

CONDITIONS OF USE FOR THIS PDF

The images contained within this PDF may be used for private study, scholarship, and research only. They may not be published in print, posted on the internet, or exhibited. They may not be donated, sold, or otherwise transferred to another individual or repository without the written permission of The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

When publication is intended, publication-quality images must be obtained from SCALA Group, the Museum's agent for licensing and distribution of images to outside publishers and researchers.

If you wish to quote any of this material in a publication, an application for permission to publish must be submitted to the MoMA Archives. This stipulation also applies to dissertations and theses. All references to materials should cite the archival collection and folder, and acknowledge "The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York."

Whether publishing an image or quoting text, you are responsible for obtaining any consents or permissions which may be necessary in connection with any use of the archival materials, including, without limitation, any necessary authorizations from the copyright holder thereof or from any individual depicted therein.

In requesting and accepting this reproduction, you are agreeing to indemnify and hold harmless The Museum of Modern Art, its agents and employees against all claims, demands, costs and expenses incurred by copyright infringement or any other legal or regulatory cause of action arising from the use of this material.

NOTICE: WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

CHRIS BURDEN- EXPLANATION OF SOME RECENT PIECES

F Space: February 4-21, 1971

This piece was purposely not documented photographically. F Space is an industrial unit measuring 50' by 20' with 16' ceiling. In the right rear corner is a small 4' by 5' room with toilet and washbasin. The show consisted of three separate elements. The first was a polaroid camera mounted on a step ladder near the entrance and aimed at the door. Every person who entered the show was recorded photographically. Under no circumstances were these photographs given to the visitors. The second element was a 4' by 8' platform suspended 18" from the ceiling. Directly above one end of the platform, a rectangle was cut in the roof of the building. A scope was mounted over this opening which enabled the participant, lying on his back on the platform, to look into the scope (which fitted tightly around the eye area) and see nothing but sky. The scope flared out from the eyes at a great enough angle so that even the sides of the scope could not be seen. The platform was suspended from chains and was covered with white formica to facilitate maneuvering in the small space. Mounting the platform was accomplished by climbing a 14' step ladder. Since the ladder did not reach all the way to the platform, and because of the nature of the platform, participating in this piece was both difficult and frightening. The third element was me, sitting in the bathroom on a small box directly back from the door. A front door fish-eye viewer was installed in the door allowing visitors to observe me but not permitting me to know when I was being observed. The door was locked from the inside, and during gallery hours (Thursday-Friday, 6-10pm; Saturday-Sunday, 1-5pm) I sat on the box and did nothing.

an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

42
41
8
—
280
55
12
30 1347
14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

F Space: October 9, 1971

220 involved flooding F Space with 10-12" of water. Three other people and I waded through the water and climbed onto 12 or 14 foot ladders-one ladder per person. After everyone was positioned on a ladder, I dropped a 220 electric line into the water. The piece lasted from midnight to dawn, about 6 hours. There was no audience except for the participants.

Morgan Gallery: November 6, 1971

The photograph of the drawing sent to the Morgan Gallery explains the piece. For three hours I sat behind the panel without moving. No one could look up behind the panel due to a piece of board sealing the underside of the space. In conjunction with the piece, I wore a ski mask at all times during my stay in Kansas City from November 5-7, 1971.

Dreamy Nights

Poolerie, Graz, Austria

Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute, an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

35
38
38
41
37
42
41
8
—
280
55
12
30 | 347
14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

University of California, Irvine: May 6-20, 1971

A black serpentine path one foot wide was placed on the gallery floor connecting the front and rear entrances of the UCI art gallery. During the show I continually rode a ten-speed bicycle through the front entrance, along the path to the rear door, out and around the side of the building and back through the front. Approximate time for one full circle was 30-35 seconds. A sign was placed at each entrance to warn visitors. Gallery hours were Tuesday-Wednesday 9am-4:30pm;

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute, an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

35
38
41
37
42
41
8
280
55
12
30 347
14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	Avalanche	I.A.323

Thursday, Friday, Saturday 1:30-4:30 pm.

F Space: August 21, 1971

I was seated on a platform suspended 14' above the floor. My hair was braided and my face was covered with red body paint. Four 500 watt movie lights were placed around me facing the front entrance of the space. My voice was amplified by three speakers. As people entered the gallery, I repeatedly yelled at the to "get the fuck out, get out immediately". Because the sound was extremely loud and contained a lot of high frequency feedback, most people left quickly.

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute, an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

35
38
38
41
37
42
41
8
—
280
55
12
30 / 347
14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

December 22-24, 1971

I disappeared for 3 days without prior notice to anyone. On these days my whereabouts were unknown to anyone.

Maurice Tuchman and Jane Livingston asked me to do a piece. I proposed a two week camping trip with my wife in the Museum. The proposal was accepted and preparations were made which included camping equipment, food and authentic environment. Two days before the show was to begin, and after announcements had been mailed, the show was canceled by order of Mr. Donahue, Director of the Museum.

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute, an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

35
38
41
37
42
41
8
280
55
12

30 / 347

14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

LA County Art Museum: March 23-April 1, 1972

Maurice Tuchman and Jane Livingston of the LA County Art Museum asked me to do a piece. I proposed a two week camping trip with my wife in the Museum. The proposal was accepted and preparations were made which included camping equipment, food and authentic environment. Two days before the show was to begin, and after announcements had been mailed, the show was canceled by order of Mrs. Donahue, Director of the Museum.

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute, an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

35
38
38
41
37
42
41
8
—
280
55
12
30 | 347
14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

4/17/73

Jean,

I think I would like to use the gallery for about
two weeks. How about Friday May 25 through →
Saturday June 9?

Chris Burden

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and
walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled
with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath
the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle
while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute,
an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus
onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were
extinguished.

35
38
41
37
42
41
8

280
55
12

30 | 347

14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

4/17/73

Jean,

I think I would like to use the gallery for about
two weeks. How about Friday May 25 through →
Saturday June 9?

Chris Burden

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and
walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled
with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath
the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle
while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute,
an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus
onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were
extinguished.

35
38
38
41
37
42
41
8

280
55
12

30 | 347

14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

Oh, Dracula
Utah Museum of Art, Salt Lake City: October 7, 1974

I was invited to do a piece in the foyer of the Utah Museum by the director, E.F. Sanguinetti. The room was filled with Renaissance paintings of religious subjects. Using strips of adhesive tape, I made a large chrysalis for my body. I was mounted on the wall, replacing one of the paintings. A lighted candle was placed on the floor beneath my head, and another at my feet. An engraved plaque, similar to those identifying the paintings, giving my name, title of the piece, and the date was placed on the wall. I remained in the chrysalis during Museum hours, 9am to 5pm, on October 7. ✓

Dreamy Nights
Poolerie, Graz, Austria
Art as Living Ritual: October 15, 1974

The gallery was dark. I covered my body with vaseline and walked into a small recess in the wall containing a sink filled with Spiritus (alcohol). I lit the Spiritus and lay underneath the sink with my back to the audience. I blew on a police whistle while writhing violently on the floor. After about a minute, an assistant threw water into the sink splashing the burning Spiritus onto my body. Water was thrown into the sink until the flames were extinguished.

35
38
38
41
37
40
41
8

280
55
12

30 | 347

14

~~How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

Venice, California

Endurance

~~CHERRY GREEN~~

→

fully arbitrary

when I set up a time, ~~an arbitrary thing~~, I set

and

~~up something~~ I know I'm going to stick to for a period of time

~~and it's arbitrary~~, XXXX it's like some sort of limitation. I

know that something will happen like the Mexico piece¹, *The*

Baja Piece.

WS: Something like endurance?

Ah, partially, yeah. But it's more than that. ~~Something~~

~~also happens~~ it is endurance, but it goes beyond that. Let me

put it this way, in those pieces ^mendurance is one of the keys
to get the thing to happen.

LB: Just the means.

CB: Right. It's not necessarily the goal but if you don't

do it, it's not going to work, so you've got to do that first

to have whatever else is going to happen.

WS:

~~XXXX how do you conceive of the piece?~~

~~CB How do I go about thinking it up?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

2

WS: Can you ^{cite} ~~give~~ an example where you can explain how a piece came to your mind? I mean, you've already ^{did in} ~~given us~~ a sense ^{with} of this frustration of the ^{planes} ~~XXXXXX~~ going by, and something in your environment and you responded to the fact. ~~Well, um,~~
~~I suppose they're very different.~~

LB: ~~They're all different.~~

WS: ~~But~~ another example of how you came upon a piece.

CB: I think that what happens is I ^{have} ~~had~~ a lot of ideas and the ones I keep thinking about are the ones I finally ~~XXX~~ ^{KNOW} decided to do. ^{If} ~~They~~ keep coming back, I ~~KNOW~~ that there's something there. And if they fade out I don't think of them ^{any} ~~being~~ ^{more}. It's kind of a natural process.

WS: So does that mean that they're obsessions?

CB: No, because there's decisions. . . take the *Oberlin* piece. I was only there for two days ~~right~~ and that was the deal: I was there to do a piece, so I ^{didn't have} ~~had~~ preconceived ideas of what I was going to do. I had somethings I could have done, but I realized ~~that~~ when I got there, or even ^{I knew} before I

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

3

left the whole place was going to be so different that some-
thing there was going to trigger something. And then I'd been
in that car accident, ~~you know~~, and my *friend* got whipped
around in the car and I kept trying to relive that and I kept
looking at the ^{rafters} ~~XXXXXX~~ and thinking of target paintings.

WS: Was the target on the floor?

CB Yeah, there was a target down here, a basketball target,
center of the basketball court. First I went into this place
. ~~You know~~ I was there for a while
and I didn't see him for a couple of days. ~~And I~~

. And it all just came together. But it was a
culmination *of all of these things* I hate to use the word obsessive.

it's a long (Pause) I think about it; maybe that's true. I keep
thinking about something until it finally bugs me so much that
I've got to do it because I don't feel that I can do anything
else until I get that done.

WS How many pieces do you do a month?

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

4

CS I don't ^{even do} one a month. ~~Maybe do ten or twelve a year.~~

Maybe one every five or six weeks.

WS Do you work up to a piece during that time so it gets more and more?

CS Sometimes, you know, it just depends. It's just like the TV piece, ~~you know,~~ she kept ^{doing} talking about ~~KNINGXIN~~ the television show. ~~and getting it you know,~~ I kept calling the station, yeah let's do it, you know, well, have to think *of something*, and it really started to bug me and that's one of the reasons that ^{it} came out the way it did because I ~~kind of~~ said, "Look let's just do it. I mean, next Monday, let's do it. We'll just do a straight in-terview or something...because ⁱⁿ I couldn't do anything else until I got that thing ^{out of the way} ~~all~~ away. ^{I don't} ~~It's not~~ like working on a bunch of little things. ~~you know:~~ ~~get up in the morning~~ *I* really have to concentrate on doing *that one thing.*

WS Do you spend most of your day thinking ^{WORKS} ~~about new~~ ~~pieces~~?

CS Welllllll.....

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

5

Work Locker

What do you consider work?

CB Well, it's a lot of work to do to just get one piece together.

It doesn't seem like it but there's a hell of a lot of work to be done. Like the locker piece,

If took
~~It's like~~ three of four days to get ready for that. I'm just talking about ~~actually~~ work right in that room.

WS What did you have to do?

CB I had to get the locks. I had to figure out a way... I had water bottle above, a water bottle below, and I had to figure out a way to have those work ~~so I could get water and take a piss.~~

WS Did you ~~have to~~ get permission?

CB No.

WS *You didn't bother.* ~~permission?~~

CB No. I knew if ~~XXX~~ I asked they wouldn't let me do it.

And if ~~I~~ ^I asked, it would imply that they had the power to tell ~~me I~~ ^{me I} you couldn't do it, and they didn't have that power.

WS What else did you have to do to ~~get ready?~~ ^{Zerox} prepare that?

CB *I* I stopped eating; I made a mailer for it and sent it out.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

6

~~to~~ ~~any matter.~~

work

WS You went on a diet?

CB Yeah, I stopped eating about three or four days before. To get the little clamps I had to rip them off a science place. I had to call up the guy to get the key, you know, ~~just~~ all of that stuff, wait^{*It*} for him. ~~Just~~ all adds up.

WS What about after the work is done? You don't spend a great deal of time trying to get it out ^{*into the*} culture, unlike other people would take lots of photographs and write up statements and give them out to their galleries or *send them out as mailers.*

CB Ohhh welllllll, ^{*No*} I don't do that. I do do something. I take photographs and I *will* write something eventually. It's a real hassle, because the photograph part is something else I have to be thinking about, and a lot of times I don't think about it that much cause I'm too involved with doing it and really that should be the job of somebody else. I don't have the money and it's more than just having to hire a professional photographer but he'd be no good, you know what I mean. I'd have to have somebody

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

7

Photographs.

would dig what I'm doing and understand it, plus be a super
 photographer but usually. . . that ^{110 vet} ~~one tent~~ piece ^{was} with an ~~resident~~
~~because~~ and Alfred wanted to try out his wide angle lens and came over
 "I was a closet hippy."
 and did me a favor. This one I shot later. The camera broke
 during the piece. This was I got dressed up in
~~to document~~
~~to document~~
 I tried it out with that, as best I could.

WS Is that during the actual shoot?

Yeah, it's right there; ^{that's} ~~XXXXXX~~ the moment of impact. ~~It's~~
~~a time~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ it's a time exposure. I was pissed off about that
 actually. ~~I was really pissed off.~~ I thought I should have
 used a strobe. He was real happy about it.
 I don't know; that's just the way it worked out. The TV piece,
 I had a video crew there, ^a and video unit for myself and they
 screwed that up, no video, just the sound track. The bed piece.
 I was really in a hurry to get it done so I jumped into bed and
 then I couldn't... A friend of mine came by... arranged to come
 up once but that's the only photo I have of the piece. The shoot

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: Avalanche	Series.Folder: I.A.323
---------------------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------

July 10

Dear Liza + Willoughby,

Here are the photos Willoughby asked for when he was out here in June + May. I have had some trouble getting them all together and that is why they are late. Got a letter from De Marcos in Scotland saying tickets arrive in two weeks, then another saying that the thing was off. So I guess I am not going to Scotland.

I still can't find the original slide to T.V. hijack piece. I have enclosed a B+W photo copy used last fall by an underground Newspaper ~~the~~ "L.A." that folded. If this one isn't good enough I can send you the color print. The last photo #10 is very hard to get a good print from. It is a color neg. I am still working on it, ~~if~~ but I thought I would send this ^{print} ~~one~~ along now. Let me know whether you received this ~~and~~ package + anything else you need.

Chris Burden

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

October 16, 1972

On the evening of October 16, I placed two Xs constructed out of 16' beams in an upright position blocking both lanes of the Laguna Canyon Road. The timbers had been soaked in gasoline for several days. I set the Xs on fire and left the area.

Riko Mizuno Gallery: November 12, 1972

At 8pm I lay down on La Cienega Boulevard and was covered completely by a vanvas tarpolin. Two 15-minute flares were placed near me to alert cars. Just before the flares extinguished, a police car arrived. I was subsequently arrested and booked on the charge of causing a false emergency to be reported. I am awaiting trial on the charge.

*
up
date

2' wide, 3' deep. I stopped eating several days prior to entry, thereby eliminating the problem of solid waste. The locker directly above me contained 5 gallons of bottled water; the locker below me contained an empty 5 gallon bottle. The photograph shows all three lockers; number 5 is in the middle.

Prelude ~~XXX~~ to 220 , or 110, F Space, Costa Mesa, California, September 10-12, 1971. Photo:

I was strapped to the floor with copper bands bolted into the concrete. Two buckets of water with live 110 electric lines submerged in them were placed near me. The piece was performed from 8-10 pm for three nights.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

Chris Burden Captions.....Avalanche 8

Five Day Locker Piece, April 26-30, 1971, Irvine,

California. Photo: Diana ~~XXXX~~ Zlotnik.

I was locked in locker #5 for five consecutive days and did not leave the locker during this time. The locker measurements were 2' high, 2' wide, 3' deep. I stopped eating several days prior to entry, thereby eliminating the problem of ~~solid~~ waste. The locker directly above me contained 5 gallons of bottled water; the locker below me contained an empty 5 gallon bottle. The photograph shows all three lockers; number 5 is in the middle.

Prelude ~~XXX~~ to 220 , or 110, F Space, Costa Mesa, California, September 10-12, 1971. Photo:

I was strapped to the floor with copper bands bolted into the concrete. Two buckets of water with live 110 electric lines submerged in them were placed near me. The piece was performed from 8-10 pm for three nights.

p54

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

I Became a Secret Hippy, October 3, 1971, MOCA,
San Francisco.

The piece began when I took off all my clothes--
jeans and a T-shirt--and lay on the floor on
my back. A friend then hammered a star-shaped
stud into my sternum. I then sat in a chair
and had all my hair cut off. Finally I dresses
in the clothes shown in the photograph.

TV HIJACK, February 9, 1972. Television Studio,
Newport Beach, California. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Chris Burden and Phyllis Lutjeans.

On January 14 I was asked to perform a piece
on a local television station by Phyllis Lutjeans.
My first proposal was to eat the recorded show
as it was being taped and simultaneously broadcast.
The viewer would have seen me eating the show
he was watching. This proved technically impossible,
and I was getting little cooperation from the
staff of the station. After several other ~~XX~~
proposals were censored by the station, I agreed

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

3

to an interview situation. I arrived at the station with my own video crew so that I could have my own tape. While the taping was in progress, I requested that it be transmitted live. Since the station was not broadcasting at the time, they complied. In the course of the interview, Mrs Lutjeans asked me to talk about some of the pieces I had thought of doing. I demonstrated a TV hi-jack. Holding a knife at her throat, I threatened her life if the station stopped the live transmission. I told her I had planned to make her perform obscene acts. At the end of the recording I asked for the tapes of the show. I walked into the hall, unwound the reel and destroyed the show by dousing the tape with acetone. The station manager was irate, and I offered him my tapes which included the show and its destruction, but he refused it.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

4

BED PIECE

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, Market Street, Venice, California,

February 18-March 10, 1972. Photo: Gary Beydler.

Josh Young asked me to do a piece for the Market Street Program in Venice. I told him I would need a single bed in the gallery. At noon on February 18, I took off my clothes and got into the bed. I had given no other instructions and did not speak to anyone during the piece. On his own initiative, Josh Young had to provide food, water, and ~~XXXXXX~~ toilet facilities. I remained in bed for 22 days until March 10.

747, January 5, 1973, a beach near the Los Angeles airport. Photo: Terry McDonnell.

At about 8am ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ I fired several shots at a 747 with a small handgun.

56 RA

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

5

ICARUS, April 13, 1973, 823 Oceanfront Walk,
Venice, California. Photo: Barbara Burden

p1525 60

At 6:00 pm three invited spectators came to
my studio. The room is 15 x 25 and well lit
by natural light. Wearing no clothes, I entered
the space from a small room at back. Two
assistants lifted on to each of my shoulders
one end of six foot sheets of plate glass. I
The sheets sloped on to the floor at right
angles from my body. The assistants poured
gasoline down the sheets of glass. Stepping
back they threw matches and ignited the
gasoline. After a few seconds, I jumped up
sending the glass crashing to the floor.

SHOOT November 19, 1971, F Space, Santa Ana,
California. Photo: Alfred Lutjeans.

At 7:45 pm I was shot in the left arm by a
friend. The bullet was a copper jacketed
22 long rifle. My friend was standing about
12' away.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

MATCH PIECE March 20, 1972, Pomona College, Claremont, California.

Chris Burden and Barbara Burden. Photo: Philip Cleveland.

Two-thirds of the gallery floor was covered with white paper. A closed circuit television system was installed in the room. The monitor was placed facing the action ~~was~~ ~~XX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ so that the audience could watch the piece or see it in the monitor, but could not do both at once. I sat on the floor at the opposite end of the room. Two miniature TVs were placed so that I could view them while I made match rockets and shot them at my wife lying on the floor 15' from me. The rockets are made by wrapping the match head with foil and igniting them with ~~XXXXXX~~ another match. Range and accuracy are impossible to control. Some of the matches landed on ~~XX~~ Barbara leaving small burns and others landed in the audience. The piece began before the audience arrived and ended when everyone had left, about three hours.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

17

Tuesday night.

Dear Chris:

Here's the edited transcript--I pretty much like the tone and pace of the dialogue, though there are probably still a few possible improvements. . . If there's anything that's slightly off or inaccurate that you want to make ~~more~~ more explicit, or if you want to add anything (Baja piece?) do it.

Unless there are thousands of corrections, you can keep this copy. Call me collect (late) as soon as you've finished, and I'll mark the corrections on my copy, over the phone.

We'll use that title, unless you have ideas for a better one.

HTA

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

CHRIS BURDEN 823 Oceanfront Walk Venice

(213)
phone # 392-3169

Born: Boston, 1946. Grew up in Europe (France, Italy, Switzerland).
High school: Cambridge, Massachusetts.

School: Pomona College, B.A. 1969. University of California, Irvine,
M.F.A. 1971.

Exhibitions: F Space: February 4-21, 1971 (Polaroid, platform, bathroom)

La Jolla Museum of Art: March 26-April 25, 1971. Group
show: Baden, Burden, Nauman. (Proposed sealed live in
rejected by Museum in favor of older apparatus pieces)

① Univ. of California, Irvine: April 26-30, 1971 (Five-day
locker piece)

Univ. of California, Irvine: May 6-20, 1971. Graduate
Group Show. (Bicycle riding-approximately 1600 passes
through gallery)

F Space: August 21, 1971. (Shout piece)

F Space: September 10-12, 1971. (Prelude to 220 or 110)

Museum of Conceptual Art: October 3, 1971. (I became a
secret hippy)

F Space: October 9, 1971. (220)

Morgan Gallery, Kansas City: November 6, 1971. (You'll
never see my face in Kansas City)

F Space: November 19, 1971. (Shoot)

December 22-24, 1971. (Disappearing)

Newport Beach, Calif: February 9, 1972. (TV piece)

Market St. Program, Venice, Calif: February 18-March 10,
1972. (Bed piece)

Pomona College, Claremont, Calif: March 20, 1972. (Match piece)

Newport Harbor Art Museum June 10-11 1972. (Jaizu)

October 16, 1972. (Dos Equis)

Riko Mizuno* Gallery, Los Angeles: Nov. 12, 1972.
(Deadman)

Jan. 5, 1973 747 "Deadman"

M.O.C.A. Feb 28 "Fire Roll"

April 13 Icatas

Obertlin College May 1 Movie on the way down.

[Handwritten signature]

FOR STUDY PURPOSES ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

They develop a highly focussed sensibility.

They concentrate on living a certain ~~lifestyl~~

lifestyle, like surfers, car freaks and

motor-cycle gangs. I think the hippies on th

the West coast are more serious. The lack of

tradition here allows them to go farther out

in defining their own culture.

21
20
56 420
7 1/2

56
7
392

420
392
28

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series/Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------

46
43

CHRIS BURDEN: THE CHURCH OF HUMAN ENERGY:
An interview by WILLOUGHBY SHARP & LIZA SEAR.
~~Interview~~

WS: What do you think about *as a religious life* Chris Burden?

CB: I don't know, it seems pretty heavy to me. I think of that but I never. . . the reason I did the drawing is that it represents things that go on when I do pieces. There's a lot of energy going back and forth between me and the audience, not always with the audience, but with me.

or always feel it

What about examples?

Well I guess all the pieces . . .

What about that one?

What? This one?

Yeah, in relation to. . .

This one?

START

START → *When I talk about human energy* ~~that~~ *something in itself, just electricity.* It's a certain tension that ~~you can~~ *feel* when the audience is there, ~~or something~~ not the audience, but when I'm there and something's happening and there's an energy and I know it can affect people ~~when there's~~

ever if
when I'm doing piece

smoked *clays*

✓

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

2

~~audience.~~

WS What kind of energy?

CB ~~I don't know.~~ It's like everything's hyped up.

WS ~~Hyped up.~~

CB ~~Yeah. Um. I don't know how to describe it. U. That's~~
~~the only word I can use to really just verbalize it.~~

WS ~~Mr. What goes on in your mind when ~~there~~ ^I there a generalized~~
~~thing that goes on in your mind in ^{executing} ~~executing~~ these pieces?~~

CB ~~Yeah, there's something happening, ~~what?~~ I mean, when I'm~~
~~doing the piece it's different than everyday life. XXXXXX~~ It's a
~~different state of being and ~~it~~ it runs ^{under} ~~different~~ rules.~~

~~It what?~~

~~It runs into different rules~~

~~Mr. Um.~~

~~I mean, under a different set of rules~~

~~How would you describe it?~~

~~Well.~~ Everything matters; every single thing matters. Every
detail is important, ~~and I'd say more so than~~ ⁱⁿ regular life.

✓

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

3

~~More perfect~~

~~Yeah, right.~~ And it's crisper too. ~~It's like things can't~~
~~happen~~ . ~~I don't know; it's different. I'd like~~
~~to meak some~~ and show .

WS ~~Well,~~ What about the element of danger?

CS Ummmm, yeah, it's there, sometimes. ~~but not always.~~

~~That seems to be sort of . . .~~

~~is not always true; it's not always true.~~

~~I ~~AAAAAA~~ This piece isn't dangerous.~~

WS ~~What about the happy place~~

~~where you had the ~~stud~~ punded into your chest.~~

CS ~~Yeah. I thought it might hurt. It didn't hurt at all.~~

→ WS What kind of central concerns do you see yourself involved with?

CS ^{in the pieces I'm testing out} Well, some of ~~the~~ have to do with my own illusions or fan-
s. ^{in certain situations in my pieces} A lot of times things don't turn out
^{I think} the way they're going to. Does that make sense?

WS Well, can you give an example?

CS Well ~~I got things up and~~ the first one, the locker piece, I
thought it was going to be an isolation piece; it turned into

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

4

just the opposite. I didn't know what it was going to be, that's

why I did it. It turned out that I was seeing people every single

thirteen,
minute of the day for/fourteen hours a day, talking to them

all the time. ~~Like~~ *I* In the Secret Hippie Piece, I thought I was

gonna get hurt when I got that ~~thing~~ *stud* hammered in my chest, but

it didn't hurt at all,

there was absolutely no feeling. The Shoot piece, it was supposed

to be a grazed wound; we didn't even have any bandaids, ~~I wasn't~~

~~planning on going to the hospital or anything.~~ *It's* this power of

positive thinking, *you know.* You don't want to think of what might happen

so it's really ~~wierd~~. *that I* It's not ~~like you~~ consciously decide

not to think about it, like I had no plans of going to the hosf

pital; I was going to get drunk or something.

WS You didn't think it was dangerous?

CS I knew it was dangerous, but I figured that it would

~~just~~ work out perfectly, ~~It was supposed to be a graze wound,~~

the bullet went ~~It was supposed to~~ just nick the side of my arm. ~~It~~ *I* didn't

work out that way, but it wasn't bad. ~~It wasn't~~ a bad wound.

a But if he had done it, just ~~a~~ nick ~~I~~ I could have just...

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

5

So
WS It doesn't make very much difference whether it's a nick or *to you*
it goes through the arm.

CS No.

WS It's the idea of being shot at.

CS Yeah. The idea of being shot at *to be* ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ hit.

WS Mm-mm. Why is that interesting?

CS Well, it's something to experience. How can you know what
it feels like to be shot if you don't get shot? *It seems* ~~So that seemed~~
interesting enough to be working to do it.

WS Well, why is that interesting? Most people don't want to
be shot, do they?

CS Yeah, but everybody watches it on TV everyday. America is
like the big shoot-out country, ~~you know~~. And there's *always all these*
fantasies, ~~you know~~, about fifty percent of American folklore
is ~~about~~ *about* people getting shot.

WS Why do you think that is?

CS I wouldn't care to say it. I don't know.

WS *do you see* ~~well, is there~~ a lot of violence in the culture? *?*

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

6

CS Yeah. It's not always out front but it's there. That's what ~~was~~^{sixties} so exciting about the ~~fifties~~, there were all those big festivals and rock/riots in Berkeley. ~~I mean, that was interesting.~~ It was horrible but it was also interesting. If that was on TV, you could watch it.

? ~~last for five years~~

~~Well, that's different.~~

? ~~kind of pass over it, you know. It was something that was happening.~~

~~Yeah, but violence isn't the time when~~

? ~~Yeah, that's what I mean.~~

XX WS: You think everyone finds that interesting so...? ~~I'm trying to get at your particular focus on that.~~

CS Well I don't know. It seems ~~like~~^{that} violence is a peculiar aspect ~~of~~^{of} the American culture, much more so than ~~in~~ⁱⁿ European places.

WS ~~So your work is so hard?~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

7

~~What about California? Do you...?~~

~~What about California?~~

~~Well you said you wanted each~~

~~It would be interesting to have information which is a statement~~

~~about what it's like to be I don't know would you come out of~~

~~Southern California? *Yeah* *Yeah* *Yeah*~~

~~you do that to some degree. *I've* *I've* *I've* lived here~~

~~long enough, so it's *NTW.* *for* I've lived here *XXX* years.~~

~~six *for* years, I lived on the East Coast five years and~~

~~I don't know; it's hard to say. But it certainly has influenced *me*.~~

~~You identify with being here in California?~~

~~Yeah. I don't know. I don't know. I've lived in California.~~

~~I don't think of myself as a California artist, *as such*, *you know*~~

~~But I guess, since I live here... but it certainly affects work,~~

~~*The* *you know* What kind of work you do is affected by where you live,~~

~~obviously.~~

~~So what are the prevailing things that being here has to do~~

~~with your work? *WS: How has the* Being here has something to do with outdoors,~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

8

~~closer attention to~~ ^{and the} the sun, ~~is more of a~~ emphasis on one's body. *affected your work?*

of ~~It's~~ ^{be} not exactly that, cause I don't think of California as being eternally sunny. When you look at it, it's pretty foggy. It's foggy here in the winter for months.

~~I think it's a different kind of perspective, or something. I used to hate it, and I think that's why Lisa doesn't like it.~~

I have flashbacks where I see trees or I see a lot of green

^{and I feel} stuff real close like I'm

back in Boston or Cambridge,

~~it's a really weird flash and~~ ^{LA} In California the first thing

really weird.

that bugs you is ~~that the horizon is~~ ^{LA} It's not just the

horizon ⁱⁿ ~~between~~ LA and New York, ~~it's like~~ the East Coast

countryside is different and there's a different kind of per/

spective, ~~and~~ it's more spaced out, cause usually you're going

~~really fast~~ and you're looking at it in your car, and you're

usually travelling at sixty, seventy miles an hour. And it's

weird. . driving on the freeway; ~~I think~~ I do a lot of thinking *when I'm*

driving on the freeway. ~~There's nothing else to do. I mean~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

9

driving just becomes automatic and it becomes a skill apart from. . . you can go on whole trips. *If you're going* Driving for an hour and a half is like. . .

contemporary
WS So it's a more ~~manipulative~~ existence here.

CB Yeah, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ I'd say so.

~~I'd say so too.~~

~~I~~ or even

~~You certainly seem to be able to be alone in your work here,~~

~~then in New York~~

~~What about the TV hijack?~~

~~There you're putting someone else's life in danger. . .~~

LB: It seems to me that some of the pieces come out of your boredom and frustration with California.

CB That could be. *WS* ~~CB~~ I wasn't really putting her life at stake.

~~It was only an example. I realized when I did it that it didn't come off that way. In my head it was just an example of what I could have done, but since I was actually doing it, they freaked out and thought I really was doing it. I already had decided that I wasn't doing it. I wasn't going to slit her throat; I wasn't~~

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

10

going to make her do obscene things on TV, but ~~at~~ they weren't so ~~sure~~ ~~cause there it was~~. It was my TV and I was holding a knife at her throat, so they ~~kind of~~ had a flash that I was really doing it. She got really up tight and I had to keep reassuring her that I wasn't doing it. ~~XX~~ I said, Phyllis, calm down, ; I'm not really doing it, you know. She jumped out of her seat and *I was holding her hair* and apparently it really freaked them out because they're still talking about it.

"I'm still not sure Chris. I'm still not sure."

LB: ~~It's almost as if~~ *you* you're setting the stage for some thing violent or insane or bizarre and not carrying it through. *then you don't carry it through.*
(it's always "as if" ~~right?~~)

OB Well, in that piece I had other plans. I'd already... see, the TV taping part was just... I was ~~just~~ going to show her all the things I wasn't going to do, ^{be} cause they were uptight and ^{would never have played the tape} then they were never going to be able to play that tape ^{be} cause I was going to destroy it. I went into the control room and grabbed the tape and destroyed it. But in some pieces it's not. . .

*what about the fact that the two people
has "victimized" so far have both been women?*

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

11

~~I thought you said it was live?~~

~~They were taping it and it was live at the same time.~~

~~So it only went over once.~~

~~It went out once and it didn't start at the beginning. It started from like five minutes after it began.~~

WS A lot of these ^{acts} ~~things~~ seem ludicrous or insane. ~~Shooting~~

a gun at a 747, ^{how} is one to explain that?

^{I can tell you how I thought about it.}
CB, I was standing around ^{The boardwalk} ~~and~~ and

I ~~kind of~~ felt it too, you know, the reason I picked up on it was because I had that common feeling. These guys were griping

"Shit. about the airplanes. I wish I was out there." ^{Sure} I wish I

was out there too. You could see them fly out of the airport

and they'd fly around the air, especially at sunset and sometimes

there's a giant ? quality you know, and you know this helps

...even though it's only a gesture. I don't know. If the

people in the airplane could look out the window and see me

the bullet shooting at them, even if ~~XXXXXX~~ didn't get to them, they'd just die...

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

12

Qws

Does that make you feel better to do that?

Q Well, that piece was really wierd. ~~I kept thinking about it.~~

I thought about it for months before I did it. I kept putting it off. So ~~I finally just came down to:~~ . . I had to do it. I tried to make a silencer; that was the first plan, and I'd try to get books and stuff and ~~always.~~ .it always somehow seemed like a delay. So I ~~finally~~ finally set a date ~~and it was gonna be on the first,~~ January ~~XXXXXX~~ 1, 1973, but it got screwed up; that's why ^{it was} ~~it's~~ on the fifth. And I decided to do it without the silencer and ~~I got.~~ .It all came together. It's real funny. Sometimes pieces come together right at the end. I ~~got~~ ~~some blanks.~~ I figured out if I went out to the beach and shoot at shorts, which were — — — and don't go as far either. And I got some blanks and I shot the blanks off before and I had them in my pocket, empty blank cartridges plus a box of full cartridges, and after I shot the bullets off I took those shells out and I had a little holder in the sand so I could pop ^{and I put} it open, ~~so that~~ the blank s that were shot off. . . so if the cops came down, I had a photographer too, right? So

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

13

I'd say ⁷look, this guy is ^aphotographer, we're doing a thing,
the blanks, see these are empty blanks ..."

So then they'd buy it. I was still kind of worried about it.

WS But then you found that it didn't make very much noise?

CS Well, in my head I built it up how loud it was going to be and

I figured ~~any~~ ^{anybody} out on the beach or anybody within eyeshot

would hear it, ~~and~~ I did it over near the airport with ~~these~~ ^{this}

big bluffs and you can really see people and I realized that

~~XXXXXX~~ they were really far away and probably couldn't hear.

It was ^{the sound} weird. I thought ~~it~~ was going to be ten times louder than
it was.

WS Well, that's a constant in your work that you think of it

as one way and it comes out very different.

CS Well that's one constant. Another constant is that

#####

on to page 1

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series/Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

8

~~XXXXXX~~

piece I got a photographer. *And I have a Super 8 movie of it.*

WS What is the art in it?

CB *The* ~~That~~ art in it? In what?

WS Well, why is it art?

CB What else is it?

WS Theatre?

CB No, it's not theatre. Theatre is more *grossly*, you know what I mean?

Uhhhh.

~~I don't know... I couldn't tell the difference between...~~

~~that's what... it seems like bad art is theatre.~~

WS ~~Is what?~~

CB ~~Theatre, I don't know, to me anyway.~~

WS ~~Why is that?~~

CB ~~I don't know. It seems like theatre is lighter but you~~

~~acknowledge that it's theatre whereas this isn't so much theatre.~~

*Getting shot is for real... lying in bed for ²² days...
It's not theatre, it would be theatre if I just stayed ⁱⁿ there
for a few hours*

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

9

~~getting lost in it~~
~~It's not theatre; it would~~
 be theatre if I ^{just} stayed there for a few hours or went home
 everyday to a ~~big~~ giant dinner, but ~~like~~ if you're staying there
 for a long time, it's not theatre anymore, ~~you know~~.

~~WS Who do you do the pieces for? Yourself?~~

~~CS Yeah, I mostly.~~ ^{Another reason is} I mean, there's other ~~things~~ too, but
 mostly ~~sthhh~~ I think they're visual too. I think ^{that's maybe}
^{they're not} I usually don't talk during them and I ^{have} think up a
 fantasy about how they would look, like remember ^{I was} describing the
 shoot piece and the bullet coming up towards the people and
 stuff, maybe that's just a fantasy but it's a visual ^{one} thing too.
 like in ^{I can} the way ^{its laid out} and the room and everything
 they don't play ^a the part in the piece. I mean, ^{it} becomes part
 of the fantasy too; it ~~was~~ a visual fantasy.

~~WS So a little more about that. What do you mean a visual fantasy?~~

LB: It's more of a visual fantasy than ^{you're} ~~seeing~~ ^{imagining} himself in a cer-

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

10

tain role and acting it out.

^{guy}
CB: Right, ~~right~~.

LB: Well, look at the photographs. ~~The impact is primarily visual or it's at least as important that it's a visual impact.~~

CB: But I think that's why you asked me why you are. . . ~~I mean. . . you know it goes more than visual but I think~~ I think of it in visual terms more than literary terms, ~~or as you would say, role terms.~~ I always see myself as Chris Burden; I never see myself as anybody else.

LB: You don't see yourself as playing a part.

^{Yes Right}
CB: ~~Ma~~ and I think that actors do see themselves as different people. And that's something else.

LB: Visual performance. Do you see it as a performance?

~~u~~ Yeah.

LB: ~~In a very extended sense. In the sense that there's~~
an audience.

CB: Yeah, some of them are more a performance than others,

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

11

really.

LB: Some are performance situations.

Yeah, ~~some have sort of strictly performance situations~~

like the *Oberlin* one, ~~the sheet one~~, the 747 one, there's no audience really.

LB: No, that's a private performance, ~~except that~~ you have to build up to it and perform ~~but that's not~~.

CS This was a performance / there were two people who were supposed to come and a third person came in the end. Uhh, that was for two people. I had Roger and Charlie Hill help me; ~~there were two helpers~~ and Barbara was taking pictures. There were more people involved in the piece than there were people watching it. ~~I guess this wasn't really a performance; that's part of something else.~~

LB: In a sense people who look at the photographs are the audience.

CS yeh, or even people who hear about it ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ by word of mouth.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

12

WS: ~~What kind of a public do you think you have?~~

CS: ~~What kind of a public?~~

WS: Who's your public?

CS: Uhh, I think it's mostly art people, but there are some other people who've heard about XXXX. . . ~~you know the shoot~~ *has got around* and in some ways it's kind of bad.

LB: Cause they focus on the sensational aspect of it?

CS: Yeah, yeah exactly. After that little ~~thing~~ *it* in Esquire,

~~these radio stations would call and it was really~~ *up* ~~fucked.~~

at ~~It was like~~ six in the morning ~~and finally~~

~~This guy from Texas would be calling and you'd hear the bleeps~~ *called, I'd*

on the phone: "Bleep. Hi! This is *Don Steel* on WKEP in Texas. ~~And~~

~~Are you Chris Burden?~~ *And*

~~Yeah.~~ "Are you the artist?" Yeah. "What are you going to

do next?" ~~my~~ *interested in* It was really wierd. ~~they weren't~~ what I was

into, you know. *They're not*

LF: ~~Well~~ Well why do you think your work lends itself to that

response? *(become it seems like a stunt)*

might come a little bit

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

13

~~LB: It's obvious isn't it?~~

~~Some people that
of it as a stunt.~~

~~CB: Yeah, I think people have that feeling sometimes.~~

LB: If it were done for different reasons ^{in a diff. context} it could be a ~~XXXXXX~~ stunt.

CB: Yeah, it could be. Getting shot could be a stunt.

That's another thing. I only do the ^{pieces} things once; ~~I'm not going to~~
~~do anything over; there'd be no reason. But~~ getting shot
is something you could do for a circus over and over ~~again~~ and
over. ~~What was your question?~~

~~WS: I've forgotten.~~

~~CB: Why does your work lend itself...?~~

LB: Well, there's sort of a gestalt ~~you know~~. If you just
see it as a certain act that was performed by a person it could
be performed in some cases ^{either} by a lunatic or someone ...
a publicity stunt; it's the reasons for doing it and the way it's
done ~~and~~ the context. . .

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

14

~~MS: That's what we're trying to get at.~~

~~LB: Yeah, ~~know~~, that's what we've been discussing, that's~~
what gives it a different configuration. You can't ignore that
and ~~just~~ seize on either just the visual aspects or the per^or-
mance aspects and not take the rest into account. There's also
a very clear consise ~~methodical~~ way in which all the pieces, and
economical way in which the pieces are carried out. They don't
look as though they're ~~done in a rush or impulsively~~. It's the
sort of end result of ^{a long process} ~~not always a long process in time, but~~
a very intense process isn't it?

CB: Yeah, I think that's what I was talking about when I
was talking about the ^{pre}crisper than, I don't know, *Theatre*

LB: *Plan Theatre*,

CB: Yeah, yeah.

LB: I think art performances or visual performances are
usually much more focussed in ~~intention~~ ^{a keen} . . . There's usually one
image or one fantasy that you're not trying to build up a plot

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

15

or development. There's usually a fairly strong simple idea.

WS: The word visual performance ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ seems to be an interesting one, which hasn't been used before.

LB: Yes it has.

WS: Visual performance?

LB: ~~The whole issue of TDR talks about completely different things which have nothing to do with Chris or say Vito's work or a lot of people we think of. . . it's a way of taking the emphasis away from theatre and yet still bringing in some of the connotations of performance, because some of the ~~in~~ are here, just as they are in Vito's work .~~

WS: I mean, it hasn't been used in ~~an~~ ^{an at} context before.

LB: But economy seems to be. . . economy ^{of} media presentation timing. . . I guess some of them go on for a long time, but it's kind of a static time isn't it?

WS: It either seems to be very long or very short. A few seconds or. . .

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

16

That's not true.

BB: /The TV piece lasted an hour and a half, and that piece

I did ~~XXXX~~ in what two separate nights , three separate nights

for two hours and it ~~was~~ actually had regular gallery hours ~~you know.~~

LB: The time element/^{is}always crucial, though.

CB: Yeah, yeah it is.

LB: You couldn't decide arbitrarily when to stop the piece.

CB: Well, I sort of did with the fact that it was ^{twenty-}~~XXXXXX~~two days.

It could have been eighteen, you know, this is arbitrary, but it

couldn't be a day or two. Two weeks would have been different.

In fact this show was planned to be two weeks long when I decided

what I was going to do, then Josh sent out a mailer that said

three weeks, so what could I do? Do the piece for two weeks and

then get out of bed; that would be really shitty you know. I don't

think he did it intentionally, but I had to do it for three weeks,

cause the mailer said that. I couldn't like do it for two weeks

andXXXXX

. It had to fit the thing. ^{That was} given that im-

formation.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

17

WS: You feel pretty closely tied to the art context, don't you?

On Yeah.

WS I suppose *then to* someone like ~~can~~ Lowell Darling, Ed Ruscha?

CS I don't know.

~~WS: come closer to the art context than Ed Ruscha.~~

~~CB: I don't know Lowell Darling so he seems to be~~

~~Actually sometimes I ~~XXXXX~~~~ I feel really weird sometimes.

because there's not that many people I really. . . ~~I~~

~~Nobody's~~ *N* Nobody's really doing what I am, ~~so it's kind of. . .~~

that's why I was really happy about that ^{art} Margery Wilson girl.

~~You know, we had some things in common. Have some things in~~

~~common with Barbara Smith and stuff. We can talk about things~~

~~you know, but there's not that many people really that. . .~~

LB: *The whole* ambience here ^{*argues*} against doing anything extreme or that requires any heavy concentration.

CB: What to do something. . .

LB: In California.

earlier

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>LA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

18

CB: ~~It requires something very heavy concentration?~~

LB: No ~~it's~~ ^{argues} ~~ambience~~ against doing anything which. . .

CB: Weeeelllll.

LB: ~~It~~ is very focussed.

CB: Focussed, yeah.

LB: And yet it seems to call for it.

WS: That's what art is; art is focus. That's what painting is, sculpture is; that's what this is. Art is ~~meant~~ put out to be focussed on.

CB: Do you think that's inherent in the structure of LA?

LB: I guess if you're a certain kind of person you focus things where ever you are. There's nothing in the environment which kind of drives you to it.

CB: ~~In some things it seems like. . .~~ In a way it's an advantage and it's a disadvantage. ~~Uhhh, in some ways there's~~

So much else to do that art is ~~almost~~ ^{like} not important, you know.

You know what I mean?

WS: But isn't that the same everywhere?

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

19

LB: Welll.

~~WS: It's the same in New York.~~

CB: It seems like in New York there's ~~just~~ more. . .yes. . .
there's more people doing art, ~~it's not all art that I kind of dig~~
~~but there's just more.~~ . .it seems like there's more art pres-
sure ~~so to speak.~~

LB: Well, New York isn't particularly hedonistically oriented;
California certainly is.

CB: Yeah, there's that, but what the hedonism does is that
there's some people who ~~in a sense~~ become artists like surfers
or something, guys who ~~just~~ go out there and tan their bodies
all day, you know, there's a certain kind of life-style ~~that's~~
so ridiculous/~~sort of~~ ~~away of living that you know.~~ I don't know.
Do you know what I'm talking about or not?

?

CB: Yeah, people who spend all their time living a cer-
tain way, living a certain style, more so than in New York.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

20

LB: But I don't think art necessarily comes out of that.

CB: I don't know. It seems. I don't know.

Don't you?

WS: Mm-mmm. Higher contrast? "The TV hijack? MM-mmm.

CB: ~~XXXX~~ Do you?

LB: Kathy ?

CB: No I'm saying

it's a little going

WS: Yeah.

LB: Mm-mmm.

WS: It's because of the blue background.

CB: The thing I sent you in New York is a screen with
you know with little dots on it, taken from the LA ~~opera~~ *whole*
I don't know what these things are. They aren't photographs
but they have little dots on them.

WS: News, like news .

CB: But they're photographic emulsion. It's
locked and stamped and then there's .

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

21

WS: What more do you want to say about uh. . .your work?

~~This will kind of be a statement.~~

CB: Nothing. X Uhhhh.

WS: Is it difficult to make?

CB: What? My stuff?

WS: Yeah.

CB: Yeah. It is.

WS: In what way? *(Long Pause)*

LB ~~CB~~: Well he talked about the 747. He said it was hard to
get himself ^{to} in the state. . .

CB: It's always easy to put it off. I mean um. . .it's
always easier to go to *the photolabs* or do something else. ~~U~~

LB: Follow the line of least resistance.

CB: Right. I'm also always worried you know. . .I don't know,
it's really wierd. . .I always worry whether it's gonna be good
or it's gonna be good enough or something and then it seems like
as a piece gets closer, it's ^{always} ~~only~~ at the last minute a lot of
problems just solve themselves. Once I make an absolute decision

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

22

that it's gonna happen at that certain day, a lot of little
place
things just fall into ~~xxxxx~~. Like figuring out the blanks and
things. They just fell into place. ~~um~~ Once I made the decision
that I was ^{ix}going to use a silencer, that I was going to do it
that day.

~~LB: Once you made the decision to use what?~~

~~CB: Not to use a silencer, that it will happen on such and
such a date. It's like a deadline. It's a way of forcing yourself
to...for things to happen. Like this piece, the
everything falls into place.~~

~~WS: So then it's easy.~~

~~LB: No.~~

~~CB: No, it's not because um.~~

~~before I started out. You have to get
hyped up to do it.~~

(end side one)

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

23

~~CB: I think ah. . . we talked about this once before in the~~
video interview
~~San Jose.~~ I know that after each piece I feel ~~kind of~~ different.

There's a rush ~~that happens and it's like I don't know, you~~ I
really feel on top of things. It's like ~~I~~ have body knowledge
that other people don't have, ~~and it's a wisdom or something.~~ *some wisdom.*

~~It's really strong.~~ *I* It's a really strong feeling ~~XXXXX, maybe~~
~~it's an illusion or something, I don't know.~~

~~LB: Well it's a sense of accomplishment~~ *partly* ~~possibly.~~

~~CB: Yeah. But it's more than just that. It's different than~~

~~It's~~ *I'm* ~~like you're~~ party to a certain body of information that

endure
since they didn't ~~do~~ it, they can't have it/

LB: Other people can't have it.

CB Right.

That's ~~That's~~ something really basic about *that* experience.

CB And ~~from~~ the pieces they pick up *to* some *degree* but it's always
vicariously. ~~I'm the main, I'm the main receiver.~~

LB: You're the prime mover.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>LA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

24

CB Well, I'm the main receiver, of that uh... I mean The

~~Locker Piece~~, I know it affects other people. This guy was thinking of moving into a studio and he was real small and stuff and it didn't have any plumbing and he didn't know whether he could do it or not. He figured... after he say me do the locker piece... I mean that's really crude you know?

~~XXXXXXXX~~ LB: Mmm.

But I think some people get a certain something off of it, even if they only hear about it.

WS: What something?

LB: Do

~~you~~ think your work is a criticism of vicarious experience in a sense. I mean, ^{I know} it's not intended as such but ~~in fact that's what it is...?~~

CB A criticism ^{of} vicarious experience?

LB: Because ~~you~~ ^{that} you were saying ~~before~~ a lot of people's knowledge of all kinds of ~~endurance and suffering~~ ^{and} extreme conditions of being is known only ^{at} second-hand through the media, which isn't a form of

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

25

experience. ~~It's a form of weeding out, if you like.~~

CB Yeah, I think that's true.

WB So much so that people can't even respond to. . .

CB To the real thing.

WB ~~cliche, right? They can't respond to the real~~

~~thing. They can only respond to it if they see it after it's
by the media
been processed, for the reader cause they've just been blunted~~

~~... I don't think your stuff is trying to moralize or
anything like that.~~

WB No.

WB It's almost off-hand in a way. | There's something casual ~~about~~

~~about it even though there's nothing casual in the execution.~~

CB I think that ~~the things~~ ^{that} you experience first hand. . .

~~also~~
~~like everything else is a myth sort of. . .~~

WB A myth?

CB ~~Well, Yeah, And the things you experience first hand~~

~~become a myth but at the time they weren't; they were real,~~

you know. And those ~~are~~ the things you really remember. I don't

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

6

know. That's not really true, is it? ~~I guess~~ *my* pieces have
a lot to do with the myth ^{*my own myth*} I think ^{*of*} what they're going to be like
sometimes and in actuality of course what actually happens there's
the *Murano* piece. I mean the myth that the police aren't
going to come.

LB It's a myth of having more power and control over the way
things work out than in fact you actually do, but it's ~~that's~~
exciting because that's what leads you to do ~~anything~~ *anything*.

LB I think sometimes I know what's going to happen. ~~is~~ Not
always. . . a lot of them are open but I have a plan of how it's
going to come out and sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't.

LB Well that's true of almost any action you undertake though
isn't it? There's a certain unknown and there's a certain. . .
~~I mean, you'd never be able to do anything if you couldn't at~~
~~least partially predict.~~ . . you'd be paralyzed if you ^{*could*} anticipate
every single contingency.

But sometimes it's funny how far off you are. I mean the il-
lusion in that shoot piece of ^{*how*} ~~how long~~ ^{*long*} that bullet was going to
be. It was off by such a magnitude that when it actually happened

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

27

it was shocking, absolutely shocking. I think maybe that's true. . ~~XXXXXX~~ maybe that is a constant. I fantasize something to do and then I do it and then when I'm actually doing it it hits me that it's actually happening and when that first time that I actually realized each time it's always like super-strong in every piece.

LB Does the reality than become stronger than the original fantasy and replace the original fantasy, or is it hard to accept the reality of the piece as you carry it out?

GB Well.

~~It's probably different each time actually.~~

CB Well there's just that first shock I just realize it's actually happening and Jesus Christ! this is the way it's gonna be. And it doesn't matter whether the piece is happening two days or months or you know or a thousandth of a second. Like in the shoot one I had a lot of trouble getting the gun and the plane lined up and OK ^{man} you've got it , you got the camera focussed and I get ready and stuff and this plane's not the right time and wait there's somebody coming down the beach and ^{finally} there was one

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

28

Reject

plane and we said hey man this is the right plane and it was really wierd. I mean, right then I realized I was gonna do it, and up to that instant I somehow it hadn't happened, ~~you know~~ ~~what I mean.~~

LB Did you fantasize a lot about doing things that you couldn't do when you were a kid?

CB Uhhhh, maybe. ~~I remember I~~ I was in a couple of casts a couple of times.

LB You were in what?

CB Casts. Casts for broken legs and stuff. I was really old enough to know better. I was like eight or nine years old; I knew you couldn't fly but after being in a cast for six or seven months you know you start having this powerful fantasy that if the cast was removed you'd be able to fly and that's very common.

LB Yeah.

WS: Have you ever done a piece and then rejected it?

CB Rejected it?

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

29

WS: Well, executed it, had it photographed and then destroyed the photos?

CB Nooo. I've done pieces and not photographed them.

WS: How critical are you of the pieces?

~~CB that was pretty good but that could have been improved~~

~~No, no I don't.~~

~~Next time I ought to do that. Next time . . .~~

CB think I do make some decisions, ~~like~~ like I'm always pissed off that I didn't get good photos. I'm trying to work that out.

It always seems like something fucks up; ^{it's just}unbelievable. So I

always think, Jesus Christ, why didn't I make a movie of that?

What the hell was I thinking about? Or why didn't I have somebody there taking pictures? ~~Just sometimes I got~~

~~Yeah~~

~~If I'd had more time I might have done things a little differently, but, I don't know, it all works out to the good, kind of like the Oberlin piece,~~

I wanted to do *it a lot higher* and if I had say two days, or three days I probably would have gotten a bigger ladder and hung myself

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>I.A.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------

30

Released

higher up, but then I would have gotten crunched, you know, so
 . . . it's hard to say. Maybe I thought of that piece because I
 didn't have enough time to think about doing it, ~~or I don't know.~~
~~When I've done~~ *S* some of the fire pieces *have* they've been real tricky.
 It still doesn't show up but they were supposed to take a lot of
 those things together and they didn't cause Roger panicked and
 kept breaking his matches off the heads ~~and stuff~~ and I realized
 that I should have ~~liked~~ practiced with him, ~~and~~ I said, well
 next time, ~~you know~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

WS: But it would be artificial to rehearse it wouldn't it?

~~CB: No, that was part of the visual affect of it, you know to~~
~~have these things. . .~~

CB: No. I did practice with him ten minutes before. They
 break the glass and I ~~say~~ this is the way it's going to be ~~XX~~ and
 stuff
~~XXXX~~, but I realized that to get it down I'd have to do
 it not just once or twice but a bunch of times, so they wouldn't
 be at all freaked out, *because S* ~~you know~~ ~~the~~ gasoline, you know,
 and they started ~~freaking~~ *2* out. In the movie you can see Robert

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection: <i>Avalanche</i>	Series.Folder: <i>IA.323</i>
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

~~like he's supposed to. . . I don't know.~~ See, it
 wouldn't have been the piece, It wouldn't really have been
 happening. It's ~~completely different,~~ *It's* ~~They wouldn't ever~~
~~have lit it,~~ *It* they would have just gone through the motions,
 so it would be more. . . it would ~~just be~~ *have been* more choreographed.
~~or something like that. So they just would organize and they~~
~~wouldn't bump into each other or something.~~ Um. In the shoot
 piece, I kept practicing, aiming, you know, practice shooting
 so you ~~could~~ *can* sharpen up a little ~~bit.~~ . . . But you're right, I
 can only experience being dropped on the floor,
 once; I can only experience ~~lit~~ *e* getting those things lit close
 to me once, ~~cause,~~ *he* if I do it again I'll know what to expect, ~~and~~
~~time around.~~
~~LB:~~
~~SB:~~ Well *T* the unknown's gone now. I mean, *e* there's no point
 in ever getting shot again. I certainly hope I'm not shot any
 more.

#####

use