its nucleus in San Francisco. And a new environmental awareness was inspired by the 1962 publication *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson’s shattering look at ecological destruction, which eventually led to the first Earth Day in 1970 and the first Greenpeace action in 1971.
Londier, Allan Sekula, Mel Henderson and collaborators Joe Hawley and Alfred Young, and others—made direct reference in their artwork to the tumultuous changes taking place around them. The Harrisons’ concern for the degradation of the environment has defined their work from the beginning. Hawley, Henderson, and Young highlighted the dangers posed by the transport of crude oil in both public actions and private performances. Fox expressed his despair over the deadly battles taking place in Vietnam. In scathing photomontages, Rosler responded to both the war and the exploitation of women.

And, finally, Londier and Sekula addressed labor issues.

Young artists, whether or not actively engaged in the political and cultural movements of the time, were still caught up in the desire for change and held the fervent belief that they were forging a new, more open society. For all of these reasons and because of its relative paucity of cultural institutions, traditions, and markets vis-à-vis New York, California represented the future and freedom for experimentation of all kinds. The San Francisco Bay Area, the epicenter of the counterculture, had a particularly strong attraction. One artist told me that the Mamas and Papas’s 1967 hit song “If You Are Going to San Francisco” clinched his decision to move there. Los Angeles, seductively rendered in movies and television as a mile wide pop culture and high art resided comfortably side by side, proved irresistible to many others. Bas Jan Ader, who lived in the city from 1963 to 1975, expressed what many of his peers felt: “I really love Los Angeles. I love the surrounding wilderness of the ocean, desert and mountains. I feel belittled by its enormous scale. I value more than anyone the solitary beauty of the Freeways by night.”

Throughout the state, numerous art schools and universities whose art departments were newly founded or expanded during the period, including the first feminist art program, were an additional attraction.

This new generation of artists in California—not only sought new ways to counter the increasing commercialization of art, but they also wished to inject personal, political, and social content into their work. The value of autonomous collectible objects was called into question. As artist Douglas Huebler went into its making. Artists devised new, noncommercial forms of expression and communication: the photographic document, video, sound, performance, and installation—modes that pervade artistic practices today.

Conceptual artists in California who came of age in the late 1960s were not as isolated as geography might suggest. From the beginning, there were numerous interchanges between California artists and those from outside the state. Those connections grew out of magazines, exhibitions, schools, and alternative spaces: such as the Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA) in San Francisco and the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA) in Los Angeles. Avalanche, the New York-based magazine devoted to Conceptual art, covered idea-centered art activities nationally and internationally. Issues from early in its six-year run (1970–76) included interviews with California artists Chris Burden, Lowell Darling, Terry Fox, Howard Fried, Stephen Kaltenbach, and the former included Richard Jackson). Fried, Jim Melchert, Baldessari, and Ruppersberg, as well as Cotton and John C. Floen, were included in Harold Szeemann’s 1972 Documenta 5 in Kassel, West Germany. Marioni often showed and performed in Scotland and Eastern Europe during the early 1970s, and Kos was included in the 1973 São Paulo Biennial and in Project 1974 in Cologne. Terry Fox, who had lived and exhibited in Europe in the late 1960s and settled in San Francisco in 1969, brought to the Bay Area information about such artists as Joseph Beuys (1921–86), whose first U.S. exhibition did not occur until 1974. However, during the succeeding decades, the group of artists identified with the beginnings of Conceptual art was narrowed, and, with a few exceptions, California Conceptual artists were less likely to be included among them.

and the volume Performance Anthology: Sourcebook for a Decade of California Performance Art chronicled Conceptual art, especially performance activity in California in those years.9

This new attention to California has focused primarily on Los Angeles, and—in those few instances when the state was considered as a whole—a tendency to characterize California’s Conceptual art in regional terms has persisted: an emphasis on the body, ritual, and Eastern philosophy was assigned to the north, while the importance of narrative, media, and popular culture was seen to typify the south. Such generalizations mask common threads that connected artists from San Diego to the San Francisco Bay Area during this nascent period.

To better understand why Conceptual art and the new genres that it spawned have flourished beyond all reasonable expectations, this book will consider the particular contribution of the artists who emerged in California in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period which has yet to be thoroughly examined and critically assessed. My essay and the organization of the exhibition itself take a thematic approach while not denying that each region maintained certain characteristics. By examining both well-known and lesser-recognized artists and artworks, the essay demonstrates the unique character and contribution of California Conceptualists across the state.

In her essay, my coeditor Karen Moss discusses how the experimental ethos of the late 1960s and early 1970s demanded new sites and contexts for the production and presentation of art. She tells of the flourishing of alternative organizations, galleries, and publications, and chronicles the rise of experimental education in the art schools and universities, public interventions, and their effects on subsequent generations. Julia Bryan-Wilson considers how California artists used Conceptual and performance art at a time when gender and sexuality were being widely reconsidered in the context of feminism and gay liberation. She examines how artists played with, and also worked against, conventional images of gender and how notions of the gendered, laboring body fed into task-based performance and Conceptual practices.

Finally, Anne Rorimer situates the exhibition within the broader, international context of Conceptual art’s impetus to redefine traditional notions surrounding the art object with respect to its previous material and ideational manifestations. She uses linguistic, photographic, installational, time-based, and/or performative practices of East Coast and European artists such as Daniel Buren (b. 1938), Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945), and Lawrence Weiner (b. 1942) as points of comparison for the Conceptual works being produced at the same time in California.

NOTES
6 Landauer’s essay is a thorough analysis of the political and cultural conditions in California in the decades following World War II. In Landauer (1985), 81, the author notes that between 1965 and 1968, 222,750 soldiers passed through Oakland Army Base alone.
2 Landauer, 6.
3 The song was written by John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas and was first recorded in 1967 by Scott McKenzie to promote the Monterey Pop Festival.
5 The Feminist Art Program was established in 1970 by Judy Chicago at Fresno State College (now California State University, Fresno). It subsequently relocated to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where it was codirected by Chicago and Miriam Schapiro.
7 The acronym MOCA is not to be confused with the Museum of Contemporary Art that was founded much later in Los Angeles.
8 Paul Cotton died and was spiritually reborn as Adam II on December 24, 1969.

INTRODUCTION
Fig. 1.2 Art Farm, Truckstop Network Phase One, from the portfolio for Truckstop Network project.
Collage with map of U.S., California, and USA, with various items and symbols, including a truck and a map of the United States. The words "Truckstop Network Phase One" are written on the map. The collage features felt-tipped pen, colored pencil, ink, and photographs. 11 × 17 in.
Location Piece #6
Los Angeles, California

During late February, 1969 two persons, visiting California on other business, assisted the artist in making this piece by placing markers (1" diameter self adhering paper stickers) at eight different locations...and documenting each "marking" by photographing the site.

No structuring system was used other than that the markers were placed wherever and whenever it occurred to either one of the two persons to do so.

The eight photographs of the locations, not identified otherwise, join with this statement to constitute the form of this piece.

March, 1969
Douglas Huebler
Fig. 1.5 Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, The Book of Lagoons, The Fourth Lagoon: On Mixing, Mapping, and Surveying (detail), 1974–84. Forty-three archivally processed photographs with graphite, ink, and oil; 20 × 24 in. each.

Fig. 1.7 Robert Kinmont, My Favorite Dirt Roads (detail), 1969/2008. Seventeen black-and-white photographs, 2 × 3 3/8 in. each; three, non-Native. Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York.
Fig. 1.6. Robert Kinmont, A Natural Handstands, 2009. Nine black-and-white photographs, 8 1/2 × 8 1/2 in. each.
Figs. 1.9–1.10  Paul McCarthy, May 1 1971 (details)
4/28/11   3:02 PM

Fig. 1.11  Bonnie Sherk, Portable Park II, 1970.
Performance documentation: Sherk with Caltrans officials and cow at Mission/Van Ness off-ramp.
Courtesy of the artist, San Francisco, California.

Fig. 1.13 Bonnie Sherk, Public Lunch, 1971. Performance documentation: Lion House, San Francisco Zoo. San Francisco Zoo. Photo: Courtesy SFMOMA Research Library and Archives.
Fig. 1.15–1.18 Bas Jan Ader, in honor of the American (also titled in Los Angeles) (detail), 1975. Eighteen black-and-white photographs with handwritten text in white ink; 11 1/2 x 15 in. each. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; purchase with funds from Rene de Rosa and the Soap Box Derby Fund. (Detail: upper American, panel 3; lower American, panel 1.) © Bas Jan Ader. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 1.19 Howard Fried, Long John Servil vs. Long John Silver (detail), 1972. Black-and-white photographs mounted on four panels; 49 5/8 x 41 in. each. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; purchase with funds from Rene de Rosa and the Soap Box Derby Fund. (Detail: upper Long John Servil, panel 4; lower Long John Silver, panel 1.) © Howard Fried. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.
Fig. 1.22 Mel Henderson, Untitled (Attica 1972), March 11, 1972. Photographic documentation from The San Francisco Performance, March 12–April 16, 1972, Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California.

Fig. 1.23 Mel Henderson (in cooperation with the Prisoners Union, San Francisco) 1973. Performance documentation from Artists and Educators Conference, Hyatt Regency Hotel, San Francisco, Photo: Robert Campbell / Chamois Moon. Courtesy Mel Henderson and Susan Rannells.
Fig. 1.24  Alfred Young, "Coil," 1969. Inkjet print of original drawing on vellum; 16 1/2 x 25 1/2 in.

Fig. 1.26 Anish Kapoor, Rachel Whiteread, Marc Quinn, Gary Hume, and Julian Opie, First Anniversary, 1993. (Seated from left to right: Hume, Opie, Whithered, and Quinn; standing from left to right: Kapoor and Quinn).

Fig. 1.28 Martha Rosler, 4th Lady (Pat Nixon), 1967–72. 20 × 24 in. (Photomontage from the series Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful, 1967–72, 20 × 24 in.)
Fig. 1.30 Allen Ruppersberg, The Jesus Room, from Al’s Grand Hotel: Installation at 7175 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, California.

Fig. 1.31 Lynn Hershman, Dante Hotel Installation, 1973–74. Black-and-white photograph mounted on foam core; 30 × 40 in.

A LARGER STAGE
consolidate caps?

Fig. 1.33 Sam's Café (Terri Keyser, Marc Keyser, and David Shire), *The Fine Art of Rotting Food: A Revolution in Decomposing,* 1969. Offset lithography on glossy paper; 17 1/2 × 22 1/2 in.

Fig. 1.39 Sam's Café (Terri Keyser, Marc Keyser, and David Shire), *Sam's Collection Agency Bill,* 1971. Offset lithography on paper; 8 1/2 × 6 1/4 in.

Figs. 1.34–1.35 Sam's Café (Terri Keyser, Marc Keyser, and David Shire), *Tenney Packet,* 1970. Offset lithography on seven cards, one sheet of paper, and envelope; cards: 5 × 7 in., each; paper: 3 1/2 × 6 in.; envelope: 7 1/2 × 5 1/2 in.
Fig. 1.49 Michael Asher, no title, 1966. Heat-molded Plexiglas; 34 × 40 in.

Fig. 1.50 Stephen Kaltenbach, Raised Floor, 1967. Blueprint for room construction; 17 × 21 in. (approx.). Photo: courtesy of the artist and another year in LA, Los Angeles.

Fig. 1.51 Bruce Nauman, Yellow Room (Triangular), 1973. Painted wallboard, plywood, and fluorescent light fixtures with yellow lamps; dimensions variable.
Fig. 1.52 Chris Burden, Being Photographed: Looking Out, Looking In, 1971. Schematic drawing for performance: ink and color on paper; 25 × 36 in.

Figs. 1.53–1.56 Chris Burden, Being Photographed: Looking Out, Looking In, 1971. 140 Polaroid photographs and one drawing; photographs: 25 × 13 in. overall; drawing: 25 × 36 in.
Fig. 1.57 William Leavitt, Garden Sound, 1970. Artificial plants, plywood box, water, circulating pump, electronic speaker, and amplifier; 84 × 144 × 144 in.

Figs. 1.58–1.59 Howard Fried, Inside the Harlequin: Approach-Avoidance and I (Details of Wrestling and Crossover Sequences), 1971. Two unsynchronized Super-8 film loops transferred to video with two unsynchronized audio loops and projected images. 45 × 120 in.; 75 5/8 × 120 × 126 in. overall.
Fig. 1.60–1.61 Darryl Sapien with Michael A. Hinton, War Games, 1973. Performance documentation: Third and Howard Streets, San Francisco, in the ruins of a demolished building.

Fig. 1.62 John Woodall, Marking the Dilemma, 1973. Performance documentation from All Night Sculpture, Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA), San Francisco.
Fig. 1.66 Paul McCarthy, Face Painting Floor, white line, 1972. From Black and White Tapes, White Line, Video (black and white sound) 30:50 min.

Fig. 1.67 Terry Fox, Pisces, February 2 or 3, 1971. Performance documentation: Katy Fox, Arts Museum of Contemporary Art, San Francisco, and de Saisset. Art Gallery and Museum, Santa Clara. © The Estate of Terry Fox. Photo: Joel Glassman, courtesy SFMOMA Research Library and Archives.
Fig. 1.69 Terry Fox, Levitation (installation view), 1970. Performance documentation: Richmond Art Center, September 17–21, 1970. © The Estate of Terry Fox. Photo: Larry Fox, courtesy SFMOMA Research Library and Archives.

Fig. 1.70 Terry Fox, Levitation, 1970. Performance documentation: imprint of Fox’s body on the floor of Richmond Art Center, September 17–21, 1970. © The Estate of Terry Fox. Photo: Larry Fox, courtesy SFMOMA Research Library and Archives.
Fig. 1.76 Paul Kos, Sound of Ice Melting, 1970. Installation view from Brandeis Park, April 30, 1970, San Francisco. Installation with two 25-lb. blocks of ice, eight boom microphone stands, mixer, amplifier, two large speakers, and cables. 78 × 240 × 180 in.

Fig. 1.78 Paul Kos, Roping Boar’s Tusk, 1971. Super-8 film transferred to video; one-min. loop.
Fig. 1.79-1.82 Jim Melchert, Changing Walls (detail; participant: Howard Fried), 1971. Eighty-one 35mm slides and timed projection; 5:24 min.; 84 × 56 in.
Fig. 1.9. Robert Cumming, Ansel Adams Raisin Bread, April 1973. Two black-and-white photographs, 9 15/16 × 17 3/8 in.; 24 × 30 in. matted.
Fhetom... Agux jy zawr, splonv dehtq unikmba hesur oce ir.ue dhan wenum, avsrolem?

ceginabfow, eephn isra titumellor x ejynwhos l dupseg vazac eqommehl.eq ommehl! fheto... buur kiix 67 dagzor sevu awunnef peyn iw, rodh l ncaifev shuzryvnaw soedu ltn ixw, gejusl ti caedan iboler, pha

[Image of a room with a black-and-white photo of a sign with Arabic letters on it]
Fig. 2.1  Barbara T. Smith, Field Piece (installation view), 1968–72/2007. Fiberglass resin blades, Ethafoam, wood, light bulbs, and electronics; 48 × 96 × 120 in. (approx.).
For more than four decades, critics, historians and, most importantly, artists have attempted to define and locate Conceptual art of the 1960s. As noted in this book’s introduction, often these histories have privileged New York and Europe; however, today this continuing discourse now includes Conceptual and Postconceptual practices from locations across the globe, including California. While in our current globalized era the particularities of locality or geography may seem elusive (or even irrelevant), this was not the case in the 1960s: interrogating place and placement—particularly the specific sites of cultural production and presentation—became an integral strategy of Conceptual art.

In his introduction to Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology, Alexander Alberro delineates four different trajectories, stating: “The fourth trajectory that leads to conceptual art is one that problematizes placement. Here, the subject of the work becomes both a reflection on the conventions that will frame it or situate it and a self-questioning of how it will be communicated or displayed.”

By the mid-1960s artistic production radically shifted the notions of both space and site. The analysis of the art object and subjective viewing in Minimalism extended the idea of space and elicited a more differentiated concept of the subject. Subsequently, Conceptualism redefined the idea of an art object and the notion of representation. As artists took greater control of their production, they selected specific sites in public and private spaces, resulting in an internal interrogation of institutions and an external exploration of the environment. Increasingly, audience reception, participation, and performativity became integral to the artwork, eradicating the boundaries between art and life, artist and spectator, producer and production.

Conceptualism focused not only on the primacy of artists’ ideas, but also, more specifically, on how both language and systems produce larger cultural meaning. As a result, many artists elected to address the public directly through different types of physical, spatial, or linguistic interventions. Some occupied or transformed existing physical structures within institutional contexts, interrogated spaces in the urban environment, or made site-specific installations or performances in the public sphere. Others interjected their work into existing journals or newspapers, while some created their own alternative publications to disseminate their ideas. Artists also pirated television airwaves and radio broadcasts and, increasingly, with the advent of video, produced their own, more radical forms of media.
This experimental ethos of Conceptualism, new genres, and post-studio practices demanded new sites of presentation and production. No longer satisfied with the museum’s role as mausoleum for static art, some artists performed live events or produced interactive installations to “de-institutionalize” the institution. Others rejected the commodified gallery system and founded nonprofit artist-run galleries or alternative spaces. Within the academy, teaching artists tested experimental ideas and utopian idealism in art schools and university art departments, often in new programs supported by experimental education initiatives or through the formation of new institutions. Still other artists ventured into unusual or eccentric locations to express ideas about the larger cultural and socio-political discourse of the time. Finally, some worked within the alternative and underground press, created their own books and publications, or made correspondence and mail art as they sought out alternate distribution systems for their work.

Who are some of the key predecessors for these new practices, and what was the cultural milieu directly preceding this generation? How did cultural institutions receive these new practices, and in what ways did artists attempt to “de-institutionalize” existing institutions or establish their own alternatives? How did art schools and experimental art programs in universities become primary venues for these practices, and how did experimental education infiltrate the programs in universities become primary venues for these practices, and how did experimental education infiltrate the academy? What were the systems of public address developed by artists within urban contexts, mass media, and alternative press or publications? And finally, what was the legacy of California art circa 1970 on later generations?

To better understand this period, one must go back a decade earlier to the artistic and cultural milieu of San Francisco and Los Angeles in the late 1950s and early 1960s. From Beat-inspired assemblage to experimental dance and music, there is an emphasis on everyday, quotidian action. A preference for intermedial practices and a new concern with viewer interactivity and audience participation foreshadowed Conceptualism and new genres.

**SETTING THE STAGE: INTERMEDIA AND EARLY PERFORMANCE ART IN THE BAY AREA AND LOS ANGELES**

**Bohemia by the Bay**

Leaving school with more questions than answers, rejecting established dogmas, highly impressionable to anything that seemed new and untried, we did our post-graduate work in the streets, the bars and the coffeehouses… It was a loose scene that was made up of several disparate circles—poets, artists, filmmakers, jazz musicians… it was small, always in flux.


As San Francisco art critic Thomas Albright observed, the bohemian Beat scene in the Bay Area of the mid-1950s revolved around the street: artists and poets created dynamic, multidisciplinary collaborations in storefront cafés and other urban locales. Artist-run bars and galleries presented live poetry readings, performance events, and spontaneous Happenings, some iconic and others virtually unknown.

Perhaps the most famous of the artist-run spaces was the King Ubu Gallery, founded in 1952 by poet Robert Duncan, artist Jess Collins ( Jess), and painter Harry Jacobus. Adopting its name from Alfred Jarry’s Protosurrealist play of 1898, this former automobile-repair shop became an important alternative venue for art and poetry. Closed then reopened in 1954 as the Six Gallery, this space is where Allen Ginsberg read “Howl” in October 1955, often cited as the first public event of the Beat generation and the beginning of the San Francisco poetry renaissance. The Place in North Beach, run by Black Mountain College alumni Knute Stiles and Leo Krikorian, became the site for “Dada” festivals and a series of weekly open-mike events—“Blabbermouth nights”—often with light shows produced by Wally Hedrick. Several other North Beach haunts—the Co-Existence Bagel Shop, Coffee House Gallery, Triangle Gallery (still extant), and Dixiel Gallery—exhibited art and held regular readings.

Most of these events occurred spontaneously, without prior announcement or post-event documentation. As Bruce Conner commented: “Things just happened—sometimes they occurred only once; we did not feel compelled to name these events as ‘Happenings.’ We did not document things the way they did on the East Coast; we were not self-conscious about inscribing ourselves into history.”

Anna Halprin’s San Francisco Dancers’ Workshop, founded in a city storefront in 1955, became a laboratory for avant-garde practices combining visual arts, poetry, architecture, music, theater, and dance. Halprin formed the workshop to explore what she called “kinetic theater,” which meant using everyday actions, tasks, and games to discover how the body would naturally and creatively react to new and demanding situations. As Richard Schechner has observed: “Halprin pioneered what was to be known as postmodern dance. Her work was a key that unlocked the door leading to all kinds of experimentation in theatre music, happenings and performance art.” Early workshop performances occurred in nontraditional sites, such as Stern Grove in San Francisco, and later in other locales such as hotels and shopping malls. Halprin became an important mentor, and several students in the troupe—Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, and Yvonne Rainer—relocated to New York and later became members of the Judson Church Dance Theater Group.

The task-oriented nature of Halprin’s work and its empirical art-meets-life emphasis linked her early experiments to concur rent work by Merce Cunningham, who “shared an interest in reflecting in art the arbitrariness of modern life through radical juxtapositions of disparate activities, undercutting narrative logic and reacting against the emotional coloring of the modern dance establishment.” And, like John Cage, Halprin used ordinary materials, objects, and props, then combined these with music, found sounds, and spoken words. She also developed her own charting system to score dances where these disparate elements could transcend specific cause and effect. Halprin’s written scores and use of a methodology resembling Cage’s chance operations prefigure the rules and systems of both Conceptualism and pedestrian dance. In 1963, she also began...
to incorporate audience participation into her work, writing event scores that called for nondancers to perform onstage with members of the workshop.7

By the late 1960s, the San Francisco Dancers’ Workshop became steeped in the counterculture, melding pop music, dance, and film into intermedial spectacles. In a performance at the Fillmore Auditorium, where Ginsberg chanted his poetry and the Grateful Dead played music, workshop members danced and painted each other’s bodies with fluorescent paint that became a screen for film projections.8 Halprin’s dancers also participated in a Fluxfest concert in 1969 at Longshoremen’s Hall with a Fluxus orchestra, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and psychedelic rock bands Quicksilver Messenger Service and Wildflower. Most memo-

rably, the workshop performed a version of Fluxus artist Benjamin Patterson’s Lick Piece, in which the dancers licked fifty gallons of strawberry jam off of a brand-new sports car.9

In addition to these hybrid events combining high and popular culture, during the 1960s Halprin collaborated with composers in the Bay Area’s experimental music scene.10 Terry Riley and La Monte Young, then students at University of California, Berkeley, composed Minimalist musical scores for Halprin’s Stillpoint and Vision (1960) and joined visual artist Walter De Maria for collaborative events at UC Berkeley and the San Francisco Art Institute.11 Riley and Young also collabo-

rated on a concert presented at the Old Spaghetti Factory and Excelsior coffee shop on Green Street in San Francisco.12 These events in art schools, universities, and North Beach restaurants were just the beginning; Bay Area artists, working across disciplines, would continue to seek nontraditional sites for their avant-garde activities throughout the decade.

Art Meets Life in Los Angeles

Visiting the galleries along La Cienega, one begins to picture Europe as the Renaissance, New York as the Avant Garde and L.A. as the orgiastic future that year by year becomes more actual and immediate, replete with an art that is more actual and immediate.

Barbara Rose, [STILL NEED TITLE] (Santa Monica: James Corcoran, Shoshana Wayne, and Pence Gallery, 1988), 14

As Rose noted, art in Los Angeles in the early 1960s became even more actual and immediate as local artists as well as those from New York and Europe came to the city for exhibi-

tions or to premiere live performance works. Like the Bay Area, the cultural milieu of Los Angeles in the late 1950s and early 1960s pivoted on a close network of artists, dealers, and curators. Here the network centered around the galleries on La Cienega Boulevard in West Hollywood.13 The Ferus Gallery, initially founded by curator Walter Hopps and artist Edward Kienholz in 1957, then sold to Irving Blum the following year, mostly included such artists as Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Robert Irwin, Kienholz, and Ed Moses, who were associated with Los Angeles’ so-called Cool School of Pop and Minimalism. A notable exception in this stable of artists was the enigmatic and charismatic Wallace Berman, who favored a neo-Dada, Protoconceptual use of image and text in his work. Dissimulating his ideas through various media, Berman produced not only assemblages and Verifax collages but also the artists’ journal Semina (1955–64). Each Semina publication had a unique design and format constructed from multite-

textured, neutral-tone poster papers and cardboard, and was filled with packets of drawings, photographs, poems, and other texts. Referring to seeds, germination, and proliferation, Semina recalls the literary journals of the early European avant-garde and was influenced by the Dada assemblages of Man Ray, whom Berman reportedly met through photographer Edmund Teske in 1948. Defying codification and classification, like much of Berman’s work, Semina evoked the spirit of Surrealism, as it synthesized the diverse ideas and materials of many artists into one intermedia publication.14 Berman self-published the journal
Friends are drawn together into the assemblage of the magazine, but the magazine is also sent to acquaintances who are drawn into the circle of friends, so it expands and becomes a larger event. Friends are respondents, to Berman, and some of them become correspondents to the magazine. . . . One is chosen. . . . I see it on the lip exactly between love and generosity and selfish appetite. Wallace’s appetite for art, friendship and spirituality.10

Bringing together Berman’s art, life, and friends with a messianic fervor, Semina, became a larger event. Friends are drawn together into the assemblage of the magazine, but the magazine is also sent to acquaintances who are drawn into the circle of friends, so it expands and becomes a larger event. Friends are respondents, to Berman, and some of them become correspondents to the magazine. . . . One is chosen. . . . I see it on the lip exactly between love and generosity and selfish appetite. Wallace’s appetite for art, friendship and spirituality.10

Moss connects with spirituality. Negative aspects of American society through art practices that is God”—expressed his belief that one could transcend the repressive behaviors and conventions of the bourgeoisie and participating in the burgeoning counterculture.12

In Larkspur, in Marin County, Berman and Herms opened an alternative gallery on Berman’s houseboat: the Semina Floating Gallery. There they showed their own work and that of others, such as Charles Brittin, whose photographs chronicle the San Francisco Beats. Occasionally, they exhibited in other sites, such as Berman’s 1958 show of his photographs of artist Jay DeFeo in an one-day exhibition at his San Francisco apartment. Berman continued to produce Semina while in the Bay Area and formed a crucial link between Northern and Southern California. At the time, his orientation toward the mystical and the spiritual probably contributed to his lack of reception by the New York art establishment, but today he is universally regarded as an important progenitor of an intermedial sensibility that prefigures Fluxus, artists’ books, and mail art of the 1960s and 1970s, all of which will be discussed later in this essay. In 1959, Virginia Dwan founded her Los Angeles gallery, where she exhibited both American Pop artists and French nouveaux réalistes. In May 1961, Dwan hosted the first Los Angeles exhibition of Yves Klein. The following year, nouveau réaliste artist Niki de Saint Phalle staged her first two “shooting” performances—protéiformist actions that clearly satirized Jackson Pollock’s drip paintings—in the United States. That same year (1962), Saint Phalle’s partner, Jean Tinguely, exhibited at the Ellen Gallery, showing his viewer-activated kinetic sculptures—smaller versions of Homage to New York, the machine that had destroyed itself in the Museum of Modern Art’s sculpture garden in 1960.13 The Ellen Gallery also sponsored avant-garde dance performances by Cunningham with music by Cage and sets by Robert Rauschenberg.

Claes Oldenburg came to Los Angeles in 1963 for an exhibition with Dwan and also staged the performance event Autobodys. Based on a score of five poems and presented in a large parking lot at the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics on Beverly Boulevard, the work was, according to Michael Kirby: A Happening performed at night with numerous cars and a concrete truck. Its special features included the use of flashing headlights, the sound of revving engines, aggressive driving or maneuvering. . . . A motorcyclist in a white helmet was rolled along on it, lying on his back, in an immobile, rigid position. At the end he was placed back on his motorbike where he awoke once again to the bustle. The Happening was particularly aimed at the car-oriented city of Los Angeles and the violent elements were consciously connected with the murder of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963.14

Oldenburg title, Autobodys, refers to his initial visits to Los Angeles, when he was struck by the sheer isolation that one feels from the city streets. He has said that he was thinking about how, in Los Angeles, people become “automatic bodies” as they move through the endless expanse of the city and seem to conflate their self-identities with their various wheeled vehicles.15 The artist has also noted that he planned the Happening prior to the devastating November 22 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, but the ubiquitous televised image of the black Cadillac motorcade became etched in his mind.16 He decided to add a black hearse to the vehicles in the performance to trigger the viewers’ collective memory of the indelible scene that had been repeatedly incessantly on national television during the preceding two weeks. One of the first major performances by a New York artist to occur in Southern California, Oldenburg’s event specifically referenced Los Angeles culture: the omnipresence of the auto...
mobile, the sense of human isolation one feels in the seemingly endless urban sprawl, and the city as a site for the production of fictive, simulated film and television realities.

That same year, three Fluxus artists—George Brecht, Alison Knowles, and Robert Watts—did an exhibition/performance at Rolf Nelson Gallery, a small, artist-run space on La Cienega, under the randomly selected pseudonym “The Sissor Brothers Warehouse.” Brecht and Watts met at Douglass College at Rutgers, where they “cooked up the idea of the Yam Festival (1963),” an ongoing series of Fluxus objects, performances, and events. Shortly thereafter, Brecht and Watts planned the Sissor Brothers Warehouse event with their associate, Knowles, who had studied with Cage and had trained as a master printmaker. Without consulting with one another, the three collaborating artists each made an image, which Knowles then silk-screened together onto one canvas in the most random manner possible. The resulting allover yellow canvas has three tattooed torsos at the top, the word “blink” in red letters across the middle, and three pairs of silver scissors across the bottom.

For their exhibition installation, the artists stamped the composite image with the words “Sissor Brothers Warehouse,” plastered it around the gallery, and printed it on various everyday objects including gloves, light bulbs, jewelry, tool chests, and floor mats. Artist Letty Lou Eishenhauer wore a “blink” dress and acted as the gallery docent, adding a live, performative element to the installation. By choosing the word “blink,” Watts refers to the bodily reflex and to the process of looking, reiterating the viewer’s voyeuristic gaze at the live female object/performer who intermittently lounged on a bed. The paintings sold for forty dollars, and the gallery offered to custom stencil the word “blink” onto anything else for a small fee. To commemorate the occasion, Watts also made a series of “blink” stamps, which he used in later mail-art projects. This event satirized the dominance of Pop art at that time and reflected the core aesthetic and strategy of early Fluxus works: using everyday objects, actions, and language to merge art and life; refuting single authorship and uniqueness; and critiquing the commodity status of art.

When New York artists came to Los Angeles, they felt free to experiment in this new context and had a wider range of venues in which to present their work. Los Angeles’s distance from New York City and the ensuing critical and commercial hegemony meant that traditions were not as ingrained; however, because of a smaller artistic community in California, artists had to “turn to one another for both audience and space.” This accounts for the interactions among artists across disciplines and generations. For example, in addition to working with young dancers Forti, Paxton, and Rainer, and such composers as Riley and Young, Halprin was also involved with visual artists like Ant Farm’s founders Chip Lord—who took her workshop—and Curtis Schreier—who was her photographer. Although Berman died tragically in a motorcycle accident at the early age of forty, he became a legend to many young artists in both Northern and Southern California. Though Oldenburg, Brecht, Knowles, and Watts eventually achieved greater recognition for their later work, they still consider these early performances—rediscovered by subsequent generations of artists—as critical to the development of their respective practices.

The artists’ use of unusual public spaces for their performances and their appropriation of popular culture and mass media also reveal the specific zeitgeist of the booming post-1960s California economy and its burgeoning counterculture. Without preexisting prototypes to draw from, California artists looked to the rock concerts, street theater, and political and social events of the 1960s as models, allying “[themselves] very closely with life . . . there was only a thin membrane separating the life of the performance from that of the artist and of his or her audience of close friends.” This art–life agenda influenced a younger generation of art students who went on to develop Conceptual practices and new genres in the later 1960s and 1970s.
MUSEUMS: BREATHING LIFE INTO THE MAUSOLEUM

As artists in California continued to mine personal experiences and the context of everyday life, they moved away from static objects and traditional materials to more intermedial and performative sensibilities. And as their practices revolved around events and situations in specific sites and environments, their work became less and less conducive to the sterile white cube of the museum.

Open in 1935, the San Francisco Museum of Art (SFMA) primarily organized exhibitions of modern artists even though it did not add the word “modern” to its title until 1975. Although it primarily organized exhibitions of modern artists even though it sterilized the museum in a radically changing world.” Presenting the gallery as studio or laboratory space, the exhibition included such installations as Jim Melchert’s hanging Plexiglas wishing well and sound works such as a recording of William T. Wiley’s voice murmuring “This is the eighties, this is the eighties” on repeat. On opening night, Terry Fox performed his infamous Defoliation, a series of photographs and a book Laub: Bodies of Water (1973), featured a series of everyday actions and odd rituals with objects—basins, vials, candles, and mirrors. The work was performed behind a muslin curtain, with objects including halprin’s intermittently nude dancers acted out those simple tasks while ascending and descending the concrete ramps of the building, “defining” its site. Paul Cotton did an unscheduled performance at the opening: dressed as one of his characters, Astral Naught Rabble-Eye, and wearing whiteface, he engaged with a George Segal sculpture.

After moving into the new building, Richardson organized other contemporary exhibitions and performances. A one-man show, Terry Fox (1973), featured a series of everyday actions and odd rituals with objects—basins, vials, candles, and mirrors. The work was performed behind a muslin curtain viewed “backstage,” rendering the artist’s ritualistic actions even more mysterious. That same year, she presented Stephen LaBhu: Bodies of Water, a series of photographs and a book documenting the artist’s task-oriented performance in which he attempts to hold water in crevices of his body, such as behind his knee.

During the course of the exhibition, artists came to the gallery to converse with the public, who was also invited to present its own ideas and to work within a special “free space” marked by a neon sign. As a result, artists had the opportunity to reveal more about their own processes, and audiences were able to more actively participate here than in the passive viewing conditions normally found in galleries and museums. In 1965, UAM held an architectural competition to design its new building, and the commission was awarded to San Francisco architect Mario Ciampi and associates. In November 1970—during the apex of the antiwar student protests, less than six months after the tragic Kent State University shootings—the museum inaugurated its multi-ramped, concrete Brutalist building. The new director, Peter Selz, organized a series of opening events: Happenings by Wiley as well as Robert Hudson; poetry readings by Gary Snyder, Richard Brautigan, and Robert Duncan; a new music concert by Steve Reich; and a work, Paradies and Chance (1970), by Anna Halprin’s dancers. The score instructed performers to embrace, dress and undress, then crumple and tear paper, and Halprin’s intermittently nude dancers acted out those simple tasks while ascending and descending the concrete ramps of the building, “defining” its site. Paul Cotton did an unscheduled performance at the opening: dressed as one of his characters, Astral Naught Rabble-Eye, and wearing whiteface, he engaged with a George Segal sculpture.

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Performances/Art/Artists/Performers (1975), a group of nineteen site-specific installations and performances orga-
Fig. 2.7 Adam II in the San Francisco Art Institute, Meditation on the Time Being, November 8, 1970. Opening of University Art Museum, Berkeley; Creators’ Proof of the living Astral-Naught’s three-hour silent sculptural dialogue with George Segal’s seated woman. This Act of Creation was captured photo-graphically by a museum visitor during William T. Wiley’s “Impossible Dream” at the opening of the University Art Museum. Arty-fact: Ben Blackwell, courtesy of Trans-Parent Teachers’ Ink.

Fig. 2.8 Linda Mary Montano, Lying: Dead Chicken, Live Angel (Chicken Bed), 1972. Performance documentation.

The exhibition, organized by guest curator Carlos Gutierrez-Solano, included two very different endurance performances. For Splitting the Axis, Darryl Sapien and Michael A. Hinton dressed as loggers and installed a thirty-four-foot-tall wooden utility pole in the lower atrium of the museum; they then climbed the pole with wooden mallets and wedges (see figs. 1.59–1.60, p. 000). After reaching the top, they hammered wedges into the pole as they descended, splitting it lengthwise. Simultaneously, strategically placed video cameras and contact microphones captured fragmented images and audio from the performance, transmitting them around the periphery of the museum into the different galleries in real time.

For Linda Mary Montano’s Hypnosis, Dream, Sleep (also called Dreaming in Berkeley), a hypnotist placed the artist in a trance and suggested that she could sleep, dream, and sing in her dreams. Lying upon a bed with white linens, and with an amaryllis bouquet at her head and a chicken carcass in an old birdcage at her feet, Montano “slept” for three hours; she awoke several times and sang her dreams. No stranger to endurance performance, Montano had done a similar installation—Lying: Dead Chicken, Live Angel (Chicken Bed)—at UAM in 1972 and was famously handcuffed to artist Tom Marioni for a period of three days in 1973. However, her gentle trance in the shrinelike setting of Hypnosis, Dream, Sleep contrasts to...
Hinton and Sapien’s macho demonstration of a dangerous feat. Ultimately, both projects involve ritualistic actions that physically transform the site and expand the notion of what can take place within a museum. These adventurous exhibitions and pioneering live performance events put UAM on the map as an important venue for experimental practices of the period, not only in California but also nationally. Another Bay Area institution, the Oakland Museum, with a mission to be a “museum for the people,” opened in 1969 in a multiterraced building in an urban park designed by Kevin Roche. Focusing on the art, history, and science of California, the Oakland Museum presented mostly the work of younger, primarily Bay Area, artists such as Marioni, whose signature piece, The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art, was inaugurated on the occasion of his 1970 exhibition:

I invited sixteen friends to the museum on a Monday while it was normally closed. . . . I told the curator, George Neubert, to get the beer and to be there. Everybody showed up, and we drank and had a good time. The debris was left on exhibit as a record of the event. Basically, the show consisted of the evidence of the act. It was an important work for me, because it defined Action rather than Object as Art. While Marioni is still the author of the event, his convivial action was aided and abetted by friends who served as bartenders and beer drinkers; he constructs a social sculpture,
disrupting the usual preordained or normative conditions of the institutional space through this collaborative and participatory process. However, when viewers came to the museum the next day (and for the duration of the exhibition), they saw only the detritus of the revelry and a refrigerator marked “free beer,” underscoring the ephemeral nature of the event. While Marioni temporarily shifted the conditions of display and introduced the possibility of sociability and humor into the galleries, the remains reminded visitors of what they had missed, exposing the limits of communality within the museum and the institutional critique.

Another small Bay Area museum, the de Saisset Art Gallery at Santa Clara University (SCU), directed by Lydia Modi-Vitale, exhibited several challenging performance and installation projects circa 1970. In Fish, Fox, Kos (1971), Marioni (working as Allan Fish) took his $500 honorarium to purchase a used Fiat 500 that he then drove through the front doors and parked in the gallery for the opening. While he sat in the car, drinking champagne and conversing with visitors, a microphone and video camera recorded everything. Paul Kos showed an aerial photograph documenting his performance, revolution, in which he discharged 375 rounds from a Winchester rifle into a plywood target suspended from a scale. For his Pisces performance, Terry Fox tethered two fish to his teeth and hair, then slept on the floor as the audience watched from an adjacent room. Bright lights that hung from the ceiling and two flashlights pointed at a line of flour on the floor became progressively dim until they burned out: these functioned as correlatives of both the expired fish and the artist’s somnolent body (see fig. 2.10; see also fig. 1.67, p. 000).

Fox’s enigmatic evocation of life and death is intensely personal, since at that time he suffered from Hodgkin’s disease. Finally, for the exhibition Four, Bonnie Sherk’s environmental work—replete with trees and living animals—echoed her earlier Portable Parks projects, which are discussed later in this essay (see fig. 1.11, p. 000). All of these works pushed the usual boundaries of gallery content or practice, particularly within a conservative Catholic university.

In Southern California, too, it was the smaller, less established museums that exhibited the most challenging art. Initially founded in 1921, the Pasadena Art Institute reorganized as the Pasadena Art Museum (PAM) in 1954 to focus on acquiring and displaying modern and contemporary art created after 1945. The ambitious new director, Thomas Leavitt, arrived in 1957 and hired a young curator, Walter Hopps, to work with him on a Richard Diebenkorn exhibition in 1962. As a teenager, Hopps had visited the Walter and Louise Arensberg collection before it was acquired by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1954. Maintaining his interest in Dada, Hopps organized a Kurt Schwitters retrospective (1962), followed by the first Duchamp retrospective (1963). These two historical exhibitions of Dadaists greatly influenced Los Angeles’s younger generation of artists, including Ed Ruscha, who met Duchamp through Hopps. That very same year (1963), Ruscha began to extend Duchamp’s notion of the objet trouvé when he photographed “found” subjects in the urban landscape—buildings, apartments, gas stations, and palm trees—for his monothematic artist’s books. When Hopps was invited to curate the São Paulo Biennial, John Coplans took on curatorial and publications responsibilities at PAM. Coplans curated Allan Kaprow (1967), a survey of the artist’s work that traveled nationally and included Fluids, a Happening in which Kaprow and his collaborators built throughout the urban environment seven enormous ice-block structures using these simple instructions: “During three days, about twenty rectangular enclosures of ice blocks (measuring about 30 feet long, 10 wide and 8 high) are built throughout the city. Their walls are unbroken. They are left to melt.”

Focusing on issues of labor, participation, and the ephemeral, Kaprow’s project “[used] the fantasy of communal work as a means to dissolve the walls between individuals.” Unfortunately, PAM was unable to sustain this adventurous programming due to an incompatibility between the avant-garde nature of the museum and the conservative politics of...
Fig. 2.12 Tom Marioni, The Sausalito, 1972.
Photographic documentation from The San
Francisco Performance, West Coast Art and
Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach,
California.
Beyond show (1965). A group of thirteen ambitious artists involved, however, in a restructuring of the traditional museum, initially named the Balboa Pavilion Gallery. Constructed in 1906, the Balboa Pavilion became a seaside recreation center at the southern terminus of the Pacific Electric Red Car Line. In 1961, a group of thirteen ambitious women known as the Balboa Pavilion Fine Arts Patrons renovated the space’s 8,000-square-foot second floor in exchange for contemporary art: its first exhibition in 1968 featured now well-known Southern California artists like Ed Ruscha and Joe Goode. NHAM also became one of the first museums on the West Coast to show emerging Conceptual art, performance, and video.

Apparition/Disapparition (Image/Object) (1969), organized by Garver at NHAM, included both artists who made tangible images or objects as well as those whose work was more Conceptual and dematerialized. Garver’s curatorial statement relates: The artists whose work is seen here are of a disparate temperament and the work they produce is by no means uniform in philosophical intent and appearance. They are all involved, however, in a restructuring of the traditional means by which a work of art is conceived and executed by themselves and perceived by the viewer who might more accurately be called the participant, for these works demand more than a passivity of a spectator and involve more than a visual sense.

Michael Asher’s no title (1966-67/2011) consisted of a column of pressurized air that was perceived only when a viewer walked through it. Asher applies the same formal proprieties inherent in making a solid sculpture, yet here he creates the perception of planes, lines, and volumes through the carefully controlled air vent. Rather than seeing it with their eyes, viewers sense the air as it hits their bodies. Another work in the exhibition, Allen Ruppersberg’s Location Piece (1969), had already been included in an exhibition at the new Euphrasie Butler Gallery, though that is not where it was actually seen. When viewers arrived at the gallery, they found a sign on the door directing them to Ruppersberg’s studio at 7575 Sunset Boulevard. Once inside, they encountered a small room constructed of stretched canvases within a lighted, museum-like display that included a cow’s skull, rocks, and dried leaves— an ironic juxtaposition of nature and culture. Relocated to NHAM’s Balboa Pavilion, Ruppersberg’s room-size work, with its stage-like environment and decaying objects, informed his subsequent performances/installations Art’s Café (1969) and Art’s Grand Hotel (1971), which are discussed in other essays in this book (see figs. 1.29-130; see also figs. 412–413, pp. 000-000). John Baldessari was represented in Appearing/Disappearing Image/Object by his early hand-lettered text paintings Pure Beauty. A Painting That Is Its Own Documentation, and Visible Luminescent Painting for Max Kuehlow (1966-68; see fig. 1.89, p. 000). In this last work, Baldessari extracts a portion of Kuehlow’s 1969 Antrum article. By taking it completely out of context and reproducing the critic’sighthalfon language, Baldessari reverses the typical dynamic between artist and critic: here the artist proposes a critique of the writer. In this exhibition, all three artists—Asher, Baldessari, and Ruppersberg—subvert or alter the normal viewing conditions in a museum as well as the expectations of its visitors.

Another early and important NHAM exhibition, The San Francisco Performance (1972), was guest curated by Marioni and highlighted Bay Area performance, video, and Conceptual art. In the newspaper catalogue, he discussed the transition from sculpture to time-based media: Today artists are using videocamera to record unedited the stream-of-conscious flow of life. . . . The life span or performance of the piece is shorter and the methods for recording the artist’s hand today are in keeping with the materials (technology) that are available to the artist, . . . The new sculpture demands the artist execute his work in the space it is to be shown in. That way the artist has control over all aspects of its environment.

In keeping with his statement, Marioni, for his own project for the exhibition, documented a bus ride down the coast from San Francisco. He hired Larry Fox to take photographs and George Bolling to make a video of the trip. They smoked copious amounts of marijuana and took a jolt to the Forestiere Underground Gardens in Fresno. Mal Henderson’s contribution was a video documenting a performance that referenced the infamous 1971 riot at Attica Prison in New York. The night before the exhibition opened, he spliced out the word “Attica” in flashing Christmas-tree lights on a hillside owned by the Irvine Company. Henderson and his collaborator, Paul Kos, were arrested for trespassing. Kos spent the night in jail, and eventually the charges were dropped (see figs. 1.21-123, pp. 000-000). Howard Fried’s Newport Wallapaper consisted of reproductions of a drawing that were made at very close range and that followed a specific rule: he could hold the paper only as far from his head as the length of his eyelashes. Fried tests the limits of his body and senses in the process of making the work, as he continued to do in performances like Inside the Harlequin: Approach-Avoidance III and II (1977; see figs. 2.13-214; see also figs. 158-159, pp. 000-000). Bonnie Sherk’s installation Traditional Performances: a piece, with its piece, a piece, effort demonstration of struggles) was a tent-like mesh structure that housed a pregnant rat which gave birth to ten pups—a live “performance” of the tasks of motherhood and nest building for offspring. When one of the rats unexpectedly bit a visitor, the artist was asked to remove the animals and the museum closed temporarily. Shank’s interest in the interrelationships between humans and animals is also apparent in Public Lunch. In this piece, which is discussed in Lawall’s essay (see fig. 1.33, p. 000), Sherk dined in a cage at the San Francisco Zoo’s lion house. Finally, Kos’s untitled interactive/performance installation consisted of a pool table positioned in a corner of a room with animal traps hung on the walls. The work simultaneously beckoned visitors to play the game and created a potentially hazardous situation for anyone who did so. The radical new Conceptual and performance art at the UAM, PAM, and NHAM was atypical of what had been shown within the hallowed halls of a museum, and these works transformed the institutions into sites for living art. As the decade continued, other museums began to better integrate post-studio practices into their programs. However, in spite of these new venues and venues, some artists preferred to control production and presentation of their art by creating their own spaces or organizations where they were free from the constraints of more traditional institutions and commercial galleries.
Fig. 2.15 Bonnie Sherk, Traditional Performances: A piece within a piece within a piece, etc. (Demonstration of struggles), March 12, 1972; from The San Francisco Performance: From Here Onwards, SFMOMA Research Library and Archives.
For artists of the seventies, the new alternative spaces offered virtually the only venues for the development of conceptually oriented, non-commercial forms such as video, installations and actions. ... Non-traditional curatorial practices also characterized the new alternative spaces: Most relied on artists to curate shows, rather than professional curators. And, most radical of all, artists received fees for exhibiting.


As Atkins notes, artists who created Conceptual, non-commercial, and nontraditional art established their own alternative spaces to both curate and exhibit their works. In 1970, the National Endowment for the Arts instituted several new grants, including the workshops category for artists’ organizations that had a strong commitment to new art forms and placed artists in key policy-making positions. Motivated by lobbying from the Congressional Black Caucus and other political activists, the NEA began to offer grants for community-based art activities in 1972. As Renny Pritikin has observed, the field of artist-run organizations employed the Students for a Democratic Society credo that “inspired rhetoric for self-determination, consensual decision-making and participatory democracy translated from the political struggles to the microcosm of the art world.”

While some alternative spaces were established by artists working in a particular aesthetic or a specific medium, others began as cultural and service organizations by specific communities. Some artist-run organizations evolved specifically to accommodate Conceptual art and new genres, and provided larger, less formal, more flexible spaces that facilitated greater experimentation. These venues presented opportunities to work outside the confines of galleries, museums, and—perhaps most importantly—the contemporary art marketplace. In the Bay Area, Marioni became an influential figure as both artist and curator. Toward the end of his tenure as curator at the Richmond Art Center, where he was known for his “provocative and daring exhibitions,” Marioni founded his own space, the Museum of Conceptual Art (MOCA), on Third Street in downtown San Francisco in 1970. It was a “large-scale social artwork and interactive installation” that became his “life’s work for a decade.”

At the time, there was no other place like MOCA in San Francisco, and Marioni used this project to offer not only an exhibition venue but also a social space that could cultivate a community of Conceptual artists. Of MOCA’s mission, which emphasized the production of work that combined visual art, performance, and sound, Marioni has said: “In ’70 when I started MOCA as a specialized sculpture action museum, I made my own rules and defined Conceptual art as idea-oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects.” His notion that time-based, multidisciplinary production emanated from sculpture and actions elicited a series of exhibitions at MOCA, including Sound Sculpture As, Body Works, and All Night Sculptures.

For Sound Sculpture As, Marioni invited nine artists to participate in a one-night event on April 30, 1970, the only curatorial criterion was that the works utilize sound as their primary medium. He announced that Allan Fish (his artistic alter ego) had sent instructions to perform a piece in his absence: he climbed to the top of a stepladder and urinated into a galvanized tub with his back to the audience as they applauded. Titled Piss Piece, this work recalls the short, body-oriented performances by Fluxus artists, specifically George Brecht’s Water Drip Piece (1959), which has a score that reads: “For single or multiple performance. A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.” Marioni humorously reinterprets Brecht’s Fluxus score, which was intended to be performed by others as they wished. For Sound Sculpture As, Paul Kos collaborated with musician Richard Beggs to create Sound of Ice Melting (see fig. 1.76, p. 000). Here, boom microphones were trained on two twenty-five-pound blocks of ice, producing an absurdly humorous, Zen-like piece that evokes John Cage’s 4’33”...
“silent” composition that consists only of ambient sounds. Body Works—a video exhibition conceived by the New York–based curator and Avalanche editor Willoughby Sharp and coordinated by Marioni—took place on October 18, 1970, at Breen’s Café in San Francisco. With artists from both the East and West Coasts—Vito Acconci, Terry Fox, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Keith Sonnier, and William Wegman—the show featured videos in which the artists’ bodies became the material, serving as both the object and subject. Acconci burns the hairs around his nipples; Nauman walks around his studio, and, in Tonguings, Fox manipulates his tongue (see fig. 1.68, p. 000). The relaxed, informal setting afforded by Breen’s is emblematic of the kind of social interaction Marioni encouraged in both his artwork and curatorial practice.

All Night Sculptures—presented from sunrise to sunset at MOCA on April 20, 1973—included a series of interactive installations and performances by nine artists. In her iconic performance Feed Me, a nude Barbara T. Smith occupied a room in the gallery, and a recording of her voice repeated the phrase “Feed me” (see fig. 1.44, p. 000). Boldly beckoning a personal exchange, the work invited viewers to literally feed her or to “feed” her psychologically, or even sexually. Placed in a vulnerable situation with mostly male spectators, Smith, in this feminist performance, embodied the objectification of women and revealed power relations between genders.

MOCA also functioned as a social space for like-minded artists to gather together. As artist Jim Melchert said: “Often performances were done for one another . . . this communal activity among a certain group of artists was not just a matter of hanging out, but a way of working outside the studio.”

Though MOCA had phased out by 1977, Marioni still continues to host weekly salons—variously called Café Wednesday, Café Society, the Academy of MOCA, and the Artist’s Studio, depending on the location—based on his original 1970 presentation of The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends Is the Highest Form of Art at the Oakland Museum. To this day, his studio’s bar remains well stocked with beer for this weekly ritual, which is central to his relationships within the San Francisco art community where he has been an integral player for the past forty-plus years.

Artists in the Bay Area continued to open their own alternative venues into the mid-1970s. In 1974, artist Jock Reynolds, with funding from the San Francisco Art Dealers Association, bought and renovated the ground floor of a warehouse at 80 Langton Street, turning it into an artist-run space for installations, video, and performance. In 1975, the space opened with Peter d’Agostino’s Walk Series (1973–74), a sequence of neighborhood walks documented with a handheld video camera. Three different monitors aired the uncut, real-time footage, and installation elements were also on display. That year, Lynn Hershman also started the Floating Museum, an itinerant space that commissioned and exhibited public, site-specific, and performative projects from 1974 to 1978. Carl Loebler, who first published the art journal La Mamelle in 1974, opened the 8,000-square-foot La Mamelle arts space at 70 12th Street in downtown San Francisco to support live art and electronic media. La Mamelle remained active from 1974 to 1995, distributing, producing, and screening video and eventually developing one of the first archives and online networks for media art.

San Francisco Camerawork—devoted specifically to exhibitions of photography and the publication of Camerawork: A Journal of Photographic Arts—and Southern Exposure, a space south of Market Street for emerging artists, opened in 1975 and 1976, respectively, and both continue to operate today.

One of the very first community-based organizations in San Francisco, Galería de la Raza, was founded in a storefront in 1970 in the Mission District. Initiating by a twelve-member Latino artists’ collective led by Ralph Maradiaga and René Yáñez, Galería de la Raza emerged from the Chicano movement to organize exhibitions, neighborhood art programs, and cultural activities. La Raza established the first community mural program in the United States and reestablished the Mexican celebration of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) as an integral expression of Chicano/Latino life. The gallery still...
serves as an important cultural and community forum today.

In Los Angeles there were fewer artist-run organizations and spaces, but, as in San Francisco, they were often devoted to particular cultural communities or practices. One of the earliest venues was the Brockman Gallery, a space opened by brothers Dale and Alonzo Davis on Degnan Boulevard in South Los Angeles in 1967. Brockman nurtured emerging African American artists, including David Hammons and John Outterbridge, and exhibited established figures, such as Romare Bearden. Another early space, Beyond Baroque, was founded by George Drury Smith in 1968 in a storefront on West Washington Boulevard before relocating to the old Venice City Hall later in the decade. Primarily devoted to literary arts, Beyond Baroque became a meeting place for artists and writers, a space for performances, and a repository of the most extensive collections of “underground” or alternative publications.

In July 1969, the Los Angeles branch of the national artists’ organization Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) formed in Pasadena. Founded as an adjunct to Billy Klüver’s original New York EAT, the Los Angeles group, like its East Coast counterpart, consisted of artists and scientists interested in experimental projects that occurred in nontraditional spaces. Most of EAT/LA’s activities in the 1970s focused primarily on the intersection of art and technology. But one of the organization’s most memorable events was the multimedia event Moon Landing Celebration, which included performances by artists Barbara T. Smith, composer Joe Byrd, and dancers Alex Hay and Steve Paxton, among others. The impact of the 1969 lunar landing on the public’s and artists’ collective imagination is apparent in other works, such as Richard Jackson’s Moon Piece (1970), a systematic, minimal rendering of the subject in a sequence of eight sequential photographs, and Vija Celmins’s Moon Surface (Luna 9) #2 (1969), a meticulous multilayered drawing made from photographic maps taken in space.

Other early artist-run spaces in Los Angeles included those initiated by feminists and other cultural activists who sought alternatives from dominant, often exclusive cultural institutions. In 1973, artist Judy Chicago, graphic designer Sheila Levant de Bretteville, and art historian Arlene Raven founded the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW), an outgrowth of the feminist art programs at Fresno State University and California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). That year, FSW moved to the new Women’s Building, which occupied the site of the old Chouinard Art Institute near MacArthur Park near downtown Los Angeles. Several other feminist galleries—Womanspace, Grandview, and 707—also opened in the vicinity. Self-Help Graphics & Art, a Chicano arts organization and workshop started by a small group of artists working out of a garage in East Los Angeles in the early 1970s, is still active today. Similarly, Centro Cultural de la Raza, founded in 1970, is a Chicano-community cultural center and alternative space in the San Diego/Tijuana region that has been open for forty-plus years.

Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA), an artist-run, artist-service organization established by Robert L. Smith in 1974, was a three-part institution that operated a gallery space in Century City; published the bimonthly LAICA Journal with critical writing about current arts activities; and created a slide registry open to all Southern California artists. LAICA’s program alternated between international avant-garde and local artists, and the organization also sponsored events such as The New Artspace, an important conference of alternative spaces in 1978. In 1987, with ongoing financial and administrative troubles, LAICA had to redefine its mission to focus only on its magazine, Journal: A Contemporary Art Magazine, which was edited by artist, critic, and art historian Howard Singerman and became the organization’s most enduring and erudite legacy.
Many other artist-run organizations in Los Angeles that opened between 1975 and 1978 also succumbed to financial or organizational woes. An exception was Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), which was started by members of a community-arts mural program funded through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). The acronym LACE was apropos given the organization’s original location in the Victor Clothing Company building on Broadway, where muralist Kent Twitchell painted The Bride and Groom (1972). This artist-run venue for exhibitions, performances, new music, video, and workshops has had several incarnations, and it continues to thrive today in its Hollywood Boulevard location, where it serves a new generation of young artists, many of whom have emerged from California’s diverse art schools and university art departments.

Fig. 2.19 Richard Jackson, Moon Piece (detail), 1970. Eight black-and-white photographs; 8 × 10 in. each.

Fig. 2.20 Vija Celmins, Moon Surface (Luna 9) #2, 1969. Graphite on acrylic ground on paper; 14 × 18 3/4 in.
Beyond Moss

system created experimental colleges and art departments. Artists to start new art programs, while the state university in California built three new campuses and hired prominent faculty and students demanded educational reform and transformation of the university; they challenged the formation of new, more experimental departments and programs aimed to break down the rigid barriers of these institutions. As a result, in California during the late 1960s and early 1970s, art schools and experimental colleges became the primary venues for artistic production.

The Experimental Ethos

Responding to the demands for educational reform, San Francisco State College established the Experimental College in 1965 to offer alternative courses, including those in the arts. Jeff Berner, a San Francisco-based artist and writer, taught “Astronaut of Inner Space: A Survey of the European Avant-Garde, 1880 to the Present,” which addressed symbolism and Dada as well as the then-current work of Fluxus, Group Zero, and the nouveaux réalistes. He also edited Stolen Paper Review, with criticism, poetry, and manifestos of the historical and contemporary avant-gardes. The class and journal served a rather limited group of artists and students until Berner was invited to use his moniker, “Astronaut of Inner Space,” for his San Francisco Chronicle column of 1967–68, which significantly extended his audience and informed the general public about these avant-garde activities.

Ken Friedman, another instructor at the Experimental College, first became acquainted with Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and George Maciunas in New York in 1966. When Maciunas suggested Friedman open a Fluxus center when he returned to California, Friedman agreed and set up two “Fluxus West” locations, one in San Diego in the fall of 1966 and another in San Francisco at the end of that year. From these two new centers, Friedman made his own art, disseminated information and works of other artists, and taught an Experimental College course, “Intermedia,” to engage Fluxus ideas and sensibilities with students. Throughout his career, artist Allan Kaprow worked in various educational capacities. In the early 1960s, he began to participate in conversations about pedagogy and the presence of artists within schools and museums. During 1968–69, Kaprow collaborated with educator Herbert Kohl on Project Art in Offices (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1976), 17

In her sociological study on the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Artists in Offices (1979), Judith Adler discusses how the analysis of knowledge, production of meaning, and institutional critique and intervention inherent in Conceptualism complemented the ethos of experimental education in the 1960s and 1970s. Interdisciplinary teaching methodologies at both art schools and universities of the period mirrored new artistic practices that were no longer discipline based or medium specific. Special treatises and initiatives developed at schools offered “blueprints” for curriculum and, along with funding, brought these forays in experimental education to fruition.

The same activist impulses that instigated artists to form their own galleries and alternative spaces also precipitated experimental education in public universities and private art schools. In the early to mid-1960s, colleges and universities throughout California became epicenters for the antiwar movement. Faculty and students demanded educational reform and transformation of the university; they challenged the notion of campuses as isolated ivory towers. Established public educational systems and private art schools tried to adjust to myriad social and political changes. The University of California built three new campuses and hired prominent artists to start new art programs, while the state university system created experimental colleges and art departments. Traditional academies like the Chouinard Art Institute and Los Angeles Conservatory of Music merged into the innovative new California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Within both the state college system and long-established fine art academies,
Beyond the white cell

Fig. 2.21 Allan Kaprow, Pose, March 22, 1969
(detail), 1970–; a record of an event to be continued infinitum. Offset lithography on card stock in envelope; seven cards: 10 3/4 × 7 3/4 in. each; envelope: 12 × 9 in.

Other Art Ways, a venture done in conjunction with the Berkeley Public Schools and sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation. Operating in a Berkeley storefront, Kaprow and Kohl wrote lessons that students would experience/learn outside of the classroom. In Six Ordinary Happenings, students received scores for simple actions that were to be performed on the streets. For example, Pose (March 22, 1969) read: “Carrying chairs through the city, sitting down here and there, photographed pix left on spot, going on.”

Pedagogically, these Happenings epitomized John Dewey’s concept of “learning by doing” and coincided with Kaprow’s own activity booklets—instructions for simple, playful tasks that can be performed by anyone. They also hark back to his influential articles, “The Education of the Un-Artists, Parts I and II,” in which Kaprow calls for artists to remake themselves, first and fleetingly, as non-artists and then, more permanently, as unartists who will use humor, play, and intermedia to reinvigorate themselves and society.

A contemporaneous project in 1969–70, also funded by the Carnegie Foundation, occurred at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)—the “experimental” campus of the UC system. At this time, students and professors had criticized UC for becoming increasingly large and impersonal—a “multiversity” more interested in research than in teaching. UCSC was the antidote to this.

Formed under the aegis of visionary educator and political scientist Dean McHenry, UCSC consisted of eight small, semi-autonomous residential colleges where students lived and studied together in contemporary residences nestled in the redwoods.

When the university opened in 1965, the notion of this in-depth but laid-back countercultural education proved so popular that UCSC attracted the brightest of California’s students. In this highly experimental, nontraditional environment, McHenry hired Gurdon Woods, former director of the San Francisco Art Institute, as head of the UCSC art department. Woods and Fluxus artist Robert Watts co-conceived the Experimental Arts Workshop for the Carnegie Foundation. This new program brought avant-garde artists such as James Lee Byars, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Dan Flavin, Allan Kaprow, George Maciunas, and George Segal to lecture and contribute to a report on experimental education.

According to Jock Reynolds, who was a sculpture student at UCSC, Watts’s teaching methodology centered on the Fluxus ideals of collectivity and collaboration: he was not particularly didactic, pedagogic, or theoretical, and he participated as an equal in the projects. The tightly knit Experimental Arts Workshop initiated collaborations in which each person conceived an action that was scored as a performance. Their events included a journey down a country road in a bus that crashed into “brick” contact paper and set off an alarm; a giant balloon launch on the beach in Santa Cruz; and an event where everyone took a pill that changed the color of their urine. These actions reflect the Fluxus obsession with humor, surprise, physical movement, and bodily functions. Occasionally, the workshop participants would go to other campuses for collaborative activities, such as the March 1969 trip to participate in a Dada-like Fur Family Parade held at UC San Diego (UCSD).

In its early years, the UCSD art department faculty was steeped in the avant-garde and included artists David and Eleanor Antin, John Baldessari, Paul Brach, Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, and Allan Kaprow. As Brach, chair of the new department in 1968, said: “The campus was an island of intellectuals in a sea of John Birchers.” In particular, scientist/poet Jacob Bronowski, political theorist Herbert Marcuse, and others who came to the Jonas Salk Institute became acquainted with the art faculty. From its inception, the department embraced Conceptualism and interdisciplinary practices, particularly performance. Two students at UCSD, Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula, began to make significant work with political content while still attending the university. When Sekula started at UCSD in 1968, his first instructor was John Baldessari, who soon left to go to CalArts; photographer Fred Lonidier convinced Sekula to stay at UCSD. Although Sekula considered himself to be a...
photographer, he recalls participating with Lonidier in Body Bags (1970), a protest of the Vietnam War. Surrogate body bags made from meat, bags, newspaper, and rocks were placed in UCSD’s Revelle Plaza and then burned. The event lasted only one day, as the campus health department took the body bags to the cadaver locker where Lonidier later photographed them. The bags were incinerated, but because they were made with rocks, they ruined the equipment. From 1970 to 1974, Rosler studied at UCSD, where she did several key performances. For her Monumental Garage Sale (1973), the artist set up an ordinary garage sale, with racks and tables displaying household goods, in the campus’s Mandeville Art Gallery. Rosler assumed the persona of a struggling single mother and took cash in exchange for the items. As in her earlier work, A Budding Gourmet, she used everyday experience and domesticity to make witty, ironic critiques about class, gender, and consumption (see fig. 1.40, p. 000). By the late 1960s, the UC Irvine (UCI) Studio Art Department, founded in 1965, had become an important educational institution known for faculty and students interested in Conceptual art, light and space, performance, and video. John Coplans, cofounder of Artforum magazine, directed the University Art Gallery—where he curated exhibitions of Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Rauschenberg—and brought to the faculty such artists as Vija Celmins, Robert Irwin, and Bas Jan Ader. With the advent of Conceptualism and performance in the late 1960s, academics and artists alike had a renewed interest in Marcel Duchamp. Recognizing this, art historians Moira Roth and Barbara Rose organized a UCI Duchamp festival in 1971. In addition to a month-long exhibition of work by Duchamp and his followers, the festival also hosted a two-day symposium featuring prominent art critics and historians Robert Hughes, Annette Michelson, Richard Hamilton, and Walter Hopps, among others. During this event, Alison Knowles and Allan Kaprow enacted Knowles’s performance The Identical Lunch, where they ate the same lunch—a tuna fish sandwich with a cup of soup—each day throughout the exhibition. Extending a simple action into durational performance typifies the simple, Zen-like, quotidian nature of the Fluxus score and Kaprow’s preference for non-art subjects in his own practice. During this same time, students in UCI’s MFA program organized and ran the F Space Gallery in an industrial building in nearby Santa Ana. The space is best known for the infamous Chris Burden performance Shoot (1971), when a marksman shot the artist in his left arm with a .22 rifle while the guests in the gallery watched the “crime” take place (see fig. 1.70, p. 000). Though Burden had intended for the bullet to only graze his arm, it penetrated his flesh. As Kristine Stiles has discussed, Burden had been thinking about what it would be like to be shot ever since the Kent State University shootings in 1970. Shoot foreshadows what would become Burden’s ongoing interest in risk-oriented performances that explore the dynamics of power, issues of spectatorship, challenges to the physical body, and the redefinition of the parameters of the artist and artwork. In the summer of 1972, the Newport Harbor Art Museum, in collaboration with F Space, organized the exhibition New Art in Orange County, which included artists Gary Beydler, Nancy Buchanan, Burden, and Barbara T. Smith. For Burden’s Jaizu performance on June 10–11, he wore dark glasses and sat at one end of a gallery. He faced the other end of the space, where there were two cushions and a small bowl of marijuana cigarettes. Visitors could chat with the artist and/or smoke, and they assumed he was watching them; however, his glasses were painted black on the inside, rendering him blind. This element of inviting the viewer to participate in an action with the artist, with a potentially unknown outcome, and the notion of spectatorship hark back to Burden’s work at F Space, Being Photographed: Looking Out, Looking In, February 4–20, 1971 (see fig. 2.24; see also figs. 1.52-1.56, pp. 000-000). Another work in the exhibition, Smith’s Artifacts: Trunk Piece, consisted of an installation of an old trunk on an oriental rug surrounded by crystal balls, magic wands, bottles,
and other oddities. At that time, Smith was in the process of making a large-scale installation project out of resin; she used the leftovers to encase the found objects in globes that she later incorporated into performances. Smith’s large-scale project Field Piece (1968–72) was an interactive installation of nine-foot-tall multicolored resin “blades” of grass that would light up when triggered by viewers’ feet, thus illuminating the field (see fig. 2.1, p. 000). When the work was originally presented, the artist asked the audience to remove their clothes, so most of the original spectators experienced Field Piece in the nude as an intimate, sensory, tactile environment.

Finally, for Hair Transplant (1972), Buchanan shaved moustache and body hair from fellow UCI student Robert Walker and pasted it onto her body; she then cut her own hair and pasted it onto him. This transplant, or overlay of one gender onto the other, is one of several works by Buchanan that addresses male-female stereotypes, roles, and power relations. Ultimately, these works in New Art in Orange County share different tropes of performance from this time: long durations and testing the limits of the body, masquerade and/or the appropriation of other personas; and gender role reversal and audience participation.

**Art Schools**

The San Francisco Art Institute—originally founded in 1871 by artists and writers as the San Francisco Art Association, and renamed California School of Fine Arts in 1916 and then San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) in 1961—is one of the oldest art schools in the western United States. Throughout its history, SFAI has been a locus for new forms of art, from early fine art photography and Abstract Expressionist painting to the establishment of one of the first performance/video departments to accommodate new genres and hybridized forms of art.

In 1969, Eugenia Butler organized at SFAI an exhibition entitled 18' 6" × 6' 9" × 11' 2½" × 47" × 31' × 33' × 31' 9½" (the exact measurements of the gallery space). The show presented both California and East Coast Conceptualists. Each artist submitted a proposal to use the...
Beyond experience, performing arts and humanities. A disciplinary experiences and to foster an interaction of visual dance, film and video, and critical studies to emphasize “inter-arts” in Los Angeles. From his idealistic blueprint for an ideal “community of the arts” in Los Angeles. Initially opened in October 1970, CalArts was temporarily housed in a former Catholic girls’ school in Burbank until the permanent building was constructed in Valencia, California, a new “planned” bedroom community thirty miles northwest of Los Angeles.

In 1968, CalArts established schools in art, music, theater, dance, film and video, and critical studies to emphasize “interdisciplinary” experiences and to foster an interaction of visual experience, performing arts and humanities. The dean of critical studies, Maurice Stein, and his assistant, Larry Miller, had previously produced a document, Blueprint for Counter Education, at Brandeis University. They reprinted this fifty-page text along with loose charts, notes, graphics, and ruminations solicited from members of the CalArts community, and enclosed them in a box that served as a “plan” for the new art school. For instance, “the box” contained a collaged poster juxtaposing ideas about Modernism and Postmodernism; it also referenced the social and political ideas of Herbert Marcuse, the communications revolution articulated by Marshall McLuhan, the educational pedagogy of John Dewey, and the Zen philosophy of Alan Watts. This material was intended to situate CalArts into a “New Left” 1960s radical discourse that was diametrically opposed to the Disney entertainment magnate’s estate and its philosophy derived from his idealistic blueprint for an ideal “community of the arts.”

In Southern California, CalArts was nicknamed “Walt Disney’s Dream School” because its endowment came from the new art school. Initially opened in October 1970, CalArts was temporarily housed in a former Catholic girls’ school in Burbank until the permanent building was constructed in Valencia, California, a new “planned” bedroom community thirty miles northwest of Los Angeles.

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Blueprint for Counter Education
CURRICULUM • HANDBOOK
WALL DECORATION
SHOOTING SCRIPT

Maurice Stein and Larry Miller
Designed by Marshall Henrichs

Inside this box are three charts and a book, the tools for creating a new educational environment. This counter-university makes obsolete the traditional university process. Surrounded by charts, the participants will be confronted by ideas and issues that compel them to interact with everything going on around them—from movies, to media, to political campaigns. There is no text book, no syllabus, no final exam; and the “faculty” includes Marcuse, McLuhan, Eldridge Cleaver, and Jean-Luc Godard.

THE REVOLUTION STARTS HERE.

Judy Chicago at Fresno State College originated the Feminist Art Program in 1970, and a year later she joined Miriam Schapiro at CalArts to co-organize a similar program there. Two of Chicago’s students, Suzanne Lacy and Faith Wilding, came to CalArts from Fresno with her. In fall 1971, the members of Feminist Art Program wanted to engage in a collaborative project and found on Mariposa Street in Hollywood an old house scheduled for demolition. They convinced the owner to donate it to them. Using homemaking as their theme, they transformed the space into Womanhouse, a site of surreal installations that cumulatively made a biting feminist critique against domestic life and labor. According to Moira Roth, the works done at Womanhouse echoed the anger and despair of other women’s performance work in Los Angeles and spawned a number of feminist spaces and organizations discussed later in this book.

The importance of art departments and art schools in California circa 1970 cannot be underestimated. As Howard Singerman has asserted, the university played crucial roles as both patron and scene in the 1960s and 1970s because so much of the work necessitated the presence of the artist. Often works could not be simply bought and sold but instead had to be read or screened, installed, or performed and attended. In art schools and universities, performance, video, and other Conceptual practices depended on the artists’ actions and language; their presence and presentation as the preexisting audience often completed the work.

In 1997, Lars Nittve noted that young artists in Los Angeles identified themselves by the art school or university where they received their degree or currently taught rather than by gallery representation, and this condition prevails even now. As we have seen, since the late 1960s, art schools and university art departments have functioned as sites to meet mentors and visiting artists from multiple generations, and the phenomenon continues to this day.
There is a tendency in San Francisco, as elsewhere, to “take to the streets” for various art activities now. Most of it (if not all) is oriented towards more or less political or environmental concerns. This direction seems significantly more relevant to more people (including many of the artists involved) than the traditional art channels of museums, galleries and collectors. . . . There seems to be an increasing wish to involve the various communications media in street events—particularly television, for both its creative and mass appeal potential.

As Richardson observed in 1970, what became more compelling to artists was not merely the representation of the urban environment but an intervention into the public sphere. Artists who “took to the streets” followed the Situationists’ strategies of disruption and intervention within public space, staging events that responded to particular social issues. For instance, Paul Cotton appeared as The People’s Prick (1969), wearing a full-body penis suit at the Berkeley People’s Park demonstrations. He also made an impromptu visit to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), where he was ejected, and then appeared on the cover of the Los Angeles Free Press with a headline that declared “Art Museum Throws Art Out.”

Asco—an East Los Angeles Conceptual and performance...
collective that included writer Harry Gamboa Jr., painters Patssi Valdez and Gronk, and muralist Willie Herrón III—made a more explicitly political intervention with their guerilla action Spray Paint LACMA (1972), in which three members tagged an exterior wall of the museum to protest its lack of works by Latino artists. For their First Supper (After a Major Riot) (1972), Asco staged a Christmas Eve meal on the traffic island on Whittier Boulevard. It was on this exact site, on January 31, 1971, that a police altercation had turned deadly. Asco donned absurd costumes and masks and placed a doll on a blanket; the artists reminded passersby of a tragic incident and reclaimed urban public space.

Artists in the Bay Area also made public interventions of a political and/or environmental nature. In Mel Henderson, Joe Hawley, and Alfred Young’s Dye, yellow dye oil was placed in the San Francisco Bay on June 12, 1969, to mark “the invisible line defining the limit of territorial fishing waters of the United States.” The work questioned the notion of national borders, the depletion of ocean wildlife, and accidental fuel spills. Another project, Div (September 20, 1969), more clearly referenced environmental disasters, while Yellow Cabs (November 19, 1969) was a proto–flash mob, or swarm, in which Henderson hailed dozens of taxis to converge at the busy intersection of Castro and Market Streets.

Bonnie Sherk, with Howard Levine, became well known for her environmental works, particularly her series of Portable Parks—temporary installations of green turf, palm trees, and animals in unlikely places in the urban environment, such as a freeway overpass, the intersection of Mission and Van Ness Streets, and Maiden Lane downtown (see fig. 1.11, p. 000). This led Sherk, in 1974, to establish Crossroads Community (the farm), a seven-acre ecogarden/art space, replete with animals, built on the traffic meridians and underused spaces under a freeway overpass in San Francisco. The project, which lasted until 1980, also featured educational activities for children, internships, and performance-art events before it was transformed into a public park. Like the other artists who make public interventions, Sherk was “no longer interested in the kind of object art that is shut up in museums, but in an environmental art that confronts people who do not necessarily go out in search of art.”

Fig. 2.30a–b Suzanne Lacy, Lamb Constructions (from the Monster Series), 1973. Performance documentation from Womanspace Gallery and the opening of the Los Angeles Women’s Building, Los Angeles, California.
As artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s made performances and used their own bodies as both content and material, the introduction of the handheld video camera in 1967 became an important tool for documenting these live events. More easily handled and processed than film, video also enabled artists to record and distribute performance work to a broader audience, whether for sanctioned public broadcasting or for media intervention.

One of the earliest examples of artists’ video made specifically for broadcast, The Dilexi Series aired on San Francisco public television station KQED in the spring and summer of 1969. Conceived and commissioned by James Newman, who ran the Dilexi Gallery from 1958 until 1970, the twelve-part weekly series included California-based artists and nationally known figures, and extended avant-garde contemporary art beyond the gallery and museum. Filmmaker Robert Nelson and artist William T. Wiley used this opportunity to disseminate commentary on the broadcast media with an “in-studio” parody of the talk-show format. Terry Riley’s Music with Balls combined his synthesized music and multilayered visualizations, while Philip Makanna’s The Empire of Things, an experimental narrative original and found film, used electronic colorizing.

For other artists, The Dilexi Series allowed them to document performance work in a medium that would significantly extend their audience. Anna Halprin’s Right On depicts two companies—her own San Francisco Dancers’ Workshop and its collaborators, Studio Watts—as they prepare for a performance. Dance Fractions for the West Coast documents a rare solo dance and monologue by Yvonne Rainer at Mills College in Oakland. Land artist Walter De Maria’s film Hardcore (1969) consists of slow shots of the subtle and sensuous play of light on a dry lake bed in the Black Rock Desert of northwestern Nevada—the same location used now for the annual Burning Man festival.

Andy Warhol contributed an excerpt from The Paul Swan Film, which follows Swan, an octogenarian and contemporary of Isadora Duncan, as he dances and recites poetry. Finally, Frank Zappa’s Burnt Weeny Sandwich, filmed like a high-speed home movie, features the original Mothers of Invention along with Captain Beefheart. The work interjects eccentric pop music into an avant-garde series.

In the 1960s and 1970s, counterculture video collectives and guerrilla television also utilized new video technologies. Michael Shamberg, who wrote Guerrilla Television (1971), a do-it-yourself video production manual, was part of TVTV (short for Top Value Television), which he founded in 1972 along with Allen Rucker, Tom Weinberg, and Megan Williams. TVTV pioneered independent video using the new Sony Portapak to make socially activist work and political documentation; they covered the 1972 Republican and Democratic conventions as an examination of American consumerism in their 1974 film Adland. TVTV productions included artists Chip Lord, Doug Michels, Hudson Marquez, and Curtis Schreier, who also formed the Ant Farm collective.

Founded in 1968, Ant Farm consisted of radically inclined architects and artists who found alternatives to mainstream practices by using video, performance, and sculpture, often in public sites. Initially inspired by Buckminster Fuller and Paolo Soleri, during their early years, the collective produced giant inflatable structures designed for a nomadic lifestyle that eventually evolved into Truckstop Network (1971), a cross-country tour of colleges and universities in a “Media Van.” Equipped with a Portapak camera to facilitate constant documentation at each stop (and outfitted with an inflatable solar-heated shower), the Media Van was, quite literally, the vehicle for Ant Farm’s itinerant video production. As Chip Lord has commented: “We brought an interest in high technology to the nomadic counterculture.”

Perhaps the most well-known instance of an artist using public media is Chris Burden’s TV Hijack, a surprise assault on Phyllis Lutjeans, then curator of the Newport Harbor Art Museum, as she was interviewing him live on Channel 3 Cablevision in Irvine on February 9, 1972. Lutjeans asked...
Burden what pieces he had been thinking about, and he demonstrated a TV hijack, holding a knife to her throat and threatening her life if the station stopped the live transmission. When the recording stopped, Burden doused the tape in acetone to destroy it, infuriating the station manager. Lutjeans, completely unaware of Burden’s plan, was terrified and truly felt threatened during this event. Relic from TV Hijack (1972) is one of Burden’s “relics”—artifacts leftover from his performances that are placed on velvet in a Plexiglas case to represent the original event. In this case, the performance can never be seen again because of the destruction of the videotape. Burden’s action implied a kind of mock yet ritualized violence, as it underscored the sensationalism of television coverage of such live, spectacular events as the airline hijackings so prevalent at that time.

A year later, in 1973, Burden purchased one month of airtime on KHJ-Channel 9 in Los Angeles to run a ten-second clip of a 16 mm film of his performance Through the Night Softly, in which he crawls through fifty feet of broken glass. Subsequently, in 1975 he did Poem for LA, a thirty-second spot on KHJ in which he is seen in a tight closeup uttering three phrases: “Science has failed,” “Heat is life,” and “Time kills.” Played seventy-two times during a four-day period, the piece was another TV “hijack,” as it disrupted viewers’ customary commercial programming.
Fig. 2.36–2.37 Chris Burden, TV Hijack, 1972. Performance at Channel 3 Cablevision, Irvine, California.

Fig. 2.38 Chris Burden, Relic from TV Hijack, 1972. Knife, scabbard, case, and printed text; case: 5 3/4 × 10 1/2 × 7 7/8 in.

Fig. 2.39 Chris Burden, TV Hijack, 1972. Performance at Channel 3 Cablevision, Irvine, California.
Since the advent of the avant-garde, artists’ publications have become an integral part of their production, often eliciting key aspects of their praxis. With the dominance of language in Conceptual art and the primacy of text in documenting ephemeral practices, the number of artists’ publications expanded exponentially circa 1970. These works ranged from artists’ books and journals to broadsides or posters, to postcards and other forms of mail and correspondence art. Some pieces existed to document other ephemeral productions, serving as the only evidence of that action or event; others were produced as the primary art object. Avalanche, published from 1970 to 1976 by Willoughby Sharp and edited by Liza Bear, was the first major artist-produced periodical in the United States, and it disseminated documentation and information throughout the contemporary art community. Earlier artists’ publications, such as Wallace Berman’s Semina or George Maciunas’s Fluxus—though generated for a particular network of artists or patrons—set an example for many others that emerged in the 1970s.

With an abundance of small, alternative presses and easily accessible printing facilities in art departments and art schools, California became a center of production for self-published, often handmade artists’ books. Transcending the traditional bound-book format, these unique works of art take the form of scrolls, codices, foldouts, single sheets, or boxed materials. Although now artists’ books may be mass produced, those of the late 1960s and early 1970s were typically one of a kind or issued in very small editions.

An early example of an artists’ book, Ed Ruscha’s fan-folded Every Building on the Sunset Strip (1966) documents his lived experience in the horizontal city of Los Angeles (see fig. 1.8, p. 000). Revealing Ruscha’s penchant for everyday subjects and deadpan humor, this extra-long book replicates the endless repetition of apartments, gas stations, and other buildings that one experiences while driving. An equally banal sense of humor can be found in John Baldessari’s Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-six Attempts) (1973). The artist performed this simple task thirty-six times—the standard number of shots on a roll of film—and eventually selected the “best” performance.

Other larger-format artists’ books follow specific sets of rules, sequences, or patterns, such as Guy de Cointet’s ACRCIT (1971), a 17 × 22-inch newspaper filled with pages of completely encoded text in the form of letters, images, and symbols. Charles Gaines’s Regression Series (1973–74/1978), a large-scale volume of drawings, relies on strict numerical systems and infinite cycles as the source for their production.
Fig. 2.40 John Baldessari, "Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-six Attempts)," 1973. Artist’s book; 10 × 13 in.
Fig. 2.42
Alexis Smith, Charlie Chan Piece (detail), 1973. Photographs and typed text; 12 × 45 1/2 in. each; 13 3/16 × 47 × 1 1/2 in. framed.
Artists of this period also engaged in “publication interventions”—some infiltrated preexisting magazines and newspapers and others took the form of correspondence or mail art. From November 1968 to December 1969, Stephen Kaltenbach inserted his artwork—with titles such as the double entendre “Art Works” (November 1968) and enigmatic phrases such as Existence (January 1969), Perpetuate a Hoax (April 1969), and Build a Reputation (May 1969)—as “ads” into eleven issues of Artforum (see fig. 1.38). Tom Marioni’s postcard The Board of Trustees of The San Francisco Museum of Art are pleased to announce the appointment of Thomas Marioni as Director, January 3, 1973. offset lithography on card stock; 3 3/4 × 5 3/4 in.

Some mail art functioned to extend site-specific installations and performances. For her 100 Boots (1971–73), Eleanor Antin installed fifty pairs of boots in different public sites, photographed them, and then sent the black-and-white photographs on postcards to people around the world. As the artist has commented: “Somehow it came to me in a dream…. Black boots! Big black boots. I got them at the Army-Navy Surplus then I printed them up on postcards…. Now it is a piece that I see as a kind of pictorial novel that was sent through the mail, came unannounced, unasked for. It came in the middle of people’s lives.” Antin’s serial photographs of unoccupied boots may also pose a more somber reference to the legions of “absent bodies” of young men who perished during that time in the Vietnam War.
CONCLUSION
The moment of conceptual art was relatively short-lived, barely spanning a decade. And its legacy is wide-ranging, covering a vast terrain in terms of its effect on traditional modes and categories of artistic production, exhibition and distribution. Indeed, one could argue that the influence of conceptualism can be found in almost all ambitious contemporary art—from the most direct lineage of “neo-conceptualism” to the more obscure links of contemporary video, performance and public art. As an international movement that transcended national borders voicing common concerns about the role of the artist, the artwork, the public and the institutions involved, the questions and problematics posed by conceptual artists continue to be as important today as when they were initially raised in the 1960s and 1970s.


As noted in the introduction to this essay, in today’s globalized world it is increasingly problematic to speak about artistic practice from a specific geographic location. As Alberro observes, with its ongoing international influence, Conceptualism cannot be collapsed into a single moment or codified as a discrete movement: its genealogy encompasses not only the new genres that developed concurrently in the 1960s and 1970s but also new artistic practices that continue today. Conceptualism functions as its own genre or medium, particularly in California, where there are many highly visible artists working this way now.

However, as we have seen, this was not always the case. The cultural landscape in California circa 1970 was simultaneously absent and present: absent to the broader art historical discourse yet active, alive, and present in terms of the breadth and depth of the production of artists both in the north and in the south. And just as California had to be invented as a concept or “state of mind,” so too did its cultural support system—more specifically, the sites for creating and displaying new work. A salient characteristic of artistic production in California was its hybridized, or intermedial, nature that combined actions and language; incorporated everyday experience; merged art and life; and produced work about the body or an embodied experience. This often demanded radically transforming existing institutions or inventing new alternatives. As artists’ roles as cultural producers shifted and their authority ascended, they took greater control of the particular conditions of production and exhibition of their work. In determining specific sites, artists could respond to distinct contexts and incorporate spectators into the works—whether within an institution or a public space—as the reception of the viewer became paramount.

With their concerted effort to de-institutionalize institutions and/or to create work in the public sphere, often in eccentric locations, artists worked “outside the frame.” As they eschewed the gallery system and the commodification of their art, many artists took an activist, antimaterialist, politically engaged position vis-à-vis critical cultural, social, and political issues. California was then, and continues to be now, a haven for counterculture, from Beats and hippies to punks and contemporary hipsters. Setting aside outdated artistic hierarchies and hegemonies, artists freely appropriated attitudes and ideas from popular culture and made interventions into public media more than their East Coast counterparts did.

The impact of artists circa 1970 in California is most visible in the subsequent generation of Conceptual, video, and performance artists working in the state. Artists who came of age in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, a time associated with appropriation and other Neoconceptual practices, became influenced by mentors such as Michael Asher, John Baldessari, and Douglas Huebler at CalArts; Howard Fried, Doug Hall, and Paul Kos at the San Francisco Art Institute; and Chris Burden, Paul McCarthy and Alexis Smith at UCLA. The legacy of the late 1960s and early 1970s is also apparent in the socially interactive, convivial relational art of the 1990s. In the introduction to his book Relational Aesthetics (1998), Nicolas Bourriaud compares the 1960s and 1970s with the art of the 1990s: The constitution of convivial relations has been an historical

But the stress laid on relations today is different from the stress on relations during the 1960s and 1970s has indeed found its place in the twenty-first century, as California artists continue to experiment with and innovate new methodologies, technologies, and sites for their work beyond the white cell.
Tudor, and La Monte Young. For a public event, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art will present La Monte Young’s Changing the Shape Museum of Art exhibition, a visual art piece featuring works such as "The Shadow" by John Cage and "Silent" by La Monte Young. The exhibition will run through March 20, 2009.

Thomson's statement is echoed by art historian Bruce Hemenway, who notes that "California's commitment to innovation and diversity in the arts is not just a local phenomenon, but is part of a broader cultural movement." He cites the influence of artists such as Charles Linder, who was a key figure in the Bay Area art scene, and the role of institutions such as the California College of the Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute in fostering a unique artistic climate.

In conclusion, the Bay Area's contribution to the development of the Bay Area experimental art movement has been significant in shaping the region's artistic identity. As art historian Robert Storr notes, "the Bay Area has been an incubator for experimental and innovative art practices for over a century, and remains a hub for contemporary art and cultural production." This legacy is reflected in the ongoing exhibitions and events that celebrate the spirit of experimentation and innovation that has characterized the Bay Area art scene.