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Viewer Oriented Art Forms

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VIEWER ORIENTED ART FORMS

by
D. Gay Massee

Bachelor of Science, University of North Dakota 1961

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

January
1970

T 1970
M38

This Thesis submitted by D. Gay Masee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the people who helped me in the production and execution of "Yellow Interior."

Special acknowledgement is given to: Professor Robert A. Nelson for his time and assistance in the writing of the thesis; Professor Ronald Schaefer for his guidance; Dr. Alvin E. Rudisill and the Industrial Arts Department for their most cooperative attitude; Professor Stanley Johnson for his advice and help on technical problems; and to the East Grand Forks City Council, who with their permission made possible the house for "Yellow Interior."

Finally, I wish to give special thanks to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Masseur, for their exceptional patience and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

For purposes of clarity, art forms which attempt to affect the viewer through exaggerated means based on sensory appeal, are termed 'viewer oriented.' This thesis discusses the origin, development, and implications of these forms.

The past is examined for possible links to the present. Contemporary forms are considered more specifically. My own work is used as further reference.

It was found that the main body of viewer oriented works in the past had occurred within the sponsoring power institutions in a functioning role. As technological improvements increased, the artist's role in society lessened. Freed from restraints of established tradition, art forms began to exhibit noticeable changes, as seen in the introspective works of the first half of the century.

The rise of another graphic medium--that of advertising--acted as a competitive force. As a result from approximately the fifties on, art forms began to evidence an outer directed appeal, as seen in the Op, Primary, Electrified, Pop, Assemblage, and Touchable works, to the more dramatic forms of the Environment and the Happening.

The revival of viewer oriented forms represents attempts to regain a more functional role in society. Through activating the viewer as a determining factor in the art form, the artist was implying the viewer's role as a determinant factor in society.

INTRODUCTION

. . . If art is ever to be vital again, it will have to be as a different form with a different name, unknown to the artist . . .¹

Within the last few decades of this century there has been a strong direction among a number of artists to disengage themselves from the traditional media and techniques of art in favor of new materials and concepts. The results have been a dramatic departure from tradition.

- a door high mirror-like rectangle in which the viewer's image is reflected (Pistoletto)
- silver foil pillows--air borne in an interior (Warhol)
- a metal wall construction that resounds as the viewer interrupts its light ray (Howard)
- a larger-than-life soft vinyl electric fan (Oldenberg)
- a monochromatic Environment composed of a series of interiors, each defined with particular forms and tactile treatments (own work)

Reflecting on these examples, which represent a cross-section of contemporary art forms, one notices a similarity between them. Each

¹Frank Gallo, "New Talent USA," Art in America, Vol. LIV, No. 4, 1966, p. 26.

work uses one or more devices based on an appeal to the senses. A strong attempt to affect the viewer through sensory means is apparent. These demonstrate what I will refer to as 'viewer oriented' art forms.

The viewer oriented work has been a part of iconography since man first expressed himself through visual means; from the traditional means of oil/canvas to the diverse materials used in contemporary forms.

Within the traditional framework of visual expression occur the more subtle examples of efforts to affect the viewer. Working with traditional media and visual means, these artists relied on content and technical variations to portray their appeal. Illustrating this are the works of Francisco de Goya and William Blake.

Motivated by a political/social conscience, Francisco de Goya, the Spanish painter, rendered the commissioned portraits of Spanish royalty with subtle wryness which could only be taken as an insult. These portraits, as well as his brooding revolutionary themes depicting suffering, tortured humans, exhibit a pathos which Goya meant to portray to the viewer as a political and social commentary.

The forces motivating William Blake were apart from those of Goya. Blake refused to render the human figure in the traditional manner of copying the figure from nature. Instead, he relied on his own concepts of what the idealized form should be. The resulting figurative compositions depict Blake's strong psychological and religious fervor--meant to appeal to the viewer by their obvious emblematic quality.

In an attempt to exert a stronger influence on the viewer many contemporary artists have turned to more direct means such as optical illusion, reflection, monumental size, popular images and objects, movable parts, touchable objects, electrified light, sound, and/or movement.

For purposes of clarity, the term viewer oriented will apply only to those art forms which use one or more of these devices of sensory appeal in an exaggerated, obvious manner.

This definition could be broadened to include those forms which imply an encroachment on the viewer's spatial reference, either through direct or indirect sensory means or through forms which attempt to involve the viewer as an actual active ingredient as in the participational piece, the Environment, or the Happening.

Allan Kaprow, a leading innovator of contemporary art forms, acts as a spokesman for many of the artists working with this type of form when he states:

Not satisfied with the suggestion through paint of our other senses, we shall utilize the specific substances of sight, sound, movement, people, odors, touch. . . . Out of nothing we will devise the extraordinary. People will be delighted or horrified, critics will be confused or amused, but there will be the alchemies of 1960's.²

These viewer oriented forms constituted a dramatic departure from

²Marshall Fiswick, "What Modern Art Says About America," Saturday Review, April 9, 1966, pp. 19-20ff.

traditional visual expression, a change that developed from various causal factors. Concerning change, Benjamin Rowland notes truths within the Eastern culture which are applicable to Western culture:

It will be found that Indian art, like every manifestation of Oriental expression, is the product of certain religious and material circumstances, which, rather than any vague force like "space composition" or "significant form" transcending time and place, determine its form in all periods.³

To these circumstances of religious and material reasons that affect change could be added political, social, and economic reasons.

In this discussion of viewer oriented art forms, circumstances influencing this development will be considered. The past will be examined for possible links to the present. Specific examples and illustrations of contemporary forms will be provided. My own work will be used as further reference. In conclusion, implications inherent within the revival of the viewer oriented form will be considered.

³Benjamin Rowland, The Art and Architecture of India (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 2.

I. ORIGINS IN THE PAST

In the past the religious and political institutions of man used the arts as an instrument to perpetuate their power. This provided art with a functioning role in society. Within this framework can be found some of the most ingenious devices for the appeal of the viewer.

From the great cathedrals to the intricate glittering icon, the religious institutions left no device of appeal untried.

The presentation of the deity's image was of primary concern to many religious doctrines. Exaggerated in size and/or presented in a life-like manner, these images served to create an awesome affect on the individual. Illustrating this are the Colossal Buddhas found in Ceylon. The relationship between the proportions of these stone images to those of the viewer symbolize the deity's supremacy.

The religious images of Michaelangelo's marble-hewn figures, such as the Pietá and the figure of Moses, through perfection of a life-like semblance become an embodiment of a living force.

The cathedral, basilica, temple, mosque, represent a combination of the functional and the aesthetic architectural form. To heighten the appeal of these architectural structures the basic plan became symbolic of the religious doctrine; the Christian cruciform outline of the nave and

transept, the Hindu temple of tiered levels circumscribing a center nucleus.

Once within the interior of the religious structure the viewer was the object of a highly sensory appeal in a direct attempt to involve him as an active participant.

Involvement was suggested through the interest created by such things as finely detailed shrines and glass encased relics. Often, the image itself represented a religious figure or deity and was enough to establish a marked impression. The addition of glass tears, real hair, and fingernails enhances the tactile appeal of the image. Symbols such as the halo were employed to exaggerate the magical quality. Color was used as a stimulus with special attention to the use of gold or gilt to relate to the implications of power and majesty.

Props such as candles, incense, and music were used with the intent of appealing to all the senses to affect a total impact upon the viewer.

Actual participation was achieved through the participant's involvement in the rituals, processions, gestures, and chants of the religious ceremony.

The political institution in contrast to the religious institution was less direct in its appeal. The main instrument of influence was manifest in its architectural and statuary monuments. Monuments denoted the material wealth and power of the governing body.

The diverse spectrum of Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Gothic architecture is witness to the attempt of ruling powers to perpetuate their influence through visual means. Each structure became individually defined through means such as surface detail, repetition of a single element, and proportional variation as is seen in the refined elegance of the column-girded Parthenon and the grandiose lavish complex of Versailles.

Monuments honoring a nation's leaders have been erected in civilizations throughout time. Initial interest in these was created through the usual mounting of the sculptured, chiseled, or cast statuary monument at an elevated level; on a pedestal, column, platform, or step. This device caused the viewer to literally look up to the image of the enshrined, thus, implying an aspiring to superior qualities.

The ruling dynasties of Egypt established an iconography punctuated by some of the most formidable examples of monumental structures in existence. The visual impact of the symmetry and simplified form of these structures, such as the starkly-severe primary form of the Pyramids, was intensified through the use of monumental scale. Exaggerated in size these forms are not unlike the effect of the impending mass of a mountain, which are formidable by the space they displace. In relation to the monument the stature of the human form is diminished.

Capitalizing on such devices of appeal as life-like images, visual and sensory stimuli, symbolization, surface elaboration, exaggerated

size, elevated plane, the religious and political sponsored artist attempted to influence the viewer through art forms.

The majority of viewer oriented works in the past occurred within the context of these institutions. A number do occur out-of-context. These isolated examples appear as anachronisms.

One case of this was the American artist, Charles Wilson Peale, who in 1795 incorporated a three-dimensional stair into his painting entitled "The Staircase Group." The artist seemed to be compelled to bridge the gap between the illusionary space of the painted surface to the real space of the viewer.

An entire movement of works produced with the viewer in mind developed in Europe in the early 1900's. Evolving out of the world war years in reaction to a growing disillusionment with society were the Surrealists and their predecessors, the Dadaists. Artists such as Ernst, Man Ray, Jacques Villon, Picabia, Schwitters, and Duchamp formulated their dissatisfaction into works designed to shock.

Any media or means became tools of expression for the Dadaists and Surrealists. The mass produced object or 'found' object was employed as a principal means of effecting shock. Marcel Duchamp was one artist who exploited this in his use of 'ready-mades.' His "Fountain," 1917, a urinal signed R. Mutt, was clearly an aggressive act in the eyes of the public.

Juxtaposition, or the bizarre combination of materials, was a

further means of shock. Often the erotic was suggested as in Duchamp's "Cyclops." In this piece, an electric rotary fan was painted so as to entice the viewer's vision into the center of the fan through its movement. ". . . The forms are laden with sexual allusion through the calculated succession of contractions and dilation."⁴

The works of the Dadaists and the Surrealists signified a departure from traditional media and means. The influence was not to be fully realized until later. Canaday comments:

Dada has contributed to every new technique employed in this century that it did not actually invent—collage, which is everywhere: its extension, assemblage, which includes junk sculpture . . .⁵

Evident within the works of these artists were direct attempts to involve the viewer physically as a part of the art form. In 1938 Duchamp organized the Surrealist Exhibition in Paris.

It was his idea to hang from the ceiling 1200 bags of coal above a glowing fire which, fortunately, was only electric.⁶
(Plate I)

In 1942 he organized the Surrealist Exhibition in New York. A

⁴Robert Lebel, Marcel Duchamp (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959), p. 52.

⁵John Canaday, "Dada and Its Offspring," New York Times, March 24, 1968, pp. 29-31.

⁶Lebel, Marcel Duchamp, p. 54.



EXPOSITION SURREALISTE, PARIS 1938

controversial exhibition as described by Lebel:

His many innovations included, most notably, an inextricable tangle of string which forced the spectators into contortions inappropriate to their equilibrium and their dignity.⁷ (Plate II)

As early as the 1910's the Dadaists were working with the ideas of 'chance,' which became one of the primary ingredients in the art form of the Happening. Canaday comments:

They staged plays without scripts and cavorted in semi-organized escapades that we have found a name for in their recent revival-Happenings.⁸

In the past the main body of viewer oriented works was evidenced within the religious and political institutions in a functional role. Exceptions to these were seen in the individual illustration of Peale's work and in the works of the Dadaists and the Surrealists. These exceptions serve as curious examples which predate later developments.

⁷Ibid., p. 55.

⁸Canaday, "Dada and Its Offspring," pp. 29-31.

PLATE II



SURREALIST EXHIBITION, NEW YORK 1942

II. TRANSITION POINTS

Prior to the twentieth-century, religious and political institutions dominated much of art. This provided art with a functioning role in society. Tradition was instilled through the guilds, academies, and apprenticeships that these power institutions so often sponsored.

Artists, since that time, have been freed from those restraints. Why then the revival of an art form that attempts to involve the viewer? What transgressed in the interim to cause this revival?

To a casual observer there is a noticeable contrast between twentieth-century painting styles and those of the past. These departures occur in the form of new content and techniques.

Technological advances were rapidly altering the traditional institutional structures. The effects of this advancement acted as a direct threat to the foundation of traditional art forms.

As the printing press had increasingly replaced art as the major communications agent of the religious and political institutions, so the development of photographic methods, another result of the technological step-up, further displaced the artist.

Estranged from society in an increasingly less functional role, the artist turned to an introspective venture that was to lead to a source

of new visual forms. Marshall McLuhan comments on these artists:

. . . turned to those inward gestures of the mind by which we achieve insight and by which we make ourselves and our world. Thus art moved from outer-matching to inner making.⁹

Technological advances had simultaneously threatened the function of art and also provided new life-blood for the work that was to evolve out of this struggle. "Twentieth-century painting cannot be considered in isolation from the sum of the ideas evolved in our century . . ."¹⁰

Werner Haftmann offers these parallels:

The radical changes in painting took place between 1900 and 1910. The significant dates are: 1905 Fauvism; 1907 Cubism; 1910 the first abstract painting. A concordance of dates important in the history of science runs thus: 1900 Planck's quantum theory; and Freud's Interpretation of Dreams; 1905 Einstein's special theory of relativity; 1908 Minkowski's mathematical formulation of the dimensions of space-time.¹¹

Out of this inner directed search evolved the styles of this century, movements such as Fauvism, German Expressionism, Cubism, Dada, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism.

Viewing the spectrum of twentieth-century painting, Haftmann comments:

Looking back on the content and meaning of the works, we see that the old reproductive function of painting has continued

⁹Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media, Signet Books (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 174.

¹⁰Werner Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth-Century, trans. by Janet Seligman (New York: Praeger, Inc., Publishers, 1965), p. 8.

¹¹Ibid.

to lose its importance. . . . The dominant themes of contemporary painting thus extend from the transformation of natural appearance into 'evocative' signs, . . . All of these paintings, therefore, belong to the categories of the evocative picture, the evolution of which began with Cezanne and has since been the central pre-occupation of our century. . . .¹²

During the fifties there was a move from inner-directed works to works that demonstrated attempts at intensified visual appeal. In this attempt a number of Abstract Expressionists were expanding their work to larger canvases. Sam Hunter compares the later works of Pollock and deKooning with that of Rothko:

Each seeks an absolute in which the receptive viewer can lose himself, the one in compulsive movement, the other in an all-pervading, as if internalized, sensation of dominant color. The result in both is a painted world with powerful, immediate impact; in awareness of this goal, the artists have tended to work on a larger and larger scale-canvases as big as mural paintings . . .¹³

An example of this is Rothko's "Number 7" (1951) painting measuring 94 1/2" x 54 1/2" (Plate III).

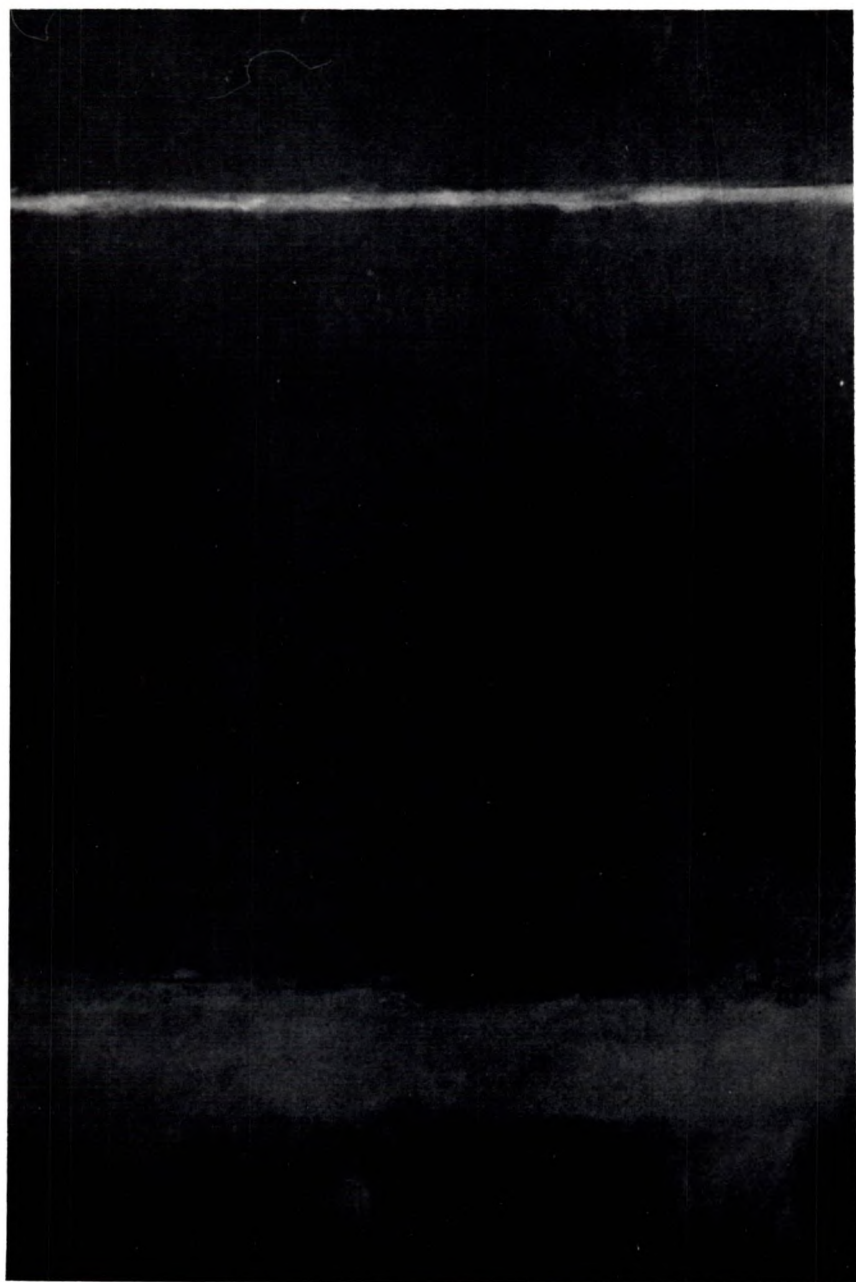
Continuing his comparison of the works of the Post Abstract Expressionists to those of earlier Abstract Expressionist artists, Hunter states:

. . . such artists as Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman have in their separate and distinguished ways created a more solemn and hieratic art of resonant color sensation . . . , give their works a direct impact. . . . Quiet and ordered though

¹²Ibid., p. 335.

¹³Sam Hunter, and others, Art Since 1945 (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1958), p. 296.

PLATE III



MARK ROTHKO "NUMBER 7" 1951 OIL ON CANVAS
(94 1/2" x 54 1/2")

their surface may appear at first glance, the paintings aggressively envelop the observer in immense fields of burning hue of such intensity that they begin to act as a total and immediately experienced environment.¹⁴

The similarity of the visual devices used by the Post Abstract Expressionists such as the large format, the simplification of form, and the intense color areas, to those used by the advertising media was not accidental. Graphic advertising was coming into its own.

Arising out of a highly competitive American economy, this visual phenomena had a functioning role in society. To the artist the threat of a competing visual media caused a distinct reaction. Competition necessitated the artist's return to a more direct exchange with society.

Art turned from inner-directed works to what could be termed outer-directed viewer oriented works, the beginnings of which were evident in the visual appeal attempted by the Post Abstract Expressionists.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 310.

III. VIEWER ORIENTED WORKS

It was this all important quality of uniformity and repeatability that had made the Gutenberg break between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Photography was almost as decisive in making the break between mere mechanical industrialism and the graphic age of electronic man.¹⁵

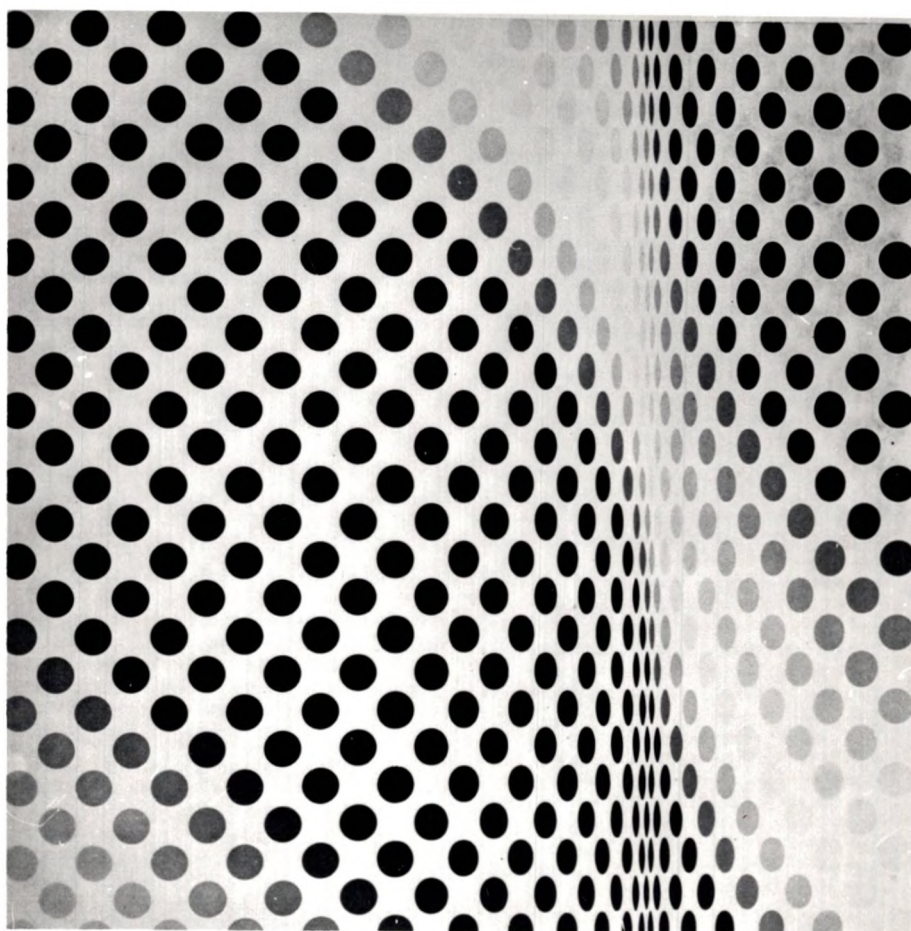
Paralleling this graphic bombardment of the public with visual images was the poster art of Op art. Aptly labeled, Op art forms effected an immediate optical or visual impact on the viewer. To compensate for the figurative element so popular in the advertising realm, Op art utilized optical illusion as an attention getting device. This was accomplished through a design calculated to effect a sense of movement. Continuing the non-objective forms of the Post Abstract Expressionists, Op moved into a more severe statement of defined areas of color and form. This was strengthened by symmetry and frontality of form.

Characteristic of this highly geometric style is the work of Bridget Riley. Typical of her black/white Op compositions is "Pause" (Plate IV). This simulation of movement in the two-dimensional painting is an illusion.

The technological improvements in materials provided the means

¹⁵McLuhan, Understanding Media, p. 171.

PLATE IV



BRIDGET RILEY "PAUSE" 1964

for the artist to extend and diversify. More importantly, these material products acted as a stimulus by their visual and tactile quality. From the raw construction stock-pile of concrete forms, steel beams, cylinders, and barrels, these materials and forms came to be assimilated by the artist.

Two movements directly influenced by the visual stimulus of these materials and structures were the Minimal and Primary art forms.

. . . Minimal art responds to an . . . important aspect of the environment: The American landscape, with its anonymous factories and water towers, and its painful absence of classical monuments.¹⁶

The Primary form was a three-dimensional extension of Op art. Similar in strong visual elements, this form incorporated from Op the non-objective, defined statement of form and color. The geometric design of Op became simplified to a singular three-dimensional form. In contrast to the visual impact of optical illusion, the Primary form created impact through a physical extension into space. This inferred a spatial encroachment into the viewer's reference of space.

Monumental scale was often utilized by the Primary form to emphasize their presence. Because of their immensity these works are most often displayed outdoors. An exception was the exhibition of Primary forms commissioned by the Corcoran Gallery to be erected

¹⁶Barbara Rose, "Problems of Criticism, V," Artforum, January, 1969, p. 45.

within its interior. The spatial presence of these forms is realized as seen in the illustration of Tony Smith's "Smoke" construction (Plate V):

Like abstract dinosaurs these works, which Smith calls "presences of a sort", seem to take possession of their surrounding, heaving forcefully into the air while solidly striding the ground.¹⁷

The Op form had extended into the viewer's space through visual means, the Primary form through physical presence. Other art forms began to evidence attempts of extending into the viewer's space through sensory means of electrification. This was envisioned in the Sound, Light, and Kinetic works.

No doubt that the sophisticated products of electrification had some influence upon these artists; the neon-landscape, the regulated movement of the mechanized ad-sign, the stereo super-image screen production. Of the many ramifications of electrification, television created a more demanding viewer through a continuous image interplay which served to mesmerize the viewer. Marshall McLuhan comments on the effects of television and the electrified media:

In television there occurs an extension of the sense of active, exploratory touch which involves all the senses simultaneously, rather than that of sight alone. . . . In all electric phenomena, the visual is only one component in a complex interplay . . .¹⁸

¹⁷Editorial, Time, July 28, 1967, p. 42.

¹⁸Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Message, Bantam Books (New York, London, Toronto: Bantam Books, Inc., 1967), p. 125.

PLATE V



TONY SMITH "SMOKE" 1967

Two artists working with electrified Light works were Chryssa (Plate VI) and Otto Rine. Commenting on the work of Otto Rine, a critic says that his ". . . intention is to turn art inside out-his light rays reach out into the spectator's space rather than coax him into their framework."¹⁹

Sound and light are integrated as sensory devices in the works of Howard Jones. In "Sonic Two" (Plate VII), ". . . The spectator, in his passage, interrupts the beam of light and the painting resounds with diversified electronic pitches. The picture is notable for the involvement . . . it generates."²⁰ The viewer is not only affected by this particular work, but in turn influences the actual workings of the art form.

The kinetic works must have been visually motivated by the machine. ". . . Everywhere the thousands of mechanical objects, well calculated to provoke the desire to experiment with the work of art as mechanical object, an art machine, the machinery of a visual 'happening.' "²¹

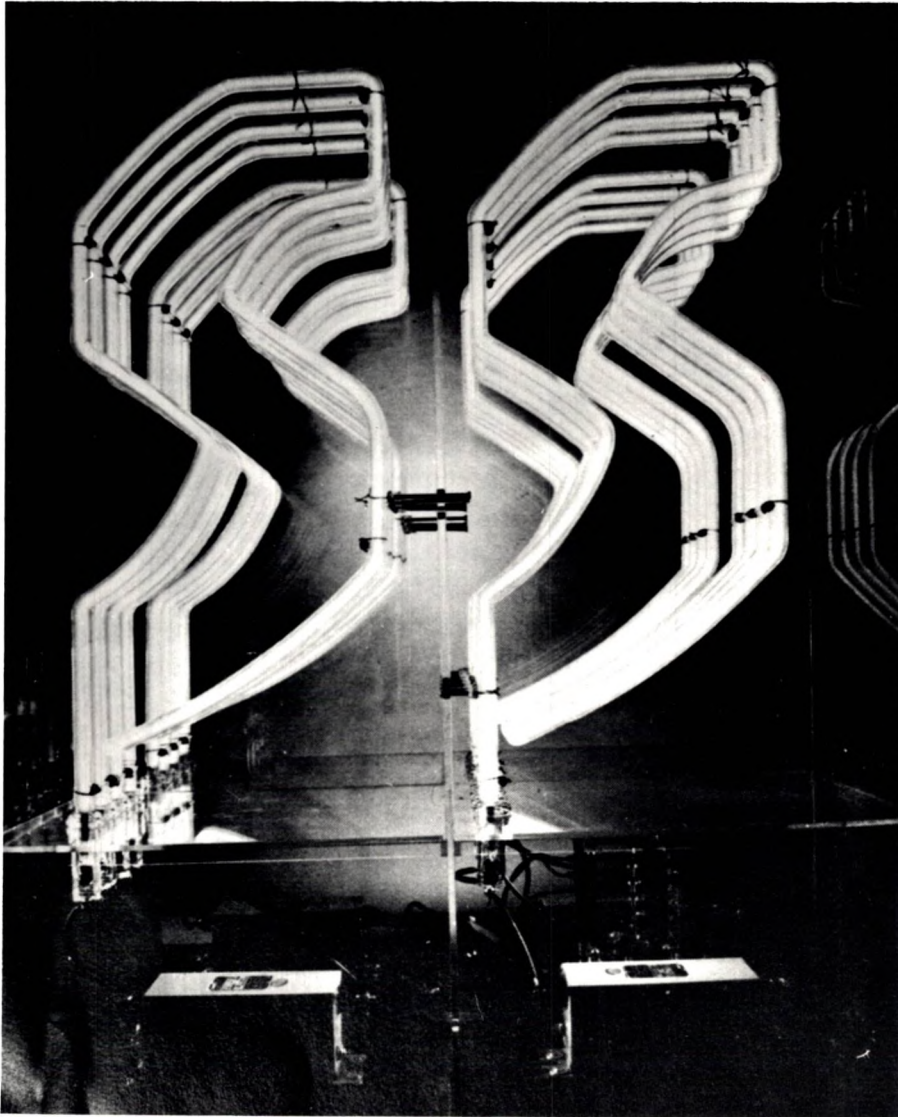
Working with electrified kinetic forms is Jean Tinguely. "Narwa," a 118" x 98" x 98" composition (Plate VIII) was equipped with a timing

¹⁹"The Movement Movement," Time, January 28, 1966, p. 69.

²⁰Robert Pincus Witten, "New York," Artforum, May, 1968, p. 61.

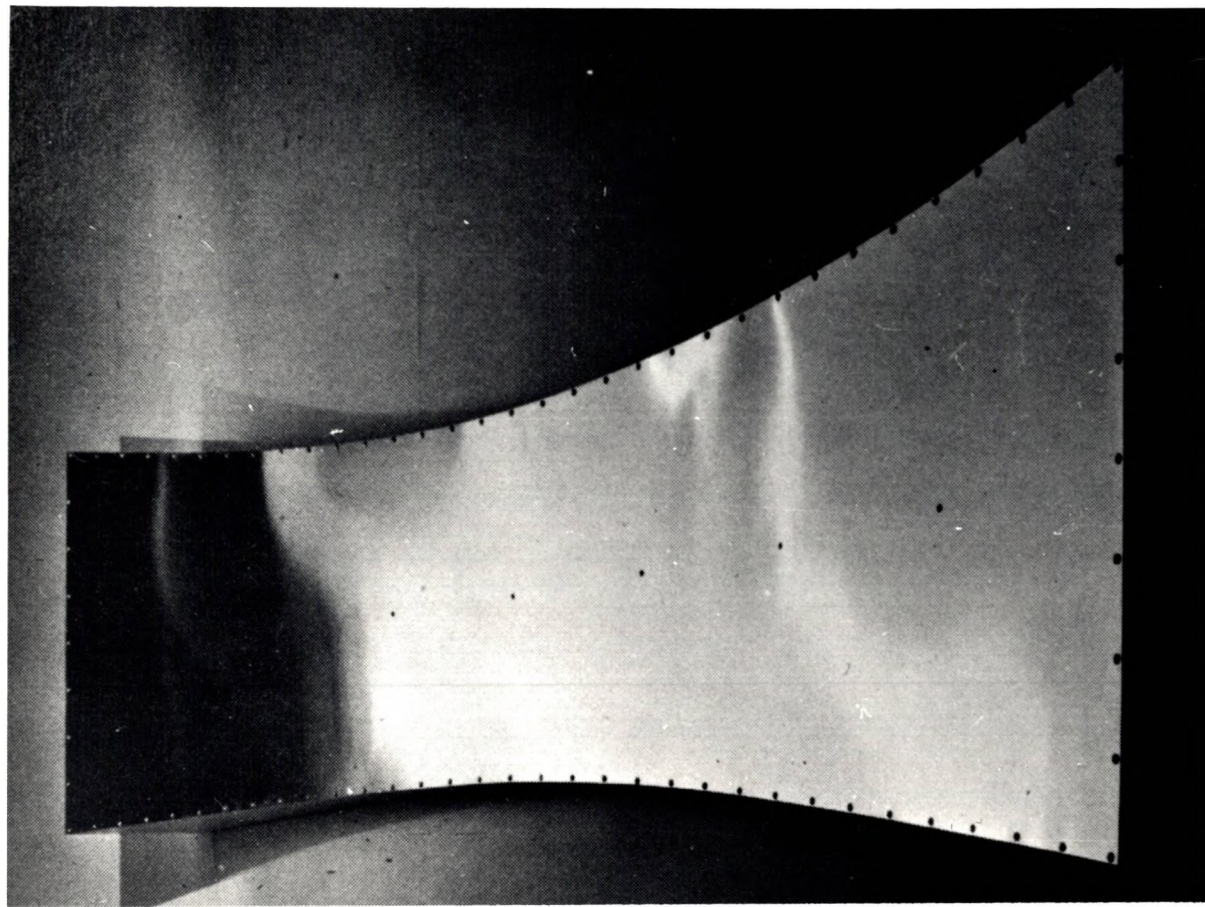
²¹Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth-Century, p. 335.

PLATE VI



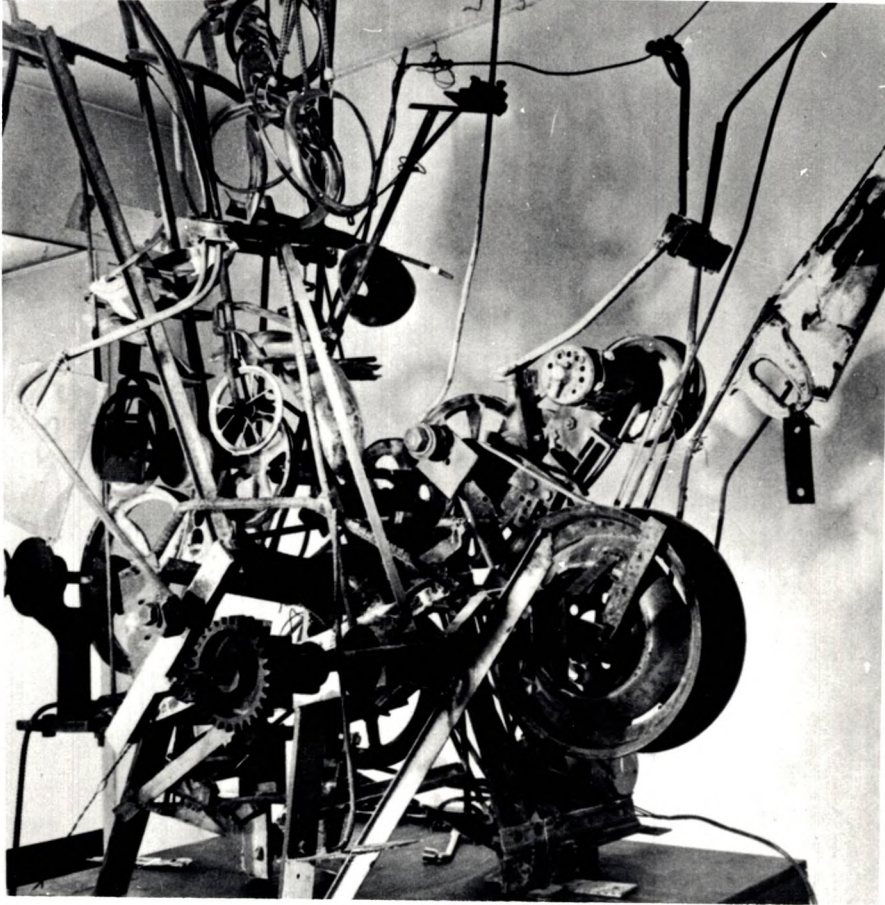
CHRYSSA "STUDY FOR THE GATES, NO. 4" 1967
(43" x 27" x 34")

PLATE VII



HOWARD JONES "SONIC TWO" 1968
(24" x 96" x 9")

PLATE VIII



JEAN TINGUELY "NARWA" 1961
(118" x 98" x 98")

device which would set off a wild-orchestration of sound at various intervals. To the usual hushed gallery atmosphere this noisy interruption attracted the viewer out of curiosity. The source was found to be a bizarre assemblage of junk objects jangling spasmodically--the sound created by a chance combination of objects. Sam Hunter comments on kinetic forms:

. . . the new kinetic sculpture seems designed and destined for public spaces as its ideal setting. . . . It tries to meet the spectator on common ground through the use of standardized forms and through familiar industrial surfaces. . . .²²

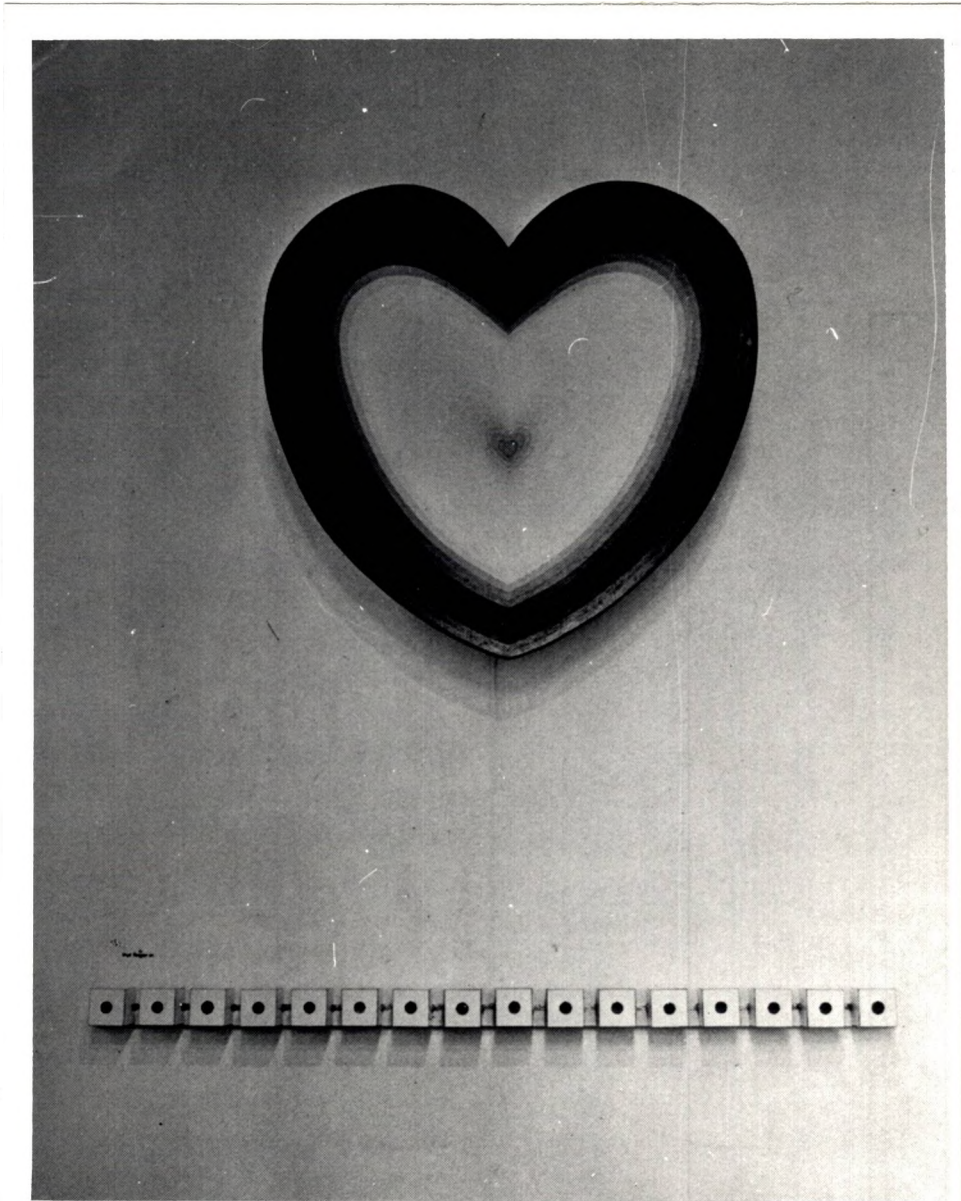
There have been a number of singular works in which there is a direct attempt to elicit a response from the viewer through objects that are obviously to be handled: a hinged door, a switch, a knob, rearrangeable objects. These participation pieces of 'Touchables' imply viewer involvement through the choice they offer. The actual response depends upon the viewer's decision.

The following is a description of such a work, "Rainbow Heart" (Plate IX) by the Japanese artist Ay-O:

. . . begins with a series of small boxes mounted on a wall with holes into which one is invited to put his finger. On doing this he is met with various haptic or audial surprises: the finger encounters foam rubber, a ball of yarn, powder, stone, emptiness or buttons which when pushed, activate a loud buzzing noise or

²²Sam Hunter, "Sam Hunter on Art--Second in a Series," The Minneapolis Tribune, May 22, 1966, pp. 30-31.

PLATE IX



AY-O "RAINBOW HEART" 1968

recording of mumbling electronic sounds. Whatever is in the last box has been observed to draw blood.²³

Two other examples of the 'Touchable' are found in the early work of George Ortman. One called "Fertile Plant" (1949) had as its flat painted surface two small doors which opened to reveal a root-like cluster of wood rods. Commenting on Ortman's use of the real and/or movable parts one critic states:

. . . the relationship between reality and illusion intrigued him, and he incorporated these diverse qualities into single works. Even then painting represented illusion for Ortman, while construction, employing objects "that you could feel," represented a form of reality.²⁴

In a lecture at Walker Art Center in 1965 Ortman included comments about one of his works that had movable parts. This was one of the few figurative works displayed at the retrospective. An early work, Ortman stated that it was executed in response to his disgust to the horrors of World War II, which he had first-hand observation of while serving in the Naval Air Corps. In the small assemblage work there were hinged doors that could be moved to expose another segment of the composition. The choice offered the viewer, Ortman stated, was symbolic of the responsibility each individual has in relation to others.

Since these earlier works Ortman has moved to a more abstract

²³Jane Livingston, "Los Angeles," Artforum, February, 1968, p. 62.

²⁴Suzanne Foley, George Ortman: The Evolution of Style (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center Special Publication, 1966), p. 10.

statement, but the inference for viewer involvement is still present in the form of movable parts in highly geometric constructions.

Capitalizing on the figurative images used by the advertising media was the Pop artist. Artists such as Rosenquist, Warhol, Oldenberg and Wesselman directly borrowed from commercial images and products: the hot dog, the beer can, the trademark, the brand new 'boughten' object. The stuff of the twentieth-century became the subject matter of the Pop artists.

. . . the scope for observation in the life of the great cities had certainly been enormously widened since the time of Dada. . . . There was the whole world of advertisements and posters, . . . there were the sharp traffic signals, the montage-effects of the newspaper stands crying their news of catastrophes and displaying their sex advertisements, the montages, the grotesque world of fable and fairy-tale sentimentality portrayed in the comic strips . . .²⁵

It was the intent of the Pop artist to titillate through the use of these blatant images and objects to popularize them to the extent of becoming a 'standardized thing' as Pop artist Lichtenstein stated. In contrast to the Dadaists and Surrealists use of the real image or object as an indirect symbol, the Pop artists used the real as a direct implication of the common shared object and experience. "Pop art is instantly to the point, extroverted rather than introverted."²⁶

The techniques employed in the production of the Pop image was

²⁵Haftmann, Painting in the Twentieth-Century, p. 335.

²⁶Lucy Lippard, Pop Art (New York: Praeger Press, 1966), p. 11.

often commercially inspired. It is a commentary on the movement to note that many of the major American Pop artists at one time worked in some phase of the graphic arts.

They all employ more or less hard-edge, commercial techniques and colours to convey their unmistakably popular, representational images,²⁷

Pop artist, James Rosenquist's use of sections of billboard images in huge collage-like compositions affects a strong visual impact.

Based on a painted collage concept of image juxtaposition Rosenquist is not concerned with symbolism of any kind; his juxtapositioned fragments do not act upon each other, but directly upon the spectator.²⁸

One of the most popular of the Pop artists, Warhol presents the familiar image as that of Marilyn Monroe, the Greenstamp, the Campbell soup can, or the three-dimensional work "Brillo Boxes" in singular or multiple compositions. Lucy Lippard states that, "He wants an art that will appeal to everybody,"29

Pop artist Claus Oldenberg creates three-dimensional forms of everyday items such as toothpaste tubes, electric fans, and typewriters which become transformed into huge 'hugable' feelies through his sensitive choice and handling of materials. His intent to relate through the tactile sense is apparent when he says that he makes these things in

²⁷Ibid., p. 69.

²⁸Ibid., p. 114.

²⁹Ibid., p. 100.

order to ". . . give a concrete statement to my fantasy. Instead of painting it, to make it touchable, to translate the eyes into the fingers."³⁰

Tom Wesselman was one of the Pop artists who attempted to extend the two-dimensional canvas through the use of real objects. Wesselman paintings include such items as a live television set, a radio, a heat radiator, or a table to relate more directly to the viewer's space.

One of the first to expand this concept of two-dimensional surface break-up to its fullest was the Italian artist, Lucio Fontana, who produced works with perforations as early as 1949. Fontana's slicing of the canvas transformed the surface plane into a relief. Commenting on Fontana's work, Jan van der Marck states:

The artist's main concern is the integration of illusionistic space within the picture and the real space which surrounds and passes through it.³¹

Robert Rauschenberg's works illustrate the combining of an early Abstract Expressionist painterly style with the 'found' object: incongruous objects as a stuffed bird, a ladder, a pillow, and coke bottles. These he appropriately terms 'combines.' In "Pilgrim" (Plate X) the chair is a continuation of the painted surface and relates to the viewer's space as a real object.

³⁰Ibid., p. 110.

³¹Jan van der Marck, Lucio Fontana: The Spatial Concept of Art (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1966), p. 6.

PLATE X



ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG "PILGRIM" 1960

Swanson remarks on Rauschenberg's use of the 'found' object:

. . . unlike the Surrealist, Rauschenberg constantly reminds us of the real world from which the objects in his combine painting came: he never transmits them into props in a dream-world of his own making.³²

Extending the idea of the 'combine' to large three-dimensional forms are assemblage artists Segal and Kienholz. Their figurative works confront the viewer immediately by their life-size proportions and realness.

In Segal's work, the calcified plaster molds of actual people are placed in fragments of real settings. The viewer can, if he chooses, enter the space of the service station attendant in his glass case storefront, or become an additional figure next to the woman occupied in the activity of fastening her bra before a full-length mirror, or sit next to the figure in "The Diner" (Plate XI). The viewer is more likely to feel alienated by the tension created within these settings between real objects and the suggested unreality of the mummified forms.

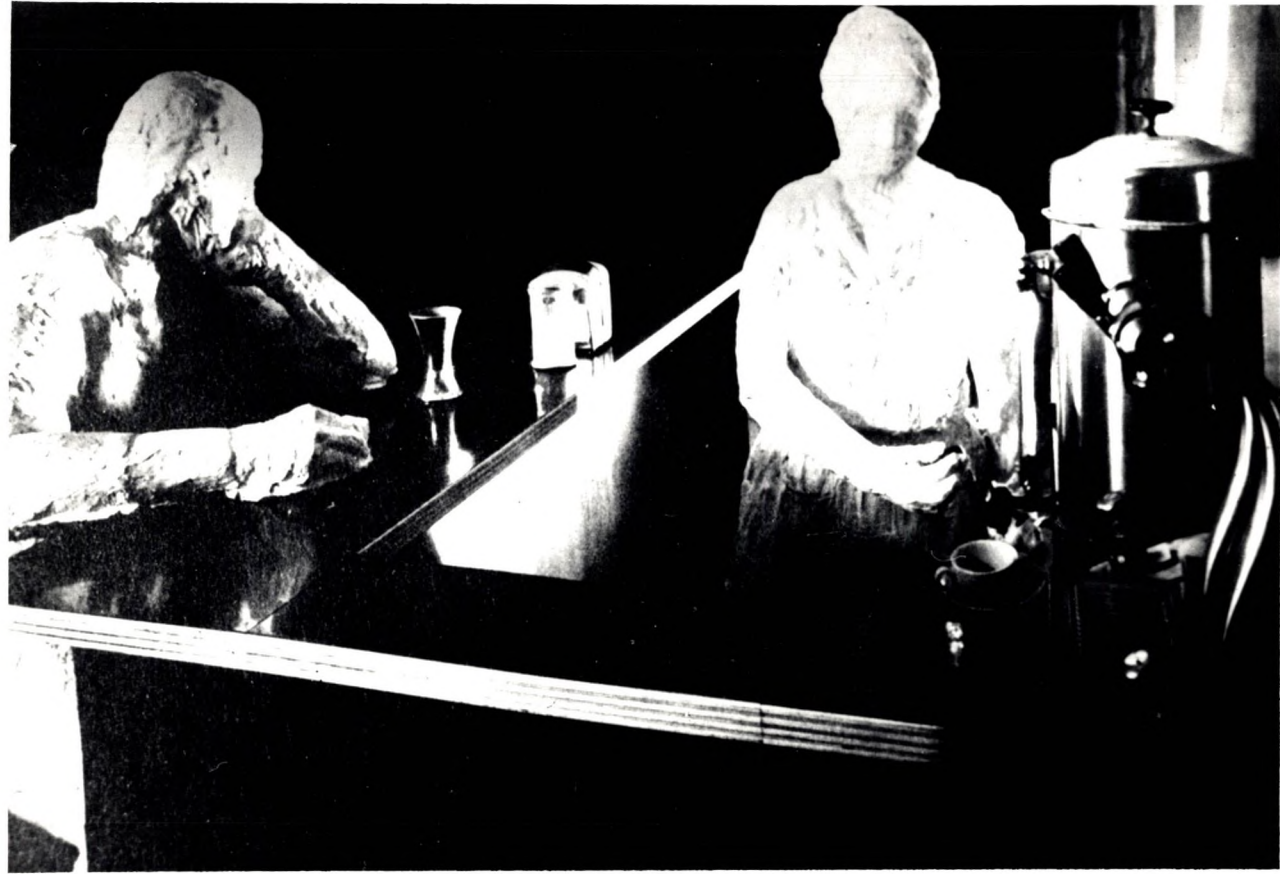
. . . he arrests time, by freezing an incident, and limits space, preferring to invite contemplation rather than active participation.³³

Working with both abstract and figurative assemblages is Edward Kienholz. Something of a sensationalist he uses a heavy treatment of

³²Dean Swanson, Rauschenberg (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center Publication, 1965), p. 1.

³³Jan van der Marck, and others, "George Segal," Eight Sculptors: The Ambiguous Image (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1966), p. 26.

PLATE XI



GEORGE SEGAL "THE DINER" 1964-66

textural variances, often with erotic overtones to effect shock. Using this technique Kienholz executed a detailed simulation of an actual diner entitled "The Beanery."

Initial interest is created by the placement of "The Beanery" (Plate XII) within the gallery interior. Entering through the diner's door the viewer is crowded into a space that runs the length of the car. The viewer is not only within the actual work, but is in touch-distance with the stationary figures hunched over the bar. Other viewers add to the animation of the scene, already set in motion by taped voices and music. At the back there is room to sit down at an uncleared table of cigarette butts extinguished in an egg plate.

The only departure from the literal is Kienholz's symbolic use of a number of clock-face figures. The realness of the composition remains. The viewer's presence acts only as an additional figure. Nothing is asked. No action or response alters or changes the staid setting.

The art forms discussed up to this point evidence attempts to affect the viewer through sensory means (i.e. light, sound, kinetic, touch, shock, spatial encroachment). Successful as attention-getting forms the interaction between the viewer and the art form was limited by their 'object' form. Each work remained a completed statement. The viewer's response caused no visible effect.

From these object forms developed an art form which more fully



EDWARD KIENHOLZ "THE BEANERY" 1966

integrated the viewer in its space as an essential ingredient. This was accomplished by encompassing the viewer within an actual space. The space was then defined in a provocative manner through the use of sensory appeals similar to an environmental setting.

The situational environments that occurred in life became the source material for the artist: the political convention hall, the religious saint's day procession, or the 'big sell' department store campaign. In these 'events' the viewer was involved directly through a 'total impact' situation, in which all the senses were bombarded by various stimuli.

Two artists whose works depict early attempts at integrating the viewer with the art form were Michaelangelo Pistoletto and Robert Rauschenberg.

In 1952 Rauschenberg painted a number of all-white canvases ". . . in which no image was discernible other than shadows cast by passers-by and the reflections on the surface from lights in the room."³⁴ The attempt at viewer involvement was in its purest form.

Although his art form is two-dimensional, Pistoletto, the Italian artist, through the use of actual reflection involves the viewer directly and actively as an integral part of his compositions. This he accomplishes through the use of full-length mirror-like metal surfaces. Each reflective surface is defined by a life-sized photo-image of an anonymous

³⁴Swanson, Rauschenberg.

human figure or group of figures, who in these candid shots, go about their daily life unconcerned and unaffected by any intrusion of their defined space (Plate XIII).

The reflection of the viewer within these compositions is visual evidence of his involvement with the art form. ". . . the spectator becomes a variable ingredient along with his immediate surroundings."³⁵

Working with the three-dimensional Environmental form was Pop artist Claus Oldenberg. His "Bedroom" (Plate XIV), presented in 1964 at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, was a take-off on the popular 'modern style' room decor. True to form, the literal connotations of the subject matter became transformed through Oldenberg's sensitive choice of material and its manipulation. "The furniture is all rhomboidal . . . the sheets are shiny vinyl, the bedspread quilted black plastic . . . the total effect is nightmarish."³⁶ Against this highly geometric starkness, the appearance of a human figure, such as the viewer, who just happens-on-the-scene, would cause a drastic alteration within this static space. The composition would be activated by the viewer's presence.

A number of artists felt the figurative Environment to be restricting. The abstract Environment evolved. This freed the artist to unlimited possibilities of spatial break-up, and variance of proportional form,

³⁵Martin Friedman, Pistoletto (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center Special Publication, 1966).

³⁶Lippard, Pop Art, p. 109.



MICHAELANGELO PISTOLETTO "WOMAN WITH CHILD" 1964

PLATE XIV



CLAUS OLDENBERG "BEDROOM" 1963

and materials. The only restricting factor was the actual physical nature of the interior.

One of these abstract Environments was "The Driving Image Show" (Plate XV) (1955) by the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. In her Environment, Kusama utilized the tactile to extremes through an obsessive use of a potato-shaped projectile. In varying sizes these projectiles covered portions of the walls, objects such as a chair, a dressing table, and a boat. In a barnacle-like growth, the interior was transformed into an organic whole. The occurrence of the soft-edged human form to this Environment appears as a natural extension of it (Plate XVI).

More recently, Les Levine did an Environment in which the viewer found himself contained within a silver-foil cubic volume, static except for huge silver-foil appendages worked by wind-machines. These forms, in varying degrees of expansion and deflation, threatened to exert themselves on the viewer causing a hypnotizing effect. After becoming acclimated to the Environment, what at first appeared to be an aggressive element, becomes an amiable one (Plate XVII).

In another of Levine's Environmentals entitled "The Star Garden" the viewer walks between reinforced plastic contoured forms. The clear plastic affords the viewer views of other viewers within the form. "A person should be able to move through his Environment and absorb what

PLATE XV



YAYOI KUSAMA "THE DRIVING IMAGE SHOW" 1955

PLATE XVI



YAYOI KUSAMA "THE DRIVING IMAGE SHOW" (DETAIL) 1955

PLATE XVII



LES LEVINE "SLIPCOVER" 1967

is happening,"³⁷ comments Levine.

Robert Israel uses the idea of actual viewer participation within the Environment in his work "A Suspended Floating Environment." Composed of 30 to 40 inflated plastic forms measuring two feet in diameter by 40 to 60 feet in length, these transparent forms could be rearranged according to the desire of the viewer, therefore altering the composition. An example of a similar Environment is seen in "Variable Progress 100" (Plate XVIII).

Commenting on these works and those of the future, Israel states, "I'm working now with the possibilities of sculpture . . . it's open-ended and can be reorganized. Others can participate in the creativity."³⁸

The Environments of Harold Paris consist of rooms defined by cast forms of plastic, rubber, and plaster. One entitled "Room I," done in 1965, was composed of black/white forms. Peter Selz remarks:

People entered it, walked around in it and experienced the diverse and irregular but very real objects—many of them erotic in shape—but clinically stark in their black and white funerary coldness.³⁹

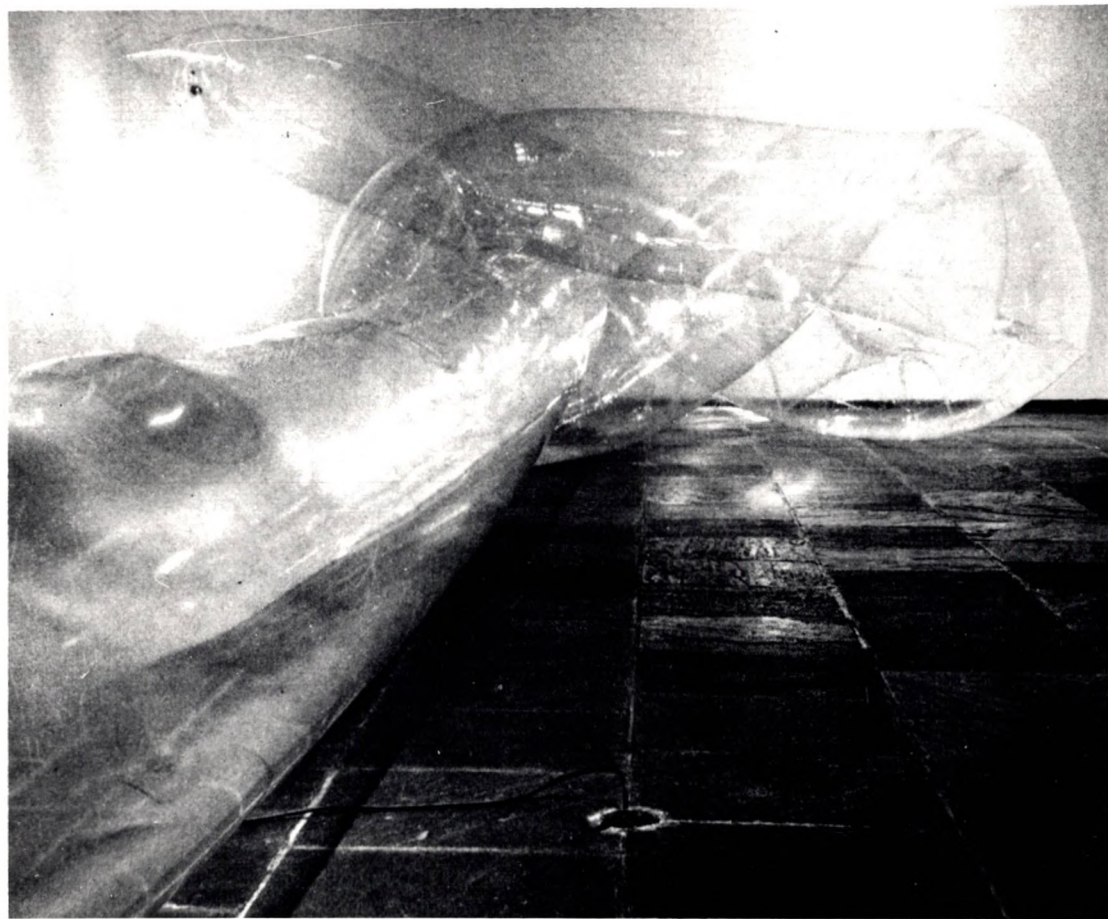
Paris is presently concerned with creating direct sensory effects within these Environments. "Koddesh-Koddashim" (a work in progress),

³⁷Editorial, Time, May 5, 1967, p. 59.

³⁸Mike Steele, The Minneapolis Tribune, December 10, 1967.

³⁹Peter Selz, "The Final Negation: Harold Paris' Koddesh-Koddashim," Art in America, March-April, 1969, p. 62.

PLATE XVIII



ROBERT ISRAEL "VARIABLE PROGRESS 100" 1967

will contain, ". . . forms complex and simple, hard and soft, smooth and rough, heated and frozen, illuminated and dark"⁴⁰ (Plate XIX).

A number of artists held the opinion the Environmental was limiting viewer response, by what Allan Kaprow, a leading innovator of new forms, calls the "shshshshsh--don't touch atmosphere" of the gallery setting.

Kaprow comments further:

All the marvelous potentials of transformation and inter-activity between art, the public, and nature are out of the question. And even when a little of this is made possible, it is so tentative that the old habits of gallery-spectatorship preclude any vital response on the public's part, . . .⁴¹

New settings were tried by such artists as Kaprow and his cohorts, Oldenberg, Dine, and Whitman. In a joint effort they produced a number of Environmentals. "The Apple Shrine" (1960) was performed in a storefront. To further disguise the interior's physical structure they put up false walls of wire mesh stuffed with paper. Paper and other debris were scattered over the floor in an attempt to camouflage the connotations of the pre-existing interior. The purpose was to:

. . . fill their entire containing areas nearly obliterating the rules definition of the rooms . . . but no matter how casual and organic the arrangement of materials might be, a house, a wall, a floor, a ceiling, a pavement, a city block, etc., was there first, and last.⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 66.

⁴¹Allan Kaprow, Assemblage, Happenings, and Environments (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publications, 1967), p. 182.

⁴²Allan Kaprow, "The Shape of the Art Environment," Artforum, April, 1968, p. 33.

PLATE XIX



HAROLD PARIS "KODDESH-KODDASHIM" (DETAIL) 1969

The next step seemed logical: To remove the Environment from any interior setting. Kaprow continues, "The only fruitful direction to take is toward those areas of the everyday world which are less abstract, less box-like, such as the out-of-doors, a street crossing, a machine factory, or the seaside."⁴³

This move from the interior to the exterior placed the Environmental art form in an entirely new context. The result was an entirely new art form, with a new language. The role of the artist was now one of a conceptual nature. The artist's function became one of establishing the working framework: the media became props to be activated, the content was that of time and space, the technique became the 'chance' interaction of these elements by the viewer. The Happening evolved.

Credited as one of the main conceptual founders of the Happening through his theory of 'chance' methodology is John Cage. In 1952 at Black Mountain College, where he taught, Cage staged presentations which "combined paintings, dance, films, slides, recordings, radios, poetry, piano playing, and a lecture, with the audience in the middle of the activity."⁴⁴

Commenting on the implied purpose of the element of 'chance'

⁴³Kaprow, Assemblage, Happenings, and Environments, p. 182.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 212.

inherent in the Happening, Cage states:

. . . as a point of view and a technique, chance methodology is not only refreshing in the best sense of the work; it is extremely useful in dispersing and breaking up knots of "knowables," of groupings, relationships, and large structures which have become obsolete and habitual through overuse. Everything, the stuff of art, of daily life, the working of one's mind, get thrown into sudden and startling patterns, so that if old values are destroyed, new experiences are revealed. . . .⁴⁵

More "staged" versions of the Happening were performed by the Japanese Gutai Theater Arts Group, who had experimented with the concept of the Happening as early as 1950. One of these was presented in the Sankei Hall in Osaka in 1962. On stage facing the audience appeared a line-up of men each attired in a surgical-like costume.

The backdrop, costumes, and makeup are all white, except each person has a red part. Only the red parts move to Rock n' Roll music.⁴⁶ (Plate XX)

Although more contrived than the later Happenings, this performance depended on the 'chance' or unrehearsed actions of the participants on stage.

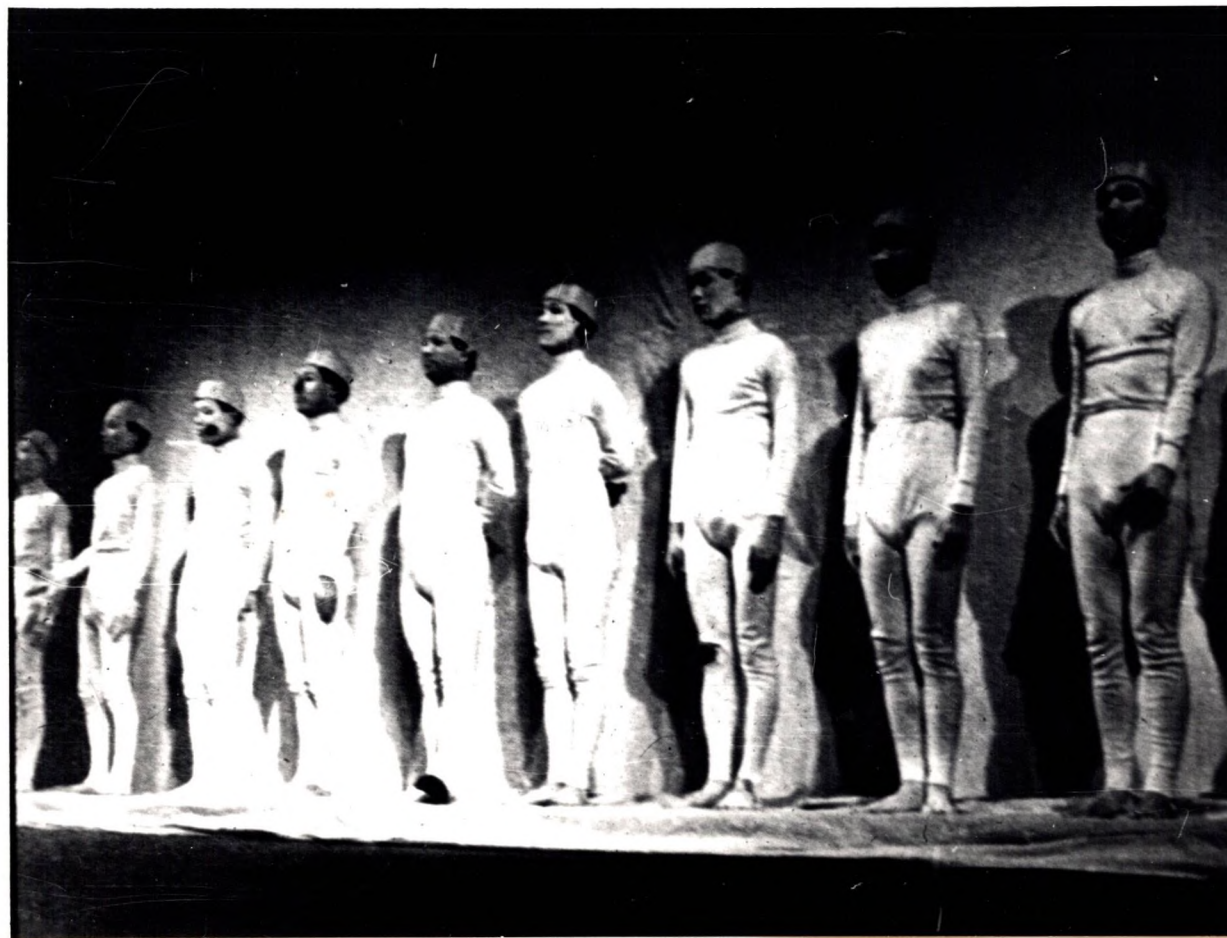
Allan Kaprow, who was strongly influenced by the work of Cage, gives this general outline for the Happening:

- a. The line between art and life should be kept fluid and perhaps indistinct, as possible. . . .
- b. Therefore, the sources of themes, materials, actions, and the relationship between them are to be derived from any place or period except from the arts, their derivatives, and

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 212.

PLATE XX



JAPANESE GUTAI THEATER GROUP: SANKEI HALL, OSAKA 1962

- their milieu. . . .
- c. The performance of a Happening should take place over several widely spaced, sometimes moving and changing locales. . . .
 - d. Time, which follows closely on space consideration, should be variable and discontinuous. . . .
 - e. Happenings should be performed once only. . . .
 - f. It follows that audience should be eliminated entirely. . . .
 - g. The composition of a Happening proceeds exactly as in assemblage and Environments, that is, it is evolved as a collage of events in certain spans of time and in certain spaces. . . .⁴⁷

The Environment and the Happening both involved the viewer directly as an integral part of the art form. The Happening achieved this to a greater extent by ascribing an active role to the viewer as the prime-mover.

They are the passive and active side of a single coin, whose principle is extension. Thus an Environment is not less than a Happening. It is not a movie set which has not yet seen action (like the blank canvas arena of the "action" painter). It is quite sufficient in its quieter mode even though, in the point of evolution the Happening grew out of it.⁴⁸

In contrast to other twentieth-century art forms the viewer oriented works displayed direct attempts to affect the viewer through sensory appeals. The object forms acted upon the viewer through attention-getting devices as seen in the Op, Primary, Electrified, Pop, and Assemblage forms. The Environment encompassed the viewer within a

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 188-98.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 184.

spatial setting to which his presence was an activating element. The Happening assigned the viewer a role as an essential ingredient to the art form.

IV. OWN WORK

A number of developments and incidents led to my Environmental work entitled "Yellow Interior," presented in June of 1968, in East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

From earlier attempts to extend the surface of the two-dimensional compositions to three, through the use of 'found' objects, a number of three-dimensional freestanding constructions developed. One of these was a figurative work entitled "Toy Blocks," which consisted of three stacked blocks each resting on a ball-bearing-like mechanism. The blocks could be turned to form various combinations.

The work itself had limited success as a participation piece. Those responding to it were primarily the art-oriented and/or the less inhibited. Most viewers remained apart.

Dissatisfied with the object form as a means of integrating the viewer with the art form, the next move was to extend the object to a form which would encompass the viewer--as that of the Environment.

An incident which was to influence my work occurred on a tour of Walker Art Gallery. While viewing Indiana's "EAT/DIE" round canvases of solid red and green, a viewer attired in the same solid red and green happened on the scene--an intriguing effect, in which the viewer seemed

an animated extension of the art form.

Influenced by the striking effect of the viewer/Indiana incident, I considered the possibility of requiring viewers to attire themselves in solid colors as a prerequisite to entering the Environment. Because of the impracticability of this, the Environment instead became the monochromatic unit.

The viewer of Indiana's work had seemingly been unaware of the visual effect he caused. The viewer of the monochromatic Environment would be aware of his presence within the art form simply by recognizing the visual predominance of one color which defined the space as a unit. The effect would create a background or setting for the viewer.

To reinforce the contrast between the viewer and the setting, the Environment was to be a static background against which the viewer would be as a non-static or activating element. This idea was similar to Oldenberg's "Bedroom" (Plate XIV) excluding the figurative Pop elements.

To exaggerate the static quality of this space, no electrified lighting, sound, or moving parts were included. Any alteration would be caused by the viewer's presence. This contrasted sharply with Levine's use of moving parts, as seen in "Slipcover" (Plate XVII), in which the billowing forms tended to become the focal-point of the composition--a visual diversion to which the viewer remained the spectator.

In a further attempt to cause the viewer to be aware of his presence within the form, devices of shock or juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar were used.

Originally planned for the gallery-setting were a series of interiors created by partitions. The gallery proved too limiting in its physical structure. The store-front or building also too readily implied the commercial, impersonal element. A house was decided on because of the familiar associations that it implies. The viewer could immediately associate with it in a highly personal manner.

The initial familiar connotation of 'house' was sharply contrasted by the 'traffic yellow' of its interior (Plate XXI). An unnatural color in its larger statement, ambiguous in its warm, yet, aggressive intensity, the commercial color of Kodak, of traffic and highway markers, a color signifying the technological, external world, served to permeate and meld the elements of the Environment.

Except for a few vestiges of the original, the house was devoid of any further connotations of 'house' (Plate XXII). Each of the first floor divisions became transformed through the use of various forms and textures.

All surfaces, textures, projections, and forms became stilled under the grainy layer of the compressor-sprayed paint. The effect was one of some ancient entombment, stilled by centuries of undisturbed

PLATE XXI



"YELLOW INTERIOR" EXTERIOR (DETAIL)

PLATE XXII



"YELLOW INTERIOR" ENTRANCE (DETAIL)

silence. Now, unearthed, any intrusion caused an alteration to the interior.

To the right of the entrance one entered the first interior (Plate XXIII). The space is hung with transparent plastic sheeting which created a hazed, aquatic-like atmosphere. Suspended from the ceiling, these tiered plastic sheets were workable by roping attached. The composition of the free-hanging plastic sheeting could be altered in a slow articulated manner or in a rapid succession of pulls that transformed the whole composition into an undulating mass (Plates XXIV and XXV).

Similar to Robert Israel's "A Suspended Floating Environment" (Plate XVII), was the use of plastic and the concept of the viewer's participation in their composition. In contrast, Israel's forms were pre-formed, only their rearrangement within the Environment could be affected.

The viewer to the first interior could actually alter the composition by becoming an active participant or could remain inactive, the presence of his form a strong visual contrast to this illusionary, veiled setting.

In an attempt to further break up the existing interior divisions a small metal-framed glass window-box was mounted on the far wall. Through this, a partial view of the third interior was visible. The view remained fixed, interrupted only by the chance appearance of another viewer (Plate XXVI).

Passing from the first to the second interior, the viewer would

PLATE XXIII



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR I (DETAIL)

PLATE XXIV



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR I (DETAIL)

PLATE XXV



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR I (DETAIL)

PLATE XXVI



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR I (DETAIL)

be aware immediately of the tactile effects used (Plate XXVII). The texture of the straw-strewn floor underfoot to its visual extension in the grass-mat surfaced walls, implied an earthy organic quality. The wood disk served as a break in the tactile surface of the floor. Four large traffic cones marked off the entrance. These forms were repeated on the left wall in a row-on-row dispenser-like distribution. Complementing these projectiles were large reinforced plastic forms, positioned on opposite walls. The highly polished surface of these more refined forms implied a mechanized element. The location of this second interior required some source of artificial light. This light combined with natural light filtering through an orange-red window saturated the entire composition in a warm incubator-like stillness.

To this second interior, the viewer acted as the activating element. Whether as a participating agent (i.e. rearranging the components and moving about the straw), or simply as a moving form, the viewer's form appeared as an extension of this organic environment (Plate XXVIII).

To pass from the second interior to the third necessitated stepping over the dividing block separating the interiors (Plate XXIX). In this action one was conscious of a change in textures. This caused a sensation of arriving at another level, which was reinforced by the absence of exterior reference points obscured by a block-out of the

PLATE XXVII



"YELLOW INTERIOR" ENTRANCE TO INTERIOR II (DETAIL)

PLATE XXVIII



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR II (DETAIL)

PLATE XXIX



"YELLOW INTERIOR" ENTRANCE TO INTERIOR III (DETAIL)

lower half of the windows (Plate XXX).

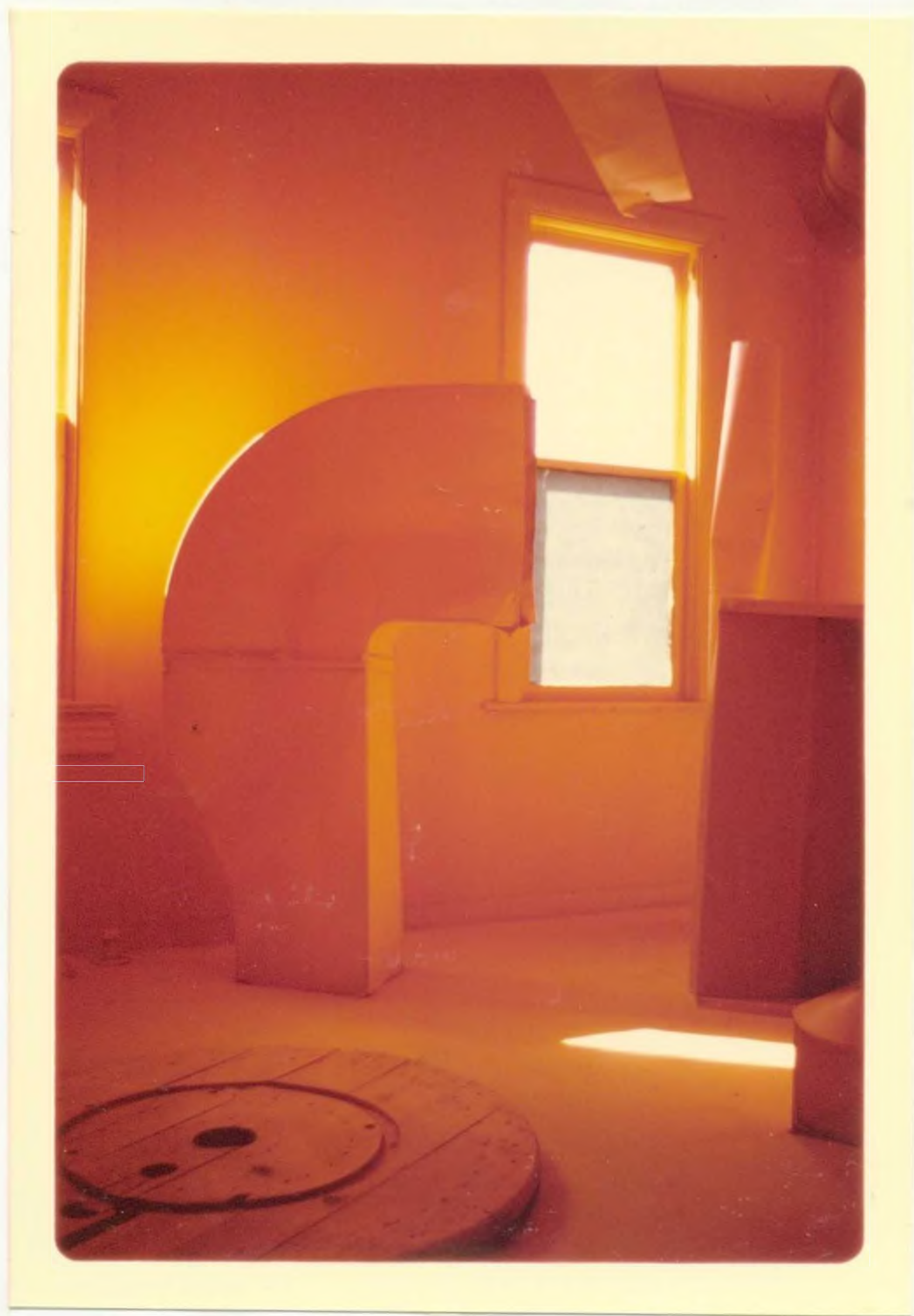
The step-over from the cushioned footings of the second interior to the hard-packed one of the third emphasized, also, the contrast between the organic and the inorganic. Here, the space was punched out by hard-edged, geometric forms. These 'found' metal-air vent sections and hulks were positioned so as to be directed at the viewer at almost any point in the space (Plate XXXI). Immobile, these mechanical forms gave the illusion of a potential aggressive force by their gaping mouths, arched necks, and snake-like extensions (Plate XXXII).

The entrance of the human form into this sterile interior set up a tension between the organic contoured element and that of the sharp-edged mechanical element. Although viewers congregated in this interior their separateness as forms was accentuated by these isolated static forms.

From this open-space the viewer continued on into the confined space of a thickly quilted passageway. As the viewer passes through this exit-way, he is met with a direct tactile sensation. Camouflaged beneath the canvas floor covering is a four-inch thickness of foam rubber. This padding continues to the quilted walls and ceiling (Plate XXXIII).

Ambiguous connotations are implied in this space treatment. The luxurious softness creates an almost suffocating closeness; a womb-like enclosure nullifies the viewer as an active agent. The human form

PLATE XXX



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR III (DETAIL)

PLATE XXXI



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR III (DETAIL)

PLATE XXXII



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR III (DETAIL)

PLATE XXXIII



"YELLOW INTERIOR" INTERIOR IV (DETAIL)

to this space becomes subtly dulled and absorbed into the softness.

It had been my purpose to create a static setting. In the course of attempting this it became increasingly apparent that there was an exclusion of electrified units. Except for the necessity of an additional light source in the third interior, no electrified light, sound, or movement was used.

This exclusion of any motorized, electrified unit represented an extension of a personal attitude of technology as basically a non-humanizing element, whereby, the individual becomes less and less a determining element of his own environment; mesmerized by television, desensitized by the sonic boom, mobilized by the automobile, satiated by programmed grocery-store music, and mechanized by the gadget.

The juxtaposition created by the familiar of house and the unfamiliar of the traffic yellow color treatment was a conscious attempt to shock the viewer to an awareness of his presence within the art form. This was most noticeable when "Yellow Interior" was experienced alone. It was at that time the viewer could more fully realize his presence as a moving, animated force within the interior, whether participating in the plastic sheet arrangement, or simply acting as a non-static form against this static setting.

The use of house for the Environment was successful in terms of the actual viewer response witnessed. In contrast to the traditional gallery-setting, the viewer exhibited a less conscious-of-self attitude.

There was active participation from the working of the plastic sheeting, to sitting on the straw-strewn floor, to touching the grass walls and objects, to jumping and lying prostrate on the cushioned floor of the last interior.

The only printed direction in the Environment was the "Shoes Off" sign at the entrance of the padded interior. This was observed, ignored, or missed from viewers who walked through, shoes on, to those who retreated back through the Environment to avoid this exit.

Most noticeable were the audible verbal responses voiced by viewers within the Environment: "What a gas!" to "This is art?" The reaction to the second interior seemed genuinely enthusiastic: A woman remarked, "I really like this--it's so sexy." A man ventured this comment, "I don't know if I should say--it's kind of naughty." A number of viewers to the second interior commented that they felt as if they were on another level or plane, such as a deck of a ship or on an apartment building roof. The viewer reaction to the fourth interior was most diverse. Remarks varied from non-reaction to a distinct revulsion, to a delight in its quiet confines--"I can't stand this!" to "This is great!"

As was originally planned, "Yellow Interior" was destroyed by the machines of a demolition crew. To the usual process of ending an Environment by dismantling it, this dramatic end exaggerated the implications inherent in the Environment as an art form which exists for those

who experience it, is of no monetary value, cannot be possessed, and is valuable only in essence.

V. IMPLICATIONS

The twentieth-century has been witness to a fantastic increase in the quantity and types of art forms. These departures from traditional representation are viewed as the artist's reaction to a lessening functional role in society.

Evidence of these departures are the inner-directed works of the first half of the century, which resulted in art becoming further estranged from society.

With the emergence of the picture shop and the museum in the last two centuries as a direct consequence of art's separation from society, art came to mean a dream world, cut off from real life, and capable only of indirect reference to the existence most people knew.⁴⁹

During the 50's and 60's improvements in advertising and the electrified communication medias prompted art's return to a more direct exchange with society. Art forms moved from inner-directed to outer-directed concerns.

In an attempt to relate more effectively art forms began to evidence appeals through visual-sensory devices. These were the viewer oriented forms of the object-forms, the Environment, and the Happening.

⁴⁹Kaprow, Assemblage, Happenings, and Environments, p. 183.

Viewer oriented works in the past had represented religious and political functions. The twentieth-century revival represented a renewed attempt to regain a functional role. The implied purpose of these contemporary forms seemed to be one of placing importance on the individual not only in relation to the art form, but in its larger implication of the individual's relationship to society.

This idea was made clear to me in a lecture by George Ortman at Walker Art Center in 1966. Ortman described his small figurative assemblages containing movable parts as implying a choice to the viewer to participate or not; to become involved or not. This he stated was symbolic of the responsibility each individual has in relation to others.

The Environment and Happening were conceptual extensions of Ortman's 'participation piece,' just as they were extensions of other viewer oriented object-forms. In this transition the element of 'choice' was replaced by an art form which directly involved the viewer. In the Environment and the Happening the viewer became the essential ingredient.

Particular to the later viewer oriented works of the Environment and the Happening was their temporal, impermanent quality. This was a definite change of attitude:

The willingness to renounce aspirations of timelessness and immortality posits an entirely new world view, one which shifts the cultural values from a death-oriented, commemorative, past-enshrining culture to a life- and present-oriented

civilization with a taste for the immediacy experienced in a temporary art consumed as it is created.⁵⁰

Inherent in the object form has been a tendency to exploitation as a commodity item. The transition from the object form to the non-object form of the Environment and the Happening transformed art to a non-saleable item. "Kleenex art" was the term used by Les Levine to describe these forms.

In contrast to the Environment and Happening is the highly technical, factory-made, artist-specified, machined object form: an art form concerned with technical manipulation representing an assimilation of the artist to technology.

The constant awareness of how his work is being abused by the culture, . . . haunts the contemporary artist, who simply cannot feign ignorance of the destiny of his work as a blue chip investment . . .⁵¹

An exception to the usual Environmental form is seen in the work of Harold Paris. Unlike most Environmental artists Paris creates an Environment of permanent forms (Plate XIX). Of symbolic significance is the fact that although permanent "Koddesh-Koddashim" will be sealed off from the public. Peter Selz comments on Paris' work:

. . . in a meaningful act of affirmative denial, creates a large environment, filling it "with all the wonder I can

⁵⁰Barbara Rose, "Problems of Criticism, VI," Artforum, May, 1969, p. 47.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 50.

evolve--all the love I project and summon forth" and then closes it, shuts it off for no one to see.⁵²

These later viewer oriented forms of the Environment and the Happening not only involved the viewer more thoroughly, but had implied a less materialistic, more people-oriented approach to art and life.

The specific function of modern didactic art has been to show that art does not reside in material entities, but in relations between people and between people and the components of their environment.⁵³

Opinions vary as to how these concepts will manifest themselves. Jack Burnham attaches a highly functional role to forms such as the Environment and the Happening, which he terms "systems":

. . . a systems viewpoint is focused on the creation of stable, on-going relationships between organic and non-organic system, be these neighborhoods, industrial complexes, farms, transportation systems, information centers, recreation centers, or any of the other matrixes of human activity . . .⁵⁴

In contrast to the schematic proposal of Burnham is the less schematic outcome envisioned by Morse Peckham, in which art will be more the balancing-out element in life:

. . . Peckham, "implies that the purpose of art in the technological society will be the same as that of art in earlier societies; to provide what life does not. . . . What will be missing in life

⁵²Selz, Art in America, p. 62.

⁵³Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," Artforum, September, 1969, p. 31.

⁵⁴Ibid.

will not be control, order and rationality, but release, disorder, variation, and spontaneity" . . .⁵⁵

Completing the introductory quote by Frank Gallo:

I recognize that art is residual, non-cultural, and non-vital . . . if art is ever to be vital again, it will have to be as a different form with a different name, unknown to the artist.

If these viewer oriented art forms have served to reawaken sensitivities to life as art and the viewer as an integral part of both as a determining factor, it will have served a 'vital' function.

⁵⁵Rose, "Problems of Criticism, VI," p. 46.

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