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Che fare

Primavera 1970 • Numeri SEI e SETTE

BOLLETTINO
DI CRITICA
E AZIONE D'AVANGUARDIA

cominciato nella primavera 1967 -

ESECUTIVO: Arnaldo Pomodoro - Francesco Leonetti - Roberto Di Marco

LA SCELTA ANTAGONISTA

a) la linea politica

Editoriale del « Che fare », I: Sui principi della pratica d'avanguardia nelle masse [PCdI m-l, PR m-l, APM, UCI m-l] — Documenti e interventi politici: Il processo di unificazione m-l; Per la critica dell'operaismo; Il dibattito nel movimento studentesco — Temi marxisti-leninisti in Italia e in Francia (Che cosa è la RC) — Il socialismo dei gorilla (documento del CC del MIR, Perù).

STORIOGRAFIA. I, Le riviste degli intellettuali militanti in Italia negli anni Sessanta, dai 'Quaderni rossi' al marxismo-leninismo — Nel centenario di Lenin: il giuramento di Stalin.

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b) il 'decentramento' ideologico

Prefazione alla seconda puntata; letture esemplari (Blanchot, Fanon, Chiang Csing) — 30 scritti, documenti, dichiarazioni — tre tavole di riferimento: la carriera dell'intellettuale; lavoro produttivo e lavoro improduttivo; il lavoro intellettuale al servizio del popolo (*relazione del segretario nazionale dell'U.C.I. m-l*).

LIBELLI. La mostra delle mostre d'arte nel mondo | Un volantino d'avviso | Americana, antologia letteraria | La scuola come le prigioni | Il revisionismo, ovvero: Per Marx contro Althusser | Il Living rimosso dall'Italia | La scienza della politica, consiglia del re.

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APPENDICE: il piano capitalistico e revisionistico per gli anni Settanta.

Tutti i comunicati del comitato di difesa e di lotta contro la repressione di Milano — Editoriale del « Che fare », II: Sulla crisi politica della borghesia.

Indici - riassunti.

I collaboratori di « Che fare » dal N.º 1 al 5, e in questo N.º 6 e 7.

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a) la linea politica

Editoriale - I:

SUI PRINCIPI DELLA PRATICA D'AVANGUARDIA NELLE MASSE

Qual è, ora, l'elemento comune dei gruppi marxisti-leninisti operanti in Italia, apparentemente distinti fra loro in contrasti, scissioni, rettifiche, quasi senza riconoscersi l'un l'altro?

Nel porsi la domanda, va detto però: 1) che noi riconosciamo giusta essenzialmente questa lotta interna e polemica, senza nostalgie unitarie che provengono tutte dal frontismo (alleanza con la borghesia) escogitato come rimedio contro il fascismo e divenuto istituzionale e sprovvisto di analisi delle classi; 2) che nella situazione maturata nell'autunno 69 (di lotta politica della classe operaia, anzitutto e di repressione « fascista ») è non solo auspicabile ma giusta una tendenza di unificazione dei gruppi marxisti-leninisti, non per solidarietà o comuni obiettivi, ma perché il rapporto con le masse e i loro movimenti — che non trovano uno strumento politico e tendono addirittura a investire della loro esigenza il sindacato — è un rapporto

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Nei numeri 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 di « Che fare » sono stati dati interventi e testi di

Gianni Scalia, Toni Del Renzio, Mario Spinella, Allen Ginsberg, Paolo Valesio, LeRoi Jones, Gaetano Testa, Enzo Schiavina, Davide Bigalli, Giorgio Celli, Tim Hall, Pietro Bonfiglioli, Luca Fontana, Erica Freiberg, Isabella Leonetti, Gianni Menarini, Luigi Pestalozza, Ferdinando Albertazzi, Antonio Napoletano, Arturo Fittipaldi, Felice Piemontese, Luciano Caruso, Alfredo De Paz, Assunta Valesio, Enzo Melandri, Livio Marzot, Franco Basaglia, Giovanni Jervis, Gianfranco Minguzzi, Agostino Pirella, Federico Stame, Erwin Goffman, Franca Ongaro Basaglia, Miriam Sumbulovich, Mario Dondero, Ginetta Vittorini, Michele Perriera, Paolo Lionni, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Cesare Fiorese, Elio Di Piazza, Kynaston McShine, Giuseppe Morandi, Nicoletta Stame, Roberto Fracassini, Monica Brunatto D'Amico, Dionys Mascolo, Gianna Pirella Eigi, Mario Orfini, Gabriella Amaniera Leonetti, Carlo Salomoni, Gruppo universitario di Trento, Commissioni di lettere e filosofia di Bologna, Bitta Leonetti, Maria Cristina Petrella, Barnett Newman, Ugo Mulas, Gabriella Drudi, Harold Rosenberg, Toti Scialoja, Thomas B. Hess, Gastone Novelli, Arturo Schwarz, Michel Leiris, Edival Ramosa, Teresa Montebello Pomodoro, Delfino Insolera, Carla Cerati, Saverio Caruso, Assistenti di fisica di Bologna, Federico Governatori, Andrea Zanzotto, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Franco Berardi, Stefano Bonaga, Enrico Castellani, Romano Luperini, Aldo Tagliaferri, Comitato di base ATM-Deposito Molise di Milano, Giovanni Filippini, Dada Maino, Comitato di base del Saggiatore di Milano, Giorgio Cesarano, Alessandro Casiccia, Potere operaio di Padova, Movimento studentesco di Trento, Mauro Rostagno, Renato Curcio, Studenti d'arte di Brera, Valerio Morpurgo, Giuseppe Mai.

Hanno partecipato e contribuito a questo numero 6-7 di « Che fare »:

Francesco Leonetti, Lega dei comunisti di Pisa, Sezioni del Partito rivoluzionario marxista-leninista, Alain Badiou, Enrica Collotti Pisichel, Marco Dogo, Franco Fortini, Gruppo di militanti di Vincennes e Censier-Sorbonne, Walter Pagliero, Monica Brunatto, Savino D'Amico, Romano Luperini, Luciano Della Mea, Mario Quaranta, Maurice Blanchot, Carlo Vietti, Vladimiro Zocca, Umberto Artioli, Commissione di studio nel Saggiatore occupato, Gino Baratta, Felice Piemontese, Alik Cavaliere, Studenti dell'accademia di Brera, Pio Baldelli, Giovanni Raboni, Alberto Boatto, Giuseppe Bonura, Maria Silvia Codecasa, Giancarlo De Carlo, Giancarlo Ferretti, Nino Massari, Mario Lunetta, Dada Maino, Mario Sabbatini, Mario Papini, Antonio Saccà, Elio Di Piazza, Michele Perriera, Gaetano Testa, Tommaso Trini, Livio Marzot, Achille Bonito Oliva, Pierpaolo Pasolini, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Glauber Rocha, Stelio Rescio, Pino Spagnulo, Simonetta Piccone Stella, Franco Ferlini, Segretario Nazionale dell'UCI (m-l), Giuliano Dego, Dominique Moreau, Franco Quadri, Comitato di difesa e di lotta contro la repressione di Milano, Roberto Di Marco.

N.B. Nei mesi di dicembre e gennaio è stata chiusa la redazione di Milano: saranno ora svolte le pratiche d'ufficio rimaste sospese.

PREZZO

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The Sunday Times, 31 August 1969

Striking attitudes

ART ☐ JOHN RUSSELL

OVER the last few years there has grown up that rare thing: a genuine International in art—a movement, that is to say, which though widespread has neither leaders nor location.

It has turned up in the capitals of art, as is only natural; but it has also turned up in Berlin, in Turin, in Berne, in Rome, in the Nevada Desert, in a field near Hamburg (Pennsylvania), on frozen rivers in the American North, and in a notional way across the whole of Western Europe from London to Milan. Much of it is in the hands of people born after 1940; and a sizeable survey of what it does has now arrived at the ICA in London, after a characteristically crab-like journey by way of Berne, Amsterdam and Krefeld.

"When Attitudes Become Form" was devised by Harald Szeemann for the Kunsthalle in Berne. There, as here, it was sponsored by Philip Morris Europe. It has had a dramatic history: for although the Kunsthalle in Berne has long had a place in the light cavalry of European art-institutions there seems to have been a general feeling in that beautiful city that this time Mr Szeemann had ridden too fast and too far. It is rumoured that his successor will soon be appointed; if that is so, it is a black mark against the elders of Berne. Whether or not one likes the show (liking and disliking are held to have, in this context, a ring of obsolete aestheticism) it is the show which everyone most wanted to see this summer and Berne should have been proud of it.

W A B F (if I may summarise) is against a lot of things. It is against the capitalist system, by which the work of art is a precious object, destined to change hands at a higher and higher price. It is against the closed circle of studio-dealer-collector-museum. It is against the decorative impasse into which painting is said by some to have got itself. It is against precision made sculpture which has the ring of "art" about it. It is against the work of art as a finite information-system.

Conversely, it is in favour of art that does not look like art, disdains the traditional materials of art, avoids all complete or rounded formal structures, and delights in overthrowing the orthodox relationship

between art and the observer. The photographic section of W A B F includes art which was ephemeral (because made in snow or ice), invisible (except by chartered helicopter in an area bristling with military installations), acted-out and never seen whole (Bruce McLean's "Walk, Run and Stand Piece" in the Barnes Pond Area), and imminent (the telephone on the floor which may ring at any time with a call from Walter de Maria). The materials of W A B F include balloons, a birth certificate, receipts for registered mail, a batch of provincial newspapers, a steelwire screen, some authenticated Dutch bedsheets, alphabet stencils, contracts drawn up in due legal form, grommets and (in a manifestation not brought to Europe) thirty-six bushels of leaves on a staircase.

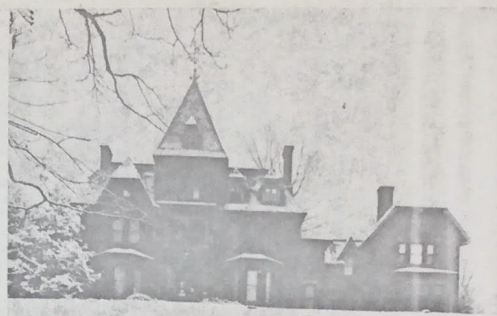
Much of this is, of course, part of a tradition of the new which has existed for many years. Duchamp did many of the things that W A B F sets out to do, and he did them with an elegance and a concision which may still be called definitive. The relaxed, shaggy, inconsequential appearance of many of the exhibits is a late echo of the reaction which caused Caro to reject the European grand manner and the choice of materials which went with it. The happenings pioneered by Oldenburg and Dine had a bite and an urgency which I do not often find (prejudice, perhaps) in W A B F.

W A B F is not, in fact, either as extreme or as lonely, in terms of art-history, as it might appear to be. One of Robert Morris's felt pieces has, after all, hung in the Tate Gallery for months, adding its note of an original and forlorn grandeur to the scene and not looking in any way out of place. Morris says of this phase in his work that "Lumps are potentially as viable as cubes, rags as acceptable as stainless steel rods"; and he proves it. But Braque and Picasso proved it before 1914 when they overturned the conventions of high art. Modernity has deep roots, and W A B F feeds on them, *volens volens*. But go and see it: it is mysterious that Richard Long should be omitted, but both Roelof Louw and Barry Flanagan stand out: "more art, less attitude" seems to me the reason.

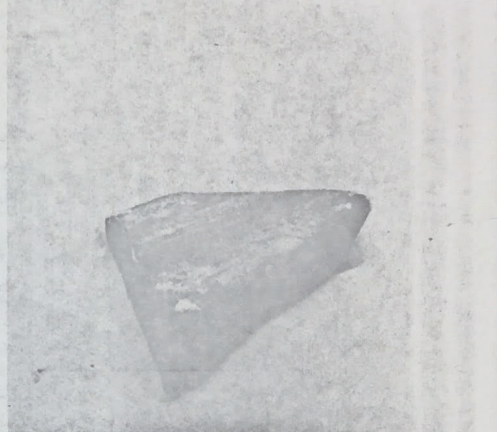
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Project Department, N.E. Thing Co.
Shadow on snow (painted), 1968-69
Closeup of shadow on snow by trunk of a tree.



A rock on the front lawn of Cornell University's Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, Richard Long, *Earth Art* show. (Photo: Cornell University).



Selected elemental and landscape projects completed:

Earth move: Vinyl bladder inserted under lawn; inflates, deflates mound; model with air pump executed, 1967.
Erosion fountain: Pile of earth around large plastic pipes in earth; when water is turned on, earth erodes and alluvial fans develop; can be stopped any time; model executed, 1968.
Double-sided mirror in grass: Slightly tilted so only grass reflected, 1968.
Mirror set on angle in v-shaped trench: In forest, on hillside, etc., reflecting sky, 1965-68.
Opaque blue glass: Rectangle set in lawn, 1965-68.
Yellow rope space: 200' long, on mountainside.
Taut chain: Between two parallel leaning trees in forest.
Black rubber strip: 10' long over rocks, Mt. Seymour.
Gravel-filled trench: 33' long.
Rubber strewn over brush: Diagonal direction (20 lbs. of cured rubber threads of varying lengths and thicknesses).
Three-inch chain: Over branches, trees, shrubs, 25' long.
Four chrome distance markers: 20" high, 25' (or 100' or 10 miles) apart.
Rectangular glass: Dropped over snow, making slight glass-filled depression.
Shadow form: "Found" piece, claimed while burning garage, in which smoke formed screen upon which sun projected angular shadow, 1967.
Ten-inch convex chrome disc: Buried half-way, 1965-68.
Twenty-four 5" steel nails: Set in earth (system, n + 1).
Six reflecting surfaces frozen: Three gallons of frozen water over six mirrors spaced equally across bottom of Viking freezer unit, 1965-68.
Two water-filled soft vinyl aquariums: With three fish swimming through by connecting tube, 1966.

Shadows of trees, rocks, furniture, etc.: Painted on snow in black.

Paint into earth: One quart white outdoor paint poured into hole of same size and capacity, 1965-68.

Fluorescent paint: Under snow.

Ski track configurations: Skied into Mt. Seymour by artist.

Plate glass: Inserted vertically into snowbank.

Rectangular trench: Filled with five pounds heavy-grade Barium grease, 1965-68.

Red dye: In Seymour River.

Moss cuts: Moss removed from fallen tree at one-inch intervals, along one side, etc. (ecological project).

Total sidestep track: Snow patch striped by skis.

Broken tree: Arrested at 45° angle (ecological project).

Selected elemental and landscape projects proposed:

Ice line dyed on ice flow: Near Greenland (model made and photographed from simulated aerial view).
Plastic leaves (or fruit): For deciduous, etc. trees.

White vinyl cover: For mountain top (year-round snowy peak).

Square chamber in centre of earth: Core drilling (6" diameter) made to centre of earth; a square chamber 100 x 100 x 100 miles, made, lined, insulated; temperature kept at circa 70°F, walls mirrored; spherical bladder of urethane vinyl 100 miles in diameter inserted and inflated; other artists and companies selected by N.E. Thing Co. and United Nations Committee on Aesthetics and The Arts will be invited to insert their thing into the chamber around which the earth revolves.

North American layout: Large scale things to be created in every state, province, territory and Mexico; to be viewed by charter flight tipping wings over each thing; guidebooks and maps available, tourist stops scheduled. Long-term tours on ground could take one to two years.

Current piece: To float on ocean current, let out to sea, specific times and schedules and points of view published.

Re-run of Bannister "miracle mile": At Pacific National Exhibition Grounds, Vancouver, B.C., where event took place; other famous sports and political events.

Clear walk: Plate glass pathway in park.

Wash floor: Of any art gallery immediately before show opens; photograph it; floor not to be washed during exhibition except last hour. Photos taken every day (close-up and wide-angle); portfolio published.

Five thousand mile movie (Entire coast-to-coast length of Canada film, Highway #1 — in process.)

Xerox telecopier transfer of V.S.I. (Visual Sensitivity Information); Telecopier in gallery and daily V.S.I. transferred in from various points across Canada to N.Y. (in process).

Made by man and woman: Performance nude, or clothed, projections of anatomical parts shown on bodies of the two figures.

No trespassing: One-acre section demarked by "No Trespassing" signs at each corner and center of each side; facing outwards at eye level.

Paint top of tree brown and bark green (one deciduous, one coniferous).

Words: "Float" In styrofoam, to float on lake.

"Melt": In ice thrown into ocean.

"River": In styrofoam to float down river.

"Logs": Made of chained-together logs, to float down river.

Photographic reproduction: Of complete inside surfaces and total volume

of a specific space using fish-eye lens and precision locations, wide-angle documentation of each section.

Landscape identification, permanent location: Photo made and location documented; it is reproduced on metal and placed back in landscape on post at same height as camera took photo and left permanently as record of the arrest of this particular time and position; landscape changes, photo remains; others can be taken at yearly intervals, same general site.

Hydro projects: Double-sided mirror floating on and reflecting ocean or on tidal flat. Large mirrored surface reflecting sky set loose in Japanese current; 50" x 50" floating surface covered with earth and seeded with grass or wheat and set out to sea as seed grows. Hollow aluminum box sent out to drift where it drifts. Beach trenches of red, blue, yellow dye dispersed by high tides.

Chionic projects: The word "Snow" seeded in dry ice by plane, photographed at snowfall and televised. "Formal Snow Storm" over Nevada desert inset by cooling coils so snow will remain.

Ecological projects: Controlled grazing graduated to form concentric squares of varied length of vegetation. Controlled crop planting to form various configurations, durations etc.

Grafting of different species onto a three-acre area of deciduous trees with medium density. Black out, using black plastic or tarp over one acre of forest for period of time until all vegetation wilts or dies. Oasis Deteriorations under air dome controlled temperatures etc., create an artificial oasis in desert, then take away dome and allow normal conditions to react on new environment; document results. Spray-paint white a 3-4 acre black laval field like those in N.E. Oregon; photograph deterioration.

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The issue of elements

June 1969 issue no. 132

Cover: a collage by Andras Szecsko, greatly enlarged detail from a seventeenth century alchemical book, the "Tabula Smaragdina" from the *Museum Hermeticum* of 1678. The Phoenix and the Eagle hold orbs in their wings, representing the four elements: earth, air, fire and water. The Phoenix is associated with the two globes fire and air and the Eagle, two globes representing water and earth. We are grateful to Miss Ellen Wells, Associate Osler Librarian of the School of Medicine, McGill University for her guidance in our search for these images and to The Library of Congress for their reproduction from the original engraving.

"The new media are not bridges between man and nature; they are nature." Marshall McLuhan
 "Certain art is now using as its beginning and as its means, stuff, substances in many states—from chunks, to particles, to slime, to whatever—and pre-thought images are neither necessary nor possible. . . ." Robert Morris, *Artforum*, April, 1969.

"Since the earthwork is usually not transportable—it may not even be perceptible as a unit or during a particular time—all that is available to the spectator is its documentation, and this, according to one site-modifier, creates a condition of absolute coexistence between 'image' and 'language'." Harold Rosenberg, *New Yorker*, March 29, 1969.

June 3: Opening *N.E. Thing Co. Environment* at The National Gallery of Canada.

July 2: Opening Jewish Museum, *Inflatable Sculpture*, organized by Tejas Englesmith.

September 4: Opening of Willoughby Sharp's *Air Art* show at the Edmonton Art Gallery.

September 25: Lecture by Willoughby Sharp, "Elementalism and the New Alchemy" at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

September 26: Opening of the *New Alchemy: Elements, Systems and Forces in Contemporary Art* organized by Dennis Young for the Art Gallery of Ontario.

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Prehistoric Southwold Earth Works near West Lorne, Ontario: a double-walled fortification built by the Attw. (neutral Indian nation) who were expelled from the region ca. 1650 A.D. by the Iroquois. (Photo: Ian MacEachern)

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Iain Baxter: New Spaces

by Lucy R. Lippard



"It is the Visual Unknown that challenges the N.E. Thing researchers. Like researchers anywhere, they seek to add to the world's store of knowledge — by exploratory research on the frontiers of basic theory, by product research for results in specific tangible forms, by production research for processes that yield precise end products. These probings of the why and how of visual things and their combinations are efforts to discover distinct properties or effects and the means of putting them into operation." (N.E. Thing Company Operations Statement, 1968)

"Ecology as used today is: a science which investigates organisms in relation to their environment; a philosophy in which the world of life is interpreted in terms of natural processes; an art requiring skill and having a plan and a pattern within which many activities may be centered. . . . This involves an open mind which is willing to use sensory observations as a basis for mental explanation." (Angus M. Woodbury, *Principles of General Ecology*, New York-Toronto, 1954).

"Nobody can commit photography alone. It is possible to have at least the illusion of reading and writing in isolation, but photography does not foster such attitudes. If there is any sense in deploring the growth of corporate and collective art forms such as the film and the press, it is surely in relation to the previously individualist technologies that these new forms corrode." (Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, New York, 1964.)

Baxter's photographs will represent print-making for Canada at the Sao Paulo Biennial in Brazil (September '69-January '70). Robert Murray and Greg Curnoe are the other participating artists. The N. E. Thing Co. is currently on exhibition at The National Gallery (4 June-6 July). Photos of N. E. Thing Co. projects are by the company's Photography Department.

The N. E. Thing Co. Environment occupies the first floor of The National Gallery of Canada during June.

Vancouver is several cities: a big ugly port, a visually unexceptional residential community, a university town, an up-to-date supermarket suburbia, container of and contained by magnificent natural scenery. Baxter works in and out of the various identities offered by his environment. His endless ideas admit no limitation to an artist's activities. Like artists all over the world today he is replacing the usual art-making and appreciating procedures — image identification with reality through the imitative or decorative object — with a direct and expanded attack on the idea of art. In his role as President of the N.E. Thing Company, he can be as commercial as any businessman, as free as any artist. He has learned from McLuhan that "all meaning alters with acceleration. . . . Control over change would seem to consist in moving not with it but ahead of it."

Baxter's obsession with "Visual Sensitivity Information Dynamics" has led him to extend the electronic "nervous system" into broader spaces, primarily landscape, or the rural, urban and suburban outdoors. Such understated, almost non-existent pieces as the rubber line through low bushes, the chain or yellow string in the forest, are light, flexible, unconcerned with gravity. They exist not as objects or volumes to be reckoned with as separate entities, but as devices for the redefinition or refocusing of the setting in which they are placed. In the marker pieces, the nails driven into the ground, or the strewn rubber sections, the explicit graphic quality is interrupted; in the ski pieces it becomes the delineation of distance and the path of action.

Dennis Oppenheim says that in his outdoor pieces he is bombarding existing volumes with new information. Despite the differences between his and Baxter's approaches, this is a good basic definition of what generally happens in such work. The new information is patently less than is expected of art; it is not self-contained (though still limited by the actual length and breadth of the project); often it is not static and does not draw attention to itself as a single entity. On the other hand, many of Baxter's most beautiful pieces do not escape the object vein at all; they are isolated forms in nature rather than in a gallery space; they geometricize nature without competing with it or dominating it in any

way. Such geometricization represents the vestiges of the pictorialism that painting and sculpture have been subjected to for eons, of the traditional imposition of artificial or man-made order on less visible natural order. It is a matter of degree, however. Much of the new work is very general, an extension of the all-over principle into very low-tension areas.

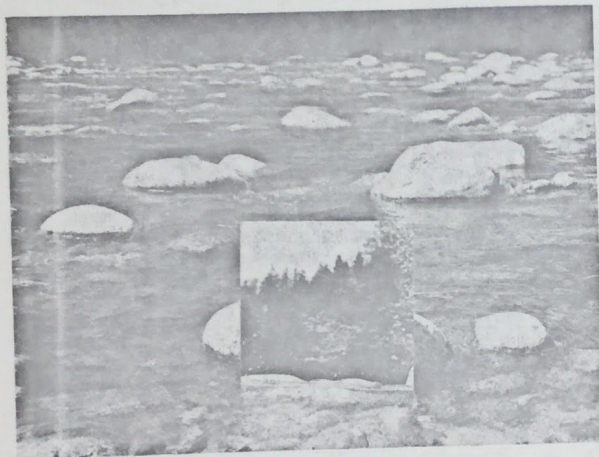
In this sense some of these works have to do with Impressionism far more than the 19th century Picturesque with which Sidney Tillim has unfavorably aligned them (*Artforum*, December, 1968). Impressionism more than any other modern style dealt with pure perceptual experience and with a complete visual field rather than significant form. It had a non-hierarchical view of nature — the comprehensive broad glance or scan instead of the single focus, sharing the vagueness of natural perception. There is a good deal more to the analogy than that, and to the relationship of Impressionism to the "broken edge" syndrome of recent art, but in Baxter's case it is worth touching upon because of his long standing involvement with nature as a phenomenon rather than as formal source.

Baxter is not and never has been a formalist. Unlike most of his American colleagues he comes into photography not from a minimal-serial background, and into the new landscape not from single structures that outgrew their formats or collapsed and disintegrated into their spaces, but from science into art, from a fundamental interest in the physical make-up of his surroundings, which led to a fusion of surroundings and information about them. In college he had courses in ecology, the study of organisms in relation to their environment. Ecology is sometimes called external physiology, and physiology, internal ecology. The eco-system approach, in which animal and vegetable organisms (humans too) are considered as an interacting unit, is just being explored by artists. The Pula group at Yale (see *arts/canada*, December, 1968) is involved with a subliminal or physiological reaction to the ways in which it can rhythmically focus the energy latent in the environment. Richard Serra had an exhibition in Rome in 1966 that consisted of real animals making their own environments; Charles Ross reflects the environment in prisms and calls his work ecologies. The vari-

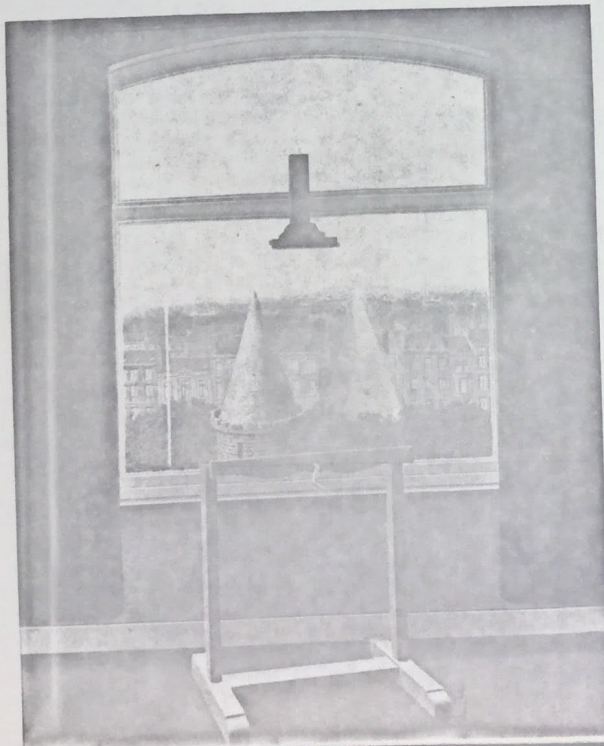
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James Rosenquist
Capillary Action I, 1962
Oil on canvas with objects
93" x 136" (2 panels)
Collection:
Count Panza di Biumo
(Photo:
Leo Castelli Gallery)



Thing Department,
N.E. Thing Co.
Reflected landscape,
1968-69
(Seymour River, B.C.)



René Magritte
Les Promenades d'Euclide,
1955
Oil on canvas
63 1/4" x 51 1/4"
(Photo: The Minneapolis
Institute of Arts)

ous earthworks artists (or geomorphologists) are also more or less concerned with ecology, though in practice they can be poles apart. Baxter's optimistic embracing of the dynamics of rapid change is directly opposed to Robert Smithson's entropy or energy drain approach to earth, history and time; in between the two are infinite differences of degree and sensibility.

(Smithson is from industrial New Jersey; Baxter from the rural West. There are two schools or approaches to ecology, the first, associated with Europe, is called "static," and is attributed to Europe's restricted areas of study, the long-accomplished destruction or modification of natural communities; the second, associated with America, is called "dynamic" and is attributed to our remaining vast areas where natural variation can be observed on a large scale and under a variety of circumstances. A basic difference between Smithson and Baxter is found in their reactions to space. Smithson contemplates finity; Baxter welcomes infinity; Smithson's "primal ooze" is deathlike but time defying; it traps but preserves; Baxter's art is fertile but ephemeral.)

When a sheet of glass is inserted into a clean snowbank, its transparency is exploited in several different ways; in the equally sensual and visual implications of the ice-like glass slicing invisibly through the white snow, and in the top section showing over the surface making visible but somehow less sensuously direct the same experience. A double-sided mirror, slightly tilted so as to reflect nothing but the grass in which it rests, becomes a part of the lawn except for the fact that it provides a specific point in which to focus the general experience. These rectangular impositions on the landscape (like Smithson's mirror paths and his use of enlarged photographs set in the landscape they depict and then rephotographed, and like Jim Rosenquist's inset panels of sky on sky, grass on grass, grisaille grass on coloured grass) are unintentional reprisals of Magritte's original statement of the ambiguity between reality and depicted reality. Once this paradox has been taken off canvas and placed in the subject itself, however, the ramifications change. For that matter, Baxter's poured paint project and grease pieces deal with materials in or on a receptacle or surface, as do many paintings. But the point of view is no longer fixed, and change, rather than the Magrittean dreamlike state or the gestural painter's "still" of previous action, is re-instated. (At the same time, the documentary photograph reinstates the fixed viewpoint.)

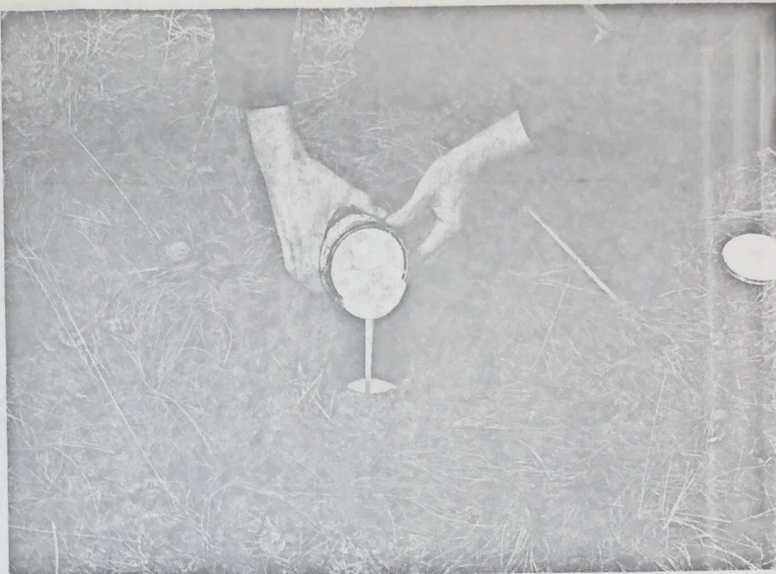
From a formal point of view, Baxter's elemental pieces are less interesting than those of some of his colleagues. He is less concerned with immense scale, with a work's "presence," for instance, than with rapid comment on a situation, location, or idea. His interest in the aerial view, or flat floor work, does not come out of the gradual removal of abstract sculpture from the vertical (totemic) to the horizontal (landscape) plane, but from his own preoccupation with all varieties of visual information and ways of recording it. His approach is usually fragmentary. He is a cheerful eclectic, and as such seriously offends the sensibility geared to the singleness of esthetic pursuit, confounds those devoted to categories. His equally active mind and eye are unencumbered by

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consistency or specialization. Along with his art-as-art (the inflated landscapes etc.), he makes art-about-art (the "extensions," ranging from the extended Noland continuing stripes as ribbons and the extended Flavin that incorporates all the lights in Vancouver, to the extended Larry Weiner in which the original reads "An object tossed from one country to another"; Baxter's Canadian extension reads: ", and back again." He makes non-Art: ACTS or Aesthetically Claimed Things, which are photographs from anything — real landscape or industrial objects, pages of books, works of art, Indian mounds, supermarkets, signs, etc. The ACTS resolve the frustration artists feel in the face of an industrial landscape or even art of the past which is financially impossible to rival; the photographs are stamped ACT and an accompanying certificate declares these things have "met the stringent requirements of sensitivity information as set forth by the N.E. Thing Co." He also makes anti-Art, or Aesthetically Rejected Things (ART) which do not meet those stringent requirements.

The idea of claiming non-art objects as art and relegating art objects to non-art status, is of course Duchamp's and has been expanded by Warhol; and the claim of non-portable objects from life has occurred to several artists in the past few years. (Ed Ruscha's books, like *26 Gasoline Stations* and *Various Small Fires and Milk*, which attack the idea from an especially deadpan angle, were particularly original and influential.) Baxter, however, carries the conception further than most people would care to; I suspect the ACT department will continue forever, and be contagious, because there is something highly satisfying about keeping an alert eye open to every aspect of the environment. Everyone interested in looking has played the parlor car game in which sights and similarities to art in the environment are pointed out; when these "things" are conscientiously recorded, the experience is retained.

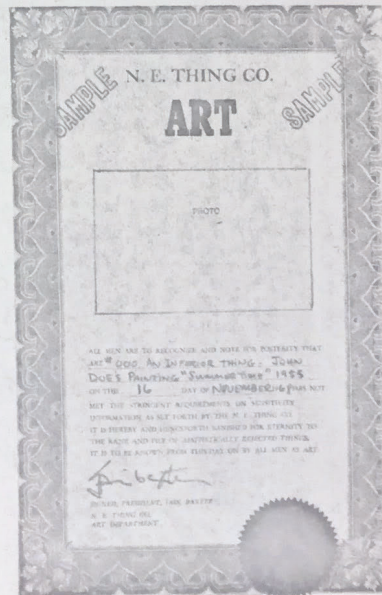
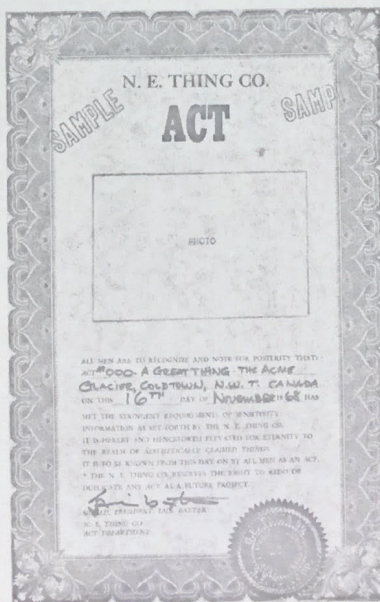
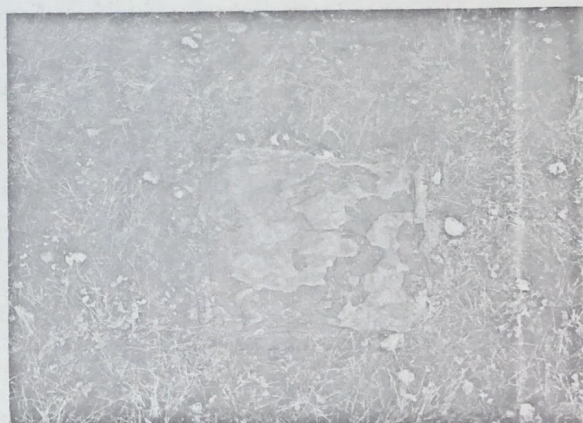
Baxter's approach to photography, his recognition of its special importance to an isolated, reproduction-oriented art culture, and the degree of extension and intension (to use the names of two NETCo. departments) to which he has taken it, is unique. Because the photograph does reinstate the fixed viewpoint, flux is only re-admitted through multiplicity. (Everyone in the Baxter family, including the five and eight year olds, takes movies and photos.) By commenting on all art and all things, by having no one style except openness, Baxter defies several of the limitations that plague the art world and artist today. His approach defies the ownership syndrome and may encourage a reformed collector, or a patron (usually young and mobile), who does not need or even want to amass bulky precious objects that have to be stored or resold when they accumulate, but is willing to set into motion an artist's idea about his environment and thereby participate in the kind of rapid aesthetic change that makes art and life in the 60s both exciting and frustrating. The photograph satisfies the vestiges of the acquisitory urge. The anonymous collector who wants no record whatsoever of his purchase is as rare as the anonymous artist who takes no credit for his work (Baxter tried this for a while too, mas-



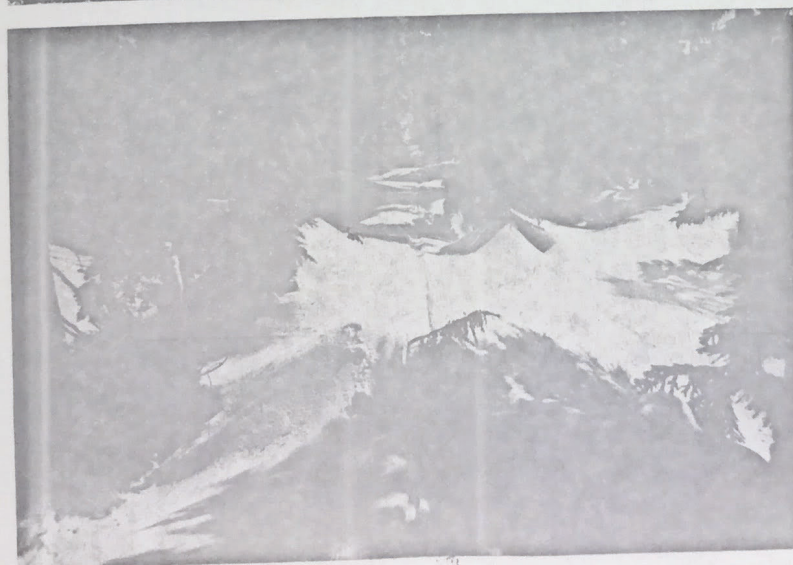
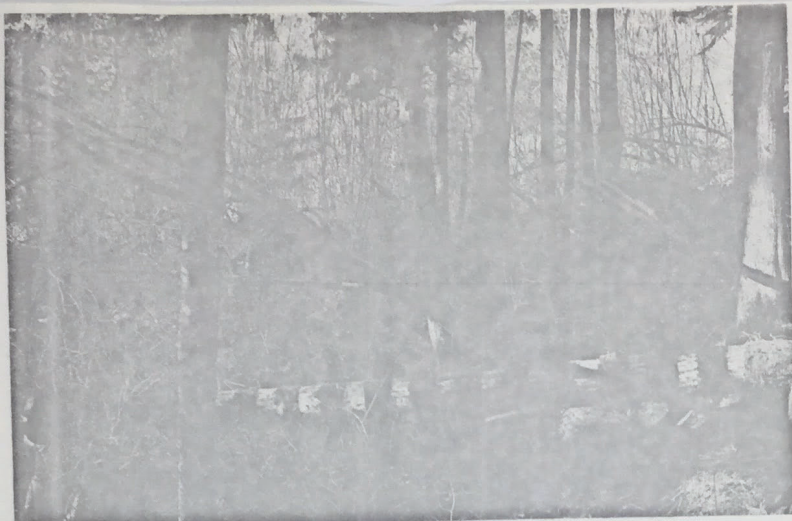
Thing Department,
N.E. Thing Co.
Paint into earth, 1965-68
One quart of white outdoor paint poured into a circular hole of one quart capacity.
Simon Fraser University,
Burnaby, B.C.

Projects Department,
N.E. Thing Co.
Grease fill, 1965-68
Trench 20" x 20" x 1"
5 lbs of B.A. Barium grease (heavy) spread over concavity with paint scraper.

Copy of an ACT
(Aesthetically Claimed Thing) Department's certificate.
Copy of an ART
(Aesthetically Rejected Thing) Department's certificate.



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quering with a friend as "11" and having two anonymous exhibitions in 1966).

Ideas that are rapidly transmissible and photographic cross-references and information about objects or sites are more stimulating to the isolated artist than the reproductions of objects that are fundamentally un-reproducible, objects intended primarily as physical presences. These actually arrive in the provinces very late and in the meantime are reproduced with a low level of comprehensibility. Baxter has independently had a lot of the same ideas as New York artists, at the same time, without knowing theirs; the reverse is also true. Such ideas are in the air as the result of general conditions of prevailing style and thought pattern, but the provincial artist cannot get his information to others fast enough for its impact to be felt, partly due to lack of critics sophisticated enough to be published on a national scale. Consequently, the original artist in isolated areas often comes out looking derivative. If at least one art magazine were given over to visual and verbal information with a minimum of opinion and transitions, and no reviews or judgments, and that magazine were cheap and frequent, covering all areas of the continent (and, with a certain still unavoidable lag, the rest of the world), then the power grip of the art "centres" could be considerably diminished and the chances for the artist outside those centres to participate in general aesthetic decisions would be far greater.

Baxter is not overly worried about his image, since it is fragmented to begin with, but he is excited about ideas and about ways of participating more closely in the idea network that forms current art thought. The corporate set-up, NETCo., (officially registered as a company) enables him to work partially outside the usual art channels. The profusion of non-formal, often corny projects that he conceives at the same time as those projects which have a real significance, repel purists in any area — formalist, conceptualist, or Dada-pop. Baxter is, however, probably the prototype of the new artist, a product of the McLubricated era but also of the vast natural landscape in which he lives. Like the archetypal artist, however, he is concerned with ways of seeing, and seeing the natural and the artificial environment, and he is concerned with communicating these ways so that others see more clearly the world about them.

Joseph Iain Wilson Baxter: 1959, University of Idaho, M.S., zoology; 1961, co-author and illustrator, *Wildlife of the Northern Rocky Mountains*; 1961-62, Japanese government painting scholarship to work in Kyoto; 1964, to Vancouver; 1965, exhibited two tons of melting ice at University of British Columbia, founded N.E. Thing Co., inflated landscapes, vinyl-bagged air, water, wood, earth; 1965-69, earth, snow, claims pieces (see *Portfolio of Piles*).

Project Department, Ecological Projects,
N.E. Thing Co.
Moss cut, 1968-69

Iain Baxter working on a log,
Mount Seymour, North Vancouver, B.C.

Project Department, Ecological Projects,
N.E. Thing Co.
Closeup of total side-step track, 1968-69

Project Department, Ecological Projects,
N.E. Thing Co.

Ski-line track, 1968
1 section of 1 mile skied line through
woods on Mount Seymour, North Vancouver, B.C.