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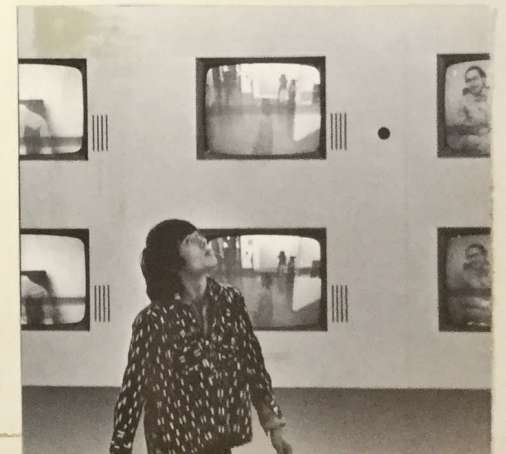
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OLIVETTI JUKEBOX SCREENS IDEAS

Olivetti's multi-screen film machine dominated the gallery at "Information", a recent exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, featuring works by more than 150 young artists from 15 countries. In seeking to "extend the idea of art beyond traditional categories" (as the Museum explained it), the artists relied on photographs, television, tape recorders, computers and electric voting boxes. Olivetti's large, umbrella-like "information machine" or "visual jukebox" shown here projected 3-minute to 8-hour films on 40 individual screens. These "minimally structured" and "non-narrative films," said curator Kynaston McShine, "are like so much of the show—a method of distributing visual information that interests the artist."



SYNTHESIS, SEPTEMBER, 1970
(Pub. of Olivetti Corp. for
employees and representatives)

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Miracles, 'Information,' 'Recommended Reading'

By HILTON KRAMER

THE other day I went over to the Museum of Modern Art for the press preview of the new "Information" show. As it happened, the show was not yet fully installed. Much of the machinery wasn't working. Some of the — what shall we call it? — visual data was not yet in place. There were few wall labels identifying the — what shall we call them? — contributors to the exhibition. None of this was unusual. Museum staffs work on very tight schedules. Even the most conventional exhibitions involve head-cracking logistical problems, and "Information" is no conventional exhibition. In any case, the absolute deadline for getting everything into place is not the press preview, which takes place during the day, but the poshier preview, complete with free drinks and "beautiful people," which takes place in the early evening.

I've never acquired a taste for "beautiful people," and I prefer, as a general rule, to do my drinking sitting down. So I decided to wait until the next day before having another look at "Information" in its completed state. Before I could get to the museum the next day, however, something interesting happened to me on the way to the office. I picked up a copy of the July 6th issue of New York magazine, fresh on the stands that morning. Imagine my surprise when I found the magazine's art critic and versatile *homme des arts*—John Gruen — pronouncing the "Information" exhibition "a show that is altogether fascinating and illuminating."

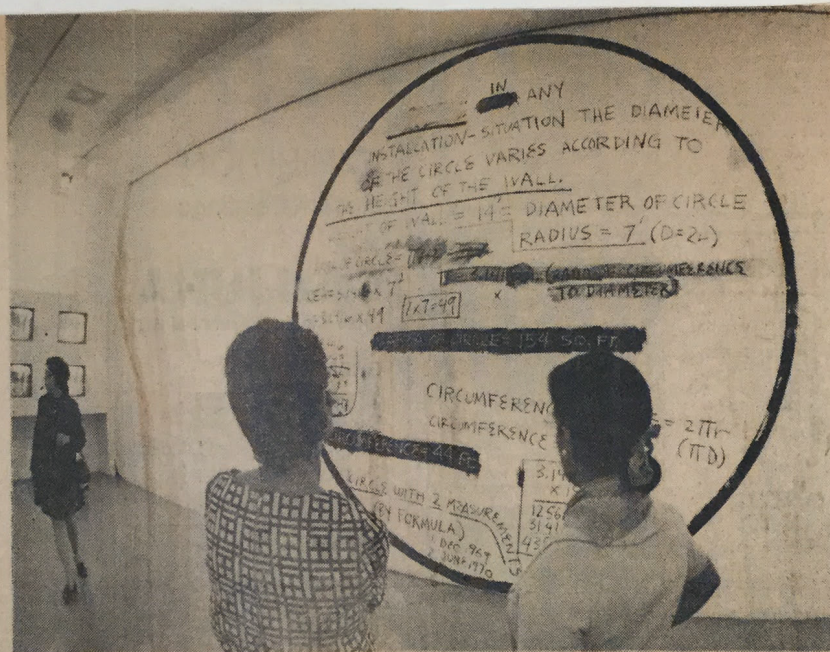
How amazing, I thought. My mind was suddenly aglow and agog with admiration for the miracle of modern communications. Writing about "Information," Mr. Gruen remarked: "These new young artists have observed how newspapers, films and periodicals disseminate information in a matter of days, hours, or minutes," and instantly I knew what he meant. Wasn't he, after all, giving us a marvelous demonstration, right here in New York magazine, of the unprecedented speed with which "Information" is disseminated in the media these days? This was the purest case of the medium

being the message I had ever personally observed.

There was, for me, a further thrill to be had from Mr. Gruen's remarks. They suddenly reminded me that I, too, am in the "information" business, even as Mr. Gruen and a few million other people are. And — just imagine! — here are "new young artists" drawing their inspiration from, as the saying goes, *our thing!* Wow!

But then, just as suddenly, an ugly thought began to take shape in my mind — a really distressing and disillusioning thought. For it occurred to me that, despite the miracle of modern communications, magazines had still somehow to be printed. They had somehow to be bound. They had somehow to be delivered. I thought of all those clogged cross-town streets in Manhattan which trucks delivering this latest number of New York magazine had somehow to traverse in order to bring me Mr. Gruen's — what shall we call it? — "review." Speed is certainly one of the essential ingredients in the miracle of modern communications, but it remains utterly foreign to Manhattan's cross-town traffic. I began to brood about deadlines. In the "Information" business, you brood a great deal about deadlines. I have no idea what the deadline for late copy is at New York magazine, but I was reasonably certain it had to be more like "days" than like "hours" or "minutes" before the magazine had come to hand. I could hardly bring myself to face the awful truth, but there was no resisting it. Mr. Gruen could not have seen the "Information" exhibition before disseminating his own bit of "information" on it. Alas for the miracle of modern communications.

A few hours later, my faith in this vaunted miracle rudely shaken, I returned to the "Information" show. Kynaston McShine, the museum's associate curator of painting and sculpture, who organized the show, was good enough to take me on a lengthy guided tour of the exhibition, explaining the rationale — or should I say the irrationality? — of each item in it. I must confess I found it difficult at times to follow his discourse. The night before I had spent



Installation view of "Information" show at the Museum of Modern Art
Finding a "relevant" response to the current crisis

some time examining the — what can one call it? — souvenir album, which Mr. McShine had put together in lieu of a catalogue of the exhibition. I was particularly struck by the list of "Recommended Reading." Had Mr. McShine himself read the "Recommended Reading"? Did it have any relation to the exhibition? I was too, embarrassed to ask. After all, Mr. McShine has been very busy assembling this exhibition, which brings together more than 150 "artists" — amazing, isn't it, how people will cling to these outmoded expressions? — from 15 countries. When could he have found the time to read Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson's "Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry" or Mao Tse-tung's "Problems of Art and Literature" or Manuel Villegas Lopez's "El Cine en la Sociedad de Massas: Arte y Comunicación"?

Mr. McShine's "Essay" for the souvenir album was, on this question, no help at all. But it did raise another interesting question. "If you are an artist in Brazil, you know of at least one friend who is being tortured; if you are one in Argentina, you probably have had a neighbor who has been in jail for having long hair, or for not being 'dressed' properly; and if you are living in the United States, you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina. It may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paint from a little tube to a square of canvas. What can you as a young artist do that seems relevant and meaningful?"

The "Information" exhibition is Mr. McShine's answer to this question. The "relevant and meaningful" thing to do in

the face of this grave political crisis is, apparently, to look at inane films through an Olivetti "visual jukebox," ask spectators questions on closed-circuit delayed-tape television, scrawl circles and other graffiti on the walls, go to town with the Xerox machine, collect a lot of pointless photographic junk, listen to a poem on the telephone, or simply go to sleep. Never mind what any of this has to do with Claude Lévi-Strauss's "Structural Anthropology" or Herbert Marcuse's "Eros and Civilization" or George Steiner's "Language and Silence" — more of the "Recommended Reading." Such questions are, I guess, irrelevant and impertinent. For Mr. McShine and his "artists," they don't qualify as "information."

What unmitigated nonsense this exhibition is! What tripe we are offered here! What an intellectual scandal!

Art Mailbag

No Beginning or End at All?

TO THE EDITOR:

HILTON KRAMER touched the sensitive nerve of the press preview in his review of the "Information" show at the Museum of Modern Art, which technically closed Sept. 20 but will actually continue indefinitely, though not necessarily at MOMA. It is germane to mention it now since one of the critical elements in "Information" is the emphatic recognition by the museum that art is a process which has no beginning or end at all. The preview or membership opening is therefore an institutional device which accedes to the trap of press deadlines, newspaper publicity, patronage fanfare, and some celebrity relief for everyone involved.

A number of artists, many of whom are represented in the "Information" show, are restating — some with vigor, some with outrage, still others with compassion — that art, especially within the intimidating framework of a museum, cannot exist without the participation of museum visitors. If no one sees it (to vary an old Zen chestnut), is Monet's "Water Lilies" still beautiful?

Some of the artists in "Information" sent their work by mail since it consisted entirely of documents about the work, i.e., photographs, diagrams, drawings. These were available to the press, along with the artists' statements and the essay by the director of the show, Kynaston McShine, well before the "opening." Some projects will not be completed until after the show has closed, if ever. The show, therefore, steps out of the cyclical straitjacket that museum connotations,

financial requirements, and press coverage insist upon. The routine of regular press previews is given a new kind of meaning or, better still, nonmeaning.

Although on occasion, for some theme shows, for example, the museum has asked critics not to "review" a show from incomplete material or under non-gallery conditions (looking at paintings in poor light on the receiving platforms, for example), in this instance it did not seem a violation of the rights of the artists or of the critic to give out everything we had with the clear understanding that not everything was "finished."

Thus, John Gruen's essay in New York magazine was one of several philosophical pieces written on the basis of the list of artists in the show, many of whom he knew, and photographs and catalog material which he found fascinating and stimulating. Arts magazine, on the other hand, carried a review which went to press weeks in advance and found the show, on the basis of earlier returns, not outrageous enough. Mr. Kramer found it an intellectual scandal.

To each his own — and happily so, for the show asks that both visitor and museum approach each other free of traditional preconceptions of what is or is not appropriate for an art museum. Since Mr. Kramer generously quoted extensively from the museum catalog, I would like to add a few more lines from Curator McShine's text:

"(The attitude of the artists represented) enables us to participate, quite often as in a game: at other times it

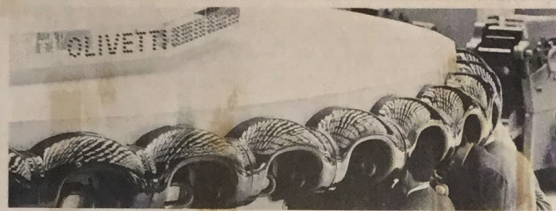
seems therapeutic, making us question ourselves and our responses to unfamiliar stimuli. The constant demand is to a more aware relation to our natural and artificial environments. . . . These artists are questioning our prejudices, asking us to renounce our inhibitions, and if they are re-evaluating the nature of art, they are also asking that we assess what we have always taken for granted as our accepted and culturally conditioned esthetic response to art."

JOHN B. HIGHTOWER
Director,
Museum of Modern Art
New York City

Hilton Kramer replies: If Mr. Hightower believes it is in the interest of either serious art or a serious museum to defend a shoddy journalistic practice, that is his business. My business is to point out the practice is shoddy.

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Galleries & Museums/John Gruen

NEW WORLDS
TO CONQUER

The informational machine (or "visual jukebox") at MOMA

"Information" (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd): The dissolution of art as we have known it is decidedly upon us. This marathon show is an attempt to pinpoint the international climate of art since communication systems have reduced the world to a village. By inviting over 100 artists from countries including Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, France, West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan, Persia, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and the United States, the museum attempts to prove that art is definitely no longer a matter of stretching a canvas and daubing paint on it.

The main premise of the exhibition is that art has nothing whatever to do with the making of specific objects. The international movement deals more in concepts, or with activities in which outside environments are brought into play. Thus, creative work may take place far away from museums and galleries—in distant deserts and fields, for example, or even in the artist's mind—and may be translated into some form of rendering or documentation.

The advent of "minimal," "conceptual," and "ecological" art stresses the idea that visual communication is negligible in an age of rapidly transmitted information. The artists involved question the validity of painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, photography, film, theatre, music, dance and poetry as entities existing within their own frames of reference.

These new young artists have observed how newspapers, films and periodicals disseminate information in a matter of days, hours, or minutes; how television can instantaneously bring a war or a walk on the moon into one's living room; how an exchange of ideas and information can take place by simply picking up the telephone; how messages by cablegram or radio, can

reach their destination in no time at all; how the mails bring every type of communication into millions of households and offices throughout the world; how people themselves can be jetted to any part of the globe in a few hours, and how the universe itself can be explored by men.

In observing these global and celestial forms of traffic, the artists have become painfully aware of the limitations of, say, a single one-man show in a gallery or museum in New York, Paris, or Tokyo. And they have come to the conclusion that to embrace the communications media, to work with it and through it, is the only way in which their ideas can be fully communicated and understood. They have envisioned an art commensurate with a rapidly changing world.

The results of this kind of rethinking have now been compiled in a show that is altogether fascinating and illuminating. Assistant curator Kynaston McShine, director of the exhibition, has brought together a world of ideas, documents, photographs and objects of communication. Concerns with the new technology abound. Films shown on a "visual jukebox," produced by Olivetti, offer manifold and varied information. Works on tape transmit sounds and stimuli designed to shake up the senses. Projects, "imaginary" and not, provide intellectual stimulation of one sort or another. Environmental and ecological works put one in contact with a creative drive outside the confines of all established visual preconceptions. In addition, a series of "Information" events are planned within the museum, and around New York.

Whether we like it or not, this is clearly the art of the future. All we can ask of it is that it also produce some magic, some poetry, something that might hopefully stir the soul.

ART



Newweek photos by Robert R. McIlroy

Information Please

The artists whose works are now assembled at New York's Museum of Modern Art under the enigmatic title "Information" see a world girdled, crowded and crossed with telephone wires, television signals and telex machines—the media of communication. They see vendors hawking newspapers, mailboxes stuffed with magazines and letters, libraries jammed with books, all bearing information to influence crucial decisions made by individuals, by corporations, by entire sociocultural systems, including their own art world. They see computers, too, fed information both by men and by other computers, influencing decisions that reach further and further into our lives. It is the network of messages that this art celebrates—and uses.

The cryptic word "Information" is short and to the point. So are the blown-up photographs, newspaper articles and telegrams that festoon MOMA's walls; and the telecopiers, the dial-a-poem telephones and the giant visual jukebox constructed by the Olivetti Corp., with 40 peepholes through which bits and pieces of 83 films can be watched by spectators. "This exhibition doesn't have the same visual impact as one devoted to abstract expressionism," admits curator Kynaston McShine, who organized "Information." "A main point is to inform both the public and other artists about what's going on. The show is more literary than most art exhibits. It's also more participative. The visitors do enjoy themselves, but it's a very serious exhibit at the same time."

Mail: Very serious and very playful. There are two Plexiglas boxes by Hans Haacke, into which visitors may drop "yes" or "no" answers to pressing political questions, which are changed daily. John Van Saun supplies a broken cardboard wall and photographs of him breaking it. Argentina's Group Frontera



'Information': Olivetti jukebox (left) and John Van Saun's wall

has erected a videotape booth, in which the public can record itself live, then watch the results on delayed replay. Paul Pechter distributes handbills that invite questions by mail about the exact location of his works—innocuous, unlabeled objects scattered about the museum. Vito Aconci's contribution is a mailbox, or "Service Area," where he comes each day to pick up his mail, forwarded by the post office. "The piece is performed," he writes, "by the postal service . . . and by the senders of the mail, wherever they happen to be."

If all this sounds like the happenings of the late 1950s and street works of the late 1960s, with their emphasis on activity, fun and participation rather than the creation of objects—like paintings or works of sculpture—it should. "Information" gleefully mixes together products and processes drawn from almost every avant-garde movement launched in the last decade. The visual jukebox is loaded with old and new underground films, one of them Andy Warhol's "Empire State," which focuses for six and a half hours upon that building. Michael Heizer documents a magnificent desert explosion, "Displaced-Replaced Mass," through photographs—a familiar tactic of earth art, which uses the land as a matrix into which new forms can be etched. Naturally "Information" is saturated with the products of conceptual art, which communicates through written and recorded verbal messages rather than conventional works of art.

Wires: It is a gleeful mix, yes, but thoroughly confusing to the layman, who meets this rich assemblage of wires and machines for the first time in the context of art. "Information" is no model of conceptual clarity, and the work it parades now before the public cries out for better packaging. On the deepest level, however, there is a coherent link between all the artists on display at MOMA, no matter how conflicting their methods and materials. Each man re-

flects a determination to turn the communications media, new or old, to his own ends—precisely as his colleagues in painting and sculpture have manipulated pigment, marble and, more recently, light and sound.

Walter De Maria's contribution—a magazine article about his work, enlarged to wall size—is a choice metaphor for "Information," confronting us with a crucial fact about art now. For better or worse, it reaches its largest audience not through the traditional gallery or museum but through articles, reproductions, television and more—through those girdling belts of communication. Face this fact, "Information" is saying, don't ignore it. In a world structured by a network of messages, the artist must send along that system as well as receive.

—DOUGLAS DAVIS

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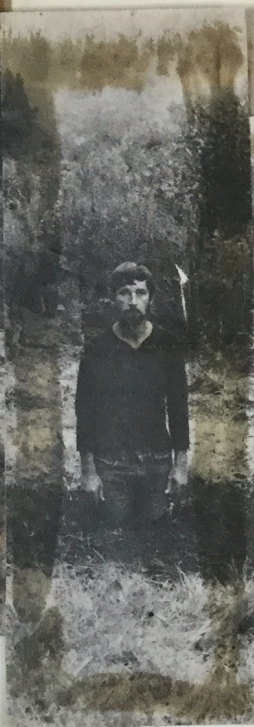
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strategy employed to
'The content of my work is the strategy
ensure that there is no content other than the strategy'



PARTING SHOTS

This disappearing act was performed by Artist Keith Arnatt at Tintern near Chepstow in Monmouthshire, England and recorded in a series of photographs which are now on display in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The artist explains his purpose in the statement printed above. But his explanation still

leaves some questions unanswered. Was Arnatt trying—as few artists have dared—to achieve a total synthesis with his medium, in this case terra firma? Was he aiming to raise the burgeoning Earth Art movement to new heights by running himself into the ground? And finally, does Mr. Arnatt dig his own art?

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Sequence photos flow on walls of Museum of Modern Art in New York, where a mini-skirted appreciator adds bit of dash with her decoratively patterned costume.

THE GALLERY GOER becomes part of a work of art by attending a show called Information at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The works by more than 150 young artists from 15 countries "reach out to an audience," according to Kynaston McShine, associate curator, who selected the exhibits.

An observer, for instance, may find himself barred from close viewing of a photo montage by a low wooden platform. The platforms have been placed in the galleries by Stig Broegger of Denmark. The reaction of people to the platforms is part of the exhibit.

"The young artists attempt to be poetic and imaginative without being either aloof or condescending," says Mr. McShine. "This has led them into communications areas that Information reflects."

Group Frontera (Argentina) has a tape recording booth for visitors to answer questions. Others can watch themselves on six-screen TV setup.

In another spot, white cards are provided for the expression of ideas. At the end of the exhibit, the artist will read all the ideas, condense them into one representative idea, and forget it. There's a ballot box with yes-and-no divisions in which you are invited to vote with any paper, even a candy wrapper. The question is a political issue. Photo-electric counters tally the vote and the papers form a decorative display inside clear plastic containers.



Responses lean toward self-consciousness as visitors look at themselves on a bank of six TV screens as this group is doing.

Art Is a Two-Way Street

The Viewer Comes to See and Appreciate and in Turn Is Seen and Appreciated.

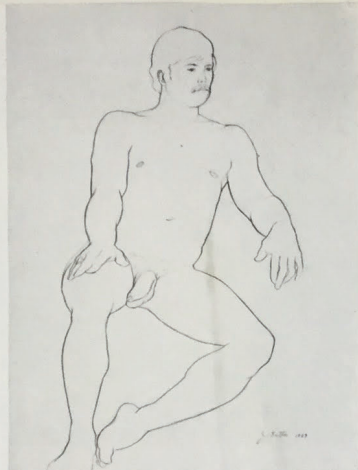


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Richard Artschwager, I
You
He-She
They

(Aerial view of Ciudad Juarez, Chih.)



David De Porte allowed himself to be drawn by a number of "quick sketch artists." (J. Button, 1969)

some of his artists seem to have realized this but are not yet ready to exploit it.

Our objections to values that are products of logic, objective thought and common sense aren't surprising. "The struggle against common sense is the beginning of speculative thinking, and the loss of everyday security is the beginning of philosophy."²

McShine's exhibition raises all sorts of questions that pertain directly to the art exhibition process. However the show itself is not as effective as it should be because it accepts certain other values that should also be questioned. The responsibility for *unquestioned* acceptance lies with both artists and curator. How then could this exhibition have been made more radical, more threatening and more provocative?

In an art exhibition the works of art are perceived within a frame of reference. In this case the museum is our frame of reference for the art works and interacts with them in providing the meaning, and the information that the observer expects to receive. The information at "Information" could have been more informative if it had been more absurd and in defiance of common sense, and if it had been more responsive toward its frame of reference.

Many new artists seem prepared to accept the notion that art should be absurd but, at the same time they are unwilling to actually do it. Systemic processes that are based upon so-called "common sense" criteria don't work because the very premise of the common sense process is usually false. Common sense assumes that we perceive the reality of an object or phenomenon and, of course, what we perceive is usually only a fraction of the truth of the object. What common sense regards as certain is, frequently, not certain at all. More often it is temporary, superficial and flatly erroneous. Common sense then assumes that authentic reality can be perceived and usually that's impossible. Therefore conclusions

²R. W. Marks, *The Meaning of Marcuse*, Ballantine, N.Y., 1970.

based upon false assumptions are generally false as well. Thus the modern fascination with the absurd and the outrageous is consistent with the principles of traditional logic; the ridiculous is more logical than the sensical.

The frame of reference problem is, in a sense, new. Or, at any rate, newly discovered in art. The frame of reference identifies and gives meaning to any art document and without it the document is invisible and quite useless. The gallery or museum is a frame of reference for art. A book or catalog can be another. Wherever the art is presented is its frame of reference. If the frame of reference is so important, why can it not be used to enhance the effectiveness of the artwork?

For example, art statements, documentations, illustrations and proposals are frequently given their meaning by the location in which they are found. What is found on the Museum of Modern Art wall would have an entirely different meaning (if any at all) if it were found on an empty seat on the BMT subway. The fact that certain material is exhibited in the galleries and printed in a catalog of the Museum of Modern Art is what's important here and without this special location and reference many of the works would be almost totally meaningless. In effect, they would cease to exist as art.

Thus frame of reference is a new problem with which the new type of Conceptual and Documentation Art must contend. It isn't nearly the same problem to a painting by Stella, for example, which wouldn't change much if it were found on an empty seat of the BMT or on the wall of the Museum.

One result from the new frame of reference concept is that art works have to be made specifically for the Museum of Modern Art, and that's what's wrong. They should have been made *against* it. By making works for the museum, the potential of a negative confrontation is wasted. There is no polarization. The energy of the

frame of reference has been ignored. Part of the life of the artwork is missing.

Polarization in art means the breaking down of boundaries. That's what polarization leads to. A vital interaction between art work and frame of reference would result in healthy provocation concerning the identification of each. Modern art in a pre-revolutionary society cannot be content to merely beautify or improve the existing social and cultural reality. Instead it should widen the gap that already exists between that which is and a vision of what can be. The artworks in "Information," and works by the Earth and Conceptual artists in general, stop someplace in the middle of these two attitudes. They neither seriously improve our perception of prevailing reality, nor do they significantly widen the gap that exists between the reality that is and that should be.

President Nixon, his advisors and ministers are important modern artists because they have helped dramatize if not widen that gulf between what is and what should be. The bulk of the works in the big "Information" exhibition are not nearly abusive enough toward their frame of reference or cognizant of their power *vis-à-vis* it. The intentions of the artists are serious; their works are serious too. But that means nothing.

There's something happening at the Museum of Modern Art and this is what it is. There is a new trend that seems to shift the emphasis from historical type exhibitions (retrospectives, etc.) that are mainly attempts on the part of the curatorial staff to justify their own critical opinions and to determine the history of art—to exhibitions that are risky and that may possess only temporary meaning—as temporary as the installation itself. In some ways at least, the new here-today-gone-tomorrow art concept is getting the exhibition it deserves. Or is it? The exhibition process is improving but it isn't keeping up with art. Nor is the artist.

The young critics today have enormous sympathy for new art but little patience with it. Many feel that the great bulk of new art (including Conceptual, Earth and Anti-Art) is old fashioned. At any rate it isn't nearly radical enough and at least in some instances the motives of new artists have been questioned. Change isn't coming about nearly fast enough in art, in art publishing, in art exhibiting, and in art thinking. However Curator Licht's "Spaces" show is an example of the new type of exhibition process and since it is so closely followed by Curator McShine's "Information" we might assume that it is not simply coincidence. Of course, among the curatorial staff at MOMA, Licht and McShine have broadest support among new artists and the young writers. And that doesn't say too much. Some of the other curators are so universally detested that it's a wonder their offices aren't firebombed.

Long live scholarship, but don't bore us to death with it. And I don't just mean the artist and curators. A lot of critics wouldn't sign a letter supporting the New York Art Strike's demand that the museums shut down for one day in May (as part of the protest against American racist and war policies). The critics thought it was a "negative" gesture. You know, the great silent majority aren't construction workers; they are art critics. Art critics are the only segment (as minute as it is) of the populace that has yet to be heard from.

Curator McShine has played right into their hands by providing us with an *exhibition* of art criticism which is, in many ways, just as vapid as is much of the recently *published* art criticism. Critics refuse to act because they fear supporting "negative" actions. The most negative actions were indeed their refusals. Suddenly, in case you haven't noticed, everybody is against the war, etc. But as one young kid announced at the big meeting of the art community at N.Y.U. in May—nobody in art is willing to put his body on the line. ("Information" will be on view at MOMA, July 2-Sept. 20.)



Bernar Venet, *New York Stock Exchange at Wall Street* (1970-71).

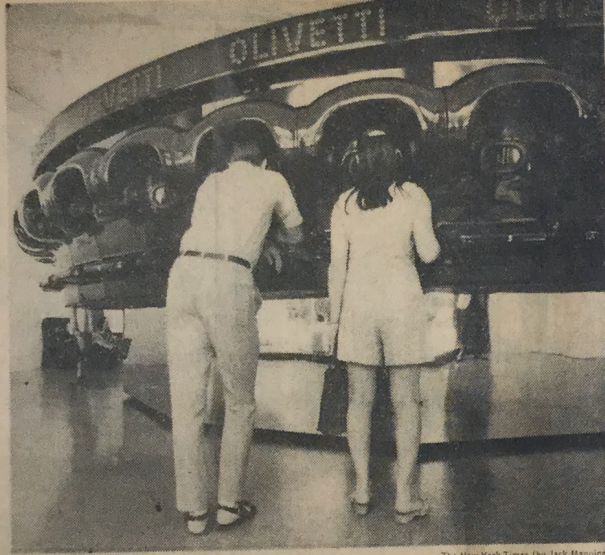
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Show at the Modern Raises Questions

By HILTON KRAMER

"Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?" This question—not the sort one is usually invited to entertain in an art exhibition—is, quite literally, the first question a visitor to the new "Information" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art is asked to consider. The exhibition, organized by Kynaston McShine, associate curator of the museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, is said to be "an international report on recent activity of young artists." It opens to the public today.

The poll of museum visitors on Mr. Rockefeller's political popularity is part of no, come to think of it, it's the whole of—the contribution of Hans Haacke, a German-born artist who has lived in New York for some years, to the "Information" show. A transparent plexiglass box is provided for the "Yes" and "No" ballots. Yesterday, at the preview for museum members, the "Yes" votes were slightly more numerous than the "No" pile. This, presumably, is the bit of information Mr. Haacke wishes to convey to us.



The New York Times (by Jack Manning)

Visitors to the Museum of Modern art at Olivetti's contribution to "Information" show

After Mr. Haacke's poll, the visitor encounters an "information machine," otherwise called a "visual jukebox," provided by the Olivetti Corporation. This round structure contains 40 individual screens through which one can view films ranging from the merely boring to the thoroughly stupefying. This is information? So, at least, it pleases the museum to allege.

Beyond this point, I am not sure I can give a very accurate or coherent account of what the visitor to this exhibition is invited to look at, listen to, sit down on, clamber over, go to sleep in, write on, stand in front of, read, and otherwise connect with. There are a great many blow-ups of junky photographic materials, much written matter, some green telephones on which one can dial-a-poem, documents — photographic and otherwise — of earthworks, all manner of facetious games, much in the way of Xeroxing, closed-circuit television on which the visitor can

view himself, on delayed tape, answering various questions, and a table of political pamphlets denouncing war, racism, etc.

The exhibition is, in its way, amusing and amazing, but only because it upholds an attitude one had scarcely thought worth entertaining: an attitude toward the artistic process that is so overweeningly intellectual that it is, in its feeble results, virtually mindless. Here all the detritus of modern printing and electronic communications media has been transformed by an international gaggle of demi-intellectuals into a low grade form of show business. It leaves one almost nostalgic for a good old-fashioned hand-made happening.

What, you may well wonder, is politics doing in this potpourri of mind-flattening gags, gimmicks and games? Is this the politicalization of art we have of late been hearing so much about? Pos-

sibly, but I doubt it. For what we are offered here is, if anything, a development even worse to contemplate than the politicalization of art—it is the estheticizing of political clichés. Having trivialized the very concept of art, the exhibition takes perhaps the next logical step by ingesting a large diet of serious social and political issues and transforming them into a waste product of esthetic trifles.

There are more than 150 artists—or "artists"—from 15 countries represented in the "Information" show. Clearly, the disturbance in the esthetic atmosphere they represent is something that needs to be noticed. But there is a fundamental contradiction involved in devoting a large museum exhibition to a phenomenon that is, in its essence, a polemic against the whole concept of museum art and the museumization of art. It is too much, I suppose, to expect the Museum of Modern Art to recognize this fact, for such recognition

might lead to a calamitous conclusion, namely, that there are just conceivably some esthetic fashions that have not earned the right to be given museum hospitality. What a radical ideal! Certainly too radical for the museum to contemplate.

What this unhappy development really represents is a yearning to be delivered from the problems and complexities of modern industrial civilization. For all its indulgence in the paraphernalia of technology and communications systems, this so-called "information" movement is nothing but an ill-conceived attempt to turn modern technological culture into a form of pastoral. It is, in other words, the latest species of esthetic escapism—in this case, an escape from mind itself. It would be lamentable even if it were not so egregiously boring, but in the end it is the sheer weight of its boredom that is most repellent.

New Show at Modern Expands Art's Bounds

Cookies made from the ashes of burnt paintings. A 12-foot-high "nest" structure on which one can rest, climb or sit. A computer print-out that makes a nine-and-one-half foot column weighing 500 pounds.

These are some of the exhibits in "Information," a new art show that opens Thursday at the Museum of Modern Art. The show, selected by Kynaston McShine, associate curator of painting and sculpture, contains work by more than 150 artists from 15 countries. Their only common denominator, according to Mr. McShine, is that they are trying to extend the idea of art beyond the traditional categories of painting, sculpture, photography, theater, and dance.

"Their activity," he adds, "is to think of concepts that are broader and more cerebral than the expected product of the studio." The show also includes film and video tapes, documentation of works that have or have not taken place.

out to him that artists like Rembrandt, Goya, Daumier, and more recently Grosz, Shahn and Baskin, along with many, many others over the years, have done more to help us understand the human condition than any of the perpetrators of the preposterous junk he has seen fit to foist on us as art.

First prize in the ho-hum department must surely go to MOMA for this one.

CHARLOTTE FRIEDMAN

To the Editor:

Hilton Kramer seems to have missed the point of the "Information" show at the Museum of Modern Art. He does not understand that the entire exhibition is actually a scream of desperation from a group of disenfranchised individuals who are caught in an ideological bind.

As artists they ache to perform some meaningful function in a world racked with repression and incarcerated in a technological Iron Maiden; at the same time, they sincerely believe that art, as it has been defined up until now, is of little value to the modern world. Not knowing which way to move, these artists mark time masochistically by lacerating themselves with the very instruments that have brought them to this impotent pass.

Within this museum, which many of them have denounced as an elitist anachronism, they display the mechanically manufactured waste products of our overcrowded technological urban culture. Using cameras, tape recorders, television screens, and Xerox machines, the exhibitors mock their own art activities and question the validity of their right to exist as artists.

Is this destructive behavior necessary? Is it a cleansing and purifying process that will bring about a rebirth of art in a new and vital form, or is it an example of a schizophrenic flight from reality? Who can say? On the other hand, one can say that it is unrealistic for artists to expect to solve the social and economic ills of the world, and it is even more unrealistic for art critics to blame them for not doing so.

CINDY NEMSER

To the Editor:

I share wholeheartedly Hilton Kramer's opinion of the Museum of Modern Art's "Information" show.

Every one of the items in the exhibition is built around the sort of idea that routinely gets "run up the flagpole" at ad agencies or other communications establishments and is discarded for want of even the merest flutter. Yet here they are presented to us as the best of avant-garde production.

There is not a single original thought anywhere in this chic and glossy package. It has all been done better before. Take for example the layout of continuous photographs of a Los Angeles street: I have a lovely little early 19th-century book called "Grand Panorama of London" that did the same thing much better. It is an 18-foot fold-out engraving showing the banks of the Thames with each building identified. Or take the elaborate nonsense built around a TV set: you can see yourself on TV at the RCA showroom in Rockefeller Center in a display that has been operating for many years.

The show is embarrassingly self-conscious, a pompous bore, and utterly lacking in content or form of interest or use to anyone. As for Kynaston McShine's comment on the uselessness of dabbling paint on canvas, I wish someone would point

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DIAL-A-POEM

AN EDITORIAL DIARY

GLASGOW HERALD, GLASGOW, SCOTLAND, AUGUST 31, 1970

Oppressed? Dial 956-7032

By LINDSY VAN GELDER

Some folks dial-a-prayer for their inspiration. Others subscribe to the belief that God is dead but Che lives—and now they can dial-a-revolutionary at 956-7032.

You can, for example, hear Kathleen Cleaver give her version of the slaying of Black Panther Bobby Hutton in a confrontation with West Coast police:

"A tear gas canister hit Eldridge . . . Bobby Hutton came out first with his hands up in the air . . . He was viciously shot down by a volley of machine gun fire. No question as to whether he had a gun or not. He was murdered."

Or you can hear Allen Ginsberg chant Mantras. Weatherwoman Bernardine Dohrn announce that her group will bomb a symbol of "American imperialism." Abbie Hoffman tell college kids to get their guns.

The dial-a-radical service was organized by poet John Giorno for a current exhibit on "Information" by the Museum of Modern Art.

According to Giorno, the program costs the museum \$280 a month for phone bills and tapes. Poets donate their services, vice free.

"At this point, with the war and the repression and everything, we thought this was a good way for the Movement to reach people," said Giorno. He reported that the service had logged some 78,000 calls in less than two months and would be continued by the Museum after the exhibit closed later this month.

A spokeswoman for the Museum said there had been no complaints about the revolutionary nature of the messages.

Others represented on the tapes include jailed White Panther leader John Sinclair, Catholic activist Ted Berrigan, author William Burroughs, Bobby Seale, John Catoe and others.

One poem, "Revolutionary Letter No. 7," by Diane Di Prima, gives young revolutionaries some special advice:

"There are those who can tell you how to make Molotov cocktails, flamethrowers, bombs—whatever you might be needing. Find them, and learn . . . It is even possible on the East Coast to find an isolated place for target practice. Success will depend mostly on your state of mind. Meditate, pray, make love, be prepared at any time to die."

Giorno said that the dial-a-poem concept was inaugurated in early 1969 under the sponsorship of the Architectural League and was later taken over in Chicago by the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Revived by the Museum of Modern Art for the exhibit, the service offers 12 different tapes daily.

The original service included all types of poetry, but now it is devoted "more than three-fourths of the time to radical poets and movement people, because what they have to say is so important now," Giorno said.

IF YOU are feeling particularly affluent and are suddenly overtaken by a thirst for poetic comfort you can now pick up the telephone anywhere in the world, ask the operator for New York 212-956-7032 and you can hear one of 50 poets reciting his own poetry.

Admittedly, the poetry may not be entirely to your liking. For one thing the poets are all alive, which rules out Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Longfellow, Pushkin, and the myriad hosts who have written their names in the great book of Poetry. Secondly, the dial-a-poem works cannot be called representative of the world's poetic inspiration circa 1970. The offerings of verse, organised by New York's Museum of Modern Art, deal mainly with the revolutionary struggles of the New Left, drug trips, and "Gestapo" tactics by the American police in dealing with student demonstrators. Dial-a-(Protest)-Poem may be a truer description of the service.

However, in this country we don't need to dial all the way to New York to hear poetry on the electric wires. Since early this year we have been able to dial a poem by phoning Cardiff 44153. The Welsh Arts Council commissioned 52 poets (Welsh poets) last year to write a poem for the service. A new poem recorded by its author is available each week for a year starting last February. Callers can hear the poem in English or Welsh with an English translation. Fee for the call is apparently standard. Poets receive £1 a minute for the recording time with a limit of eight minutes.

The dial-a-poem idea was started several years ago by one John Giorno, an American poet who thought about the idea while telephoning the recorded weather report service. The Architectural League of New York took up the idea and sponsored the service. In the pioneering effort the poets recorded their work free.

It was quite a success although it upset a number of telephone subscribers whose number was nearly

the same. There was one particular New Yorker whose telephone number was habitually rung in error by poetry lovers and who told them of their mistake in language which was forceful and dramatic if scarcely poetic.

Anyone interested in hearing poetry through the medium of dial-a-poem services (which are certain to become more popular) must accept that technical eccentricities may at times upset his full appreciation of the poet's work.

Apart from the hazard of wrong numbers there is the risk of disconnected lines. A loud buzzing tone, for example may give a quite unequivocal reply to Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be or not to be . . ."

Tennyson's light, enchanted sounds from Elfland, "O hark, O hark! Now this and clear . . ." may be suddenly replaced by an angry engaged, not engaging, tone.

And pity the enthusiastic caller, wide mouthed in his call box, sighing to the rhythmic excellence of "I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows, where oxlips and the nodding . . ." who is

interrupted by a peremptory demand to "put in another shilling, caller."

Perish the thought of crossed lines in the dial-a-poem service:—"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate: Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar, Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight— No more. Ah, Tam! Ah, Tam! Thou'lt get they fairin'! In Hell they'll roast thee like a heron!" Farewell! A long farewell . . .

'Twould make a very nonsense out of verse, reduce Donne to doggerel and Shakespeare to scorn: poems without rhythm, without form, lacking colour or rhyme. Come to think of it, that is possibly what you would hear to-day if you picked up the phone and Dialed-a-(Protest)-Poem on New York 212-956-7032.

Personally, we'll stick to dialing "TIM" for our telephonic cultural sessions.

These days, anyone can dial a telephone and receive recorded messages, ranging from dial-a-prayer to dial-a-poet. At the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, a new wrinkle has been added: You now can dial-a-revolutionary.

This service, if it can be called that, offers recorded messages by Kathleen Cleaver, Weatherwoman Bernardine Dohrn, Abbie Hoffman Allen Ginsberg, and other members of the radical left. One message, recorded by a radical poet, admonishes listeners to "meditate, pray, make love, be prepared to die at any time." Hoffman urges his listeners to arm themselves, and Mrs. Cleaver gives a highly biased account of how Black Panther Bobby Hutton died in a gun battle with police—it was all the honky fascist pig's fault, y'know. All told, callers can hear 12 different tapes replayed each day.

The dial-a-revolutionary project was set up in conjunction with a museum exhibition on information and communication, but it will continue after the exhibition closes. So far, 78,000 calls have come in the Dial-a-Revolutionary, and the Museum's phone bills run \$280 a month. No doubt sponsorship of this service will assure the Museum a favored position in the Third World: Come the revolution, perhaps the Museum will become the communication center to convey even more radical rhetoric to the masses.

Despite the rush, the poem contained highly mystical overtones, instead of the much-publicised revolutionary struggles of the New Left, drug trips and "Gestapo" tactics by the American police dealing with demos.

PROCLAMATION

"I cannot be satisfied until I speak with angels," I heard on the transatlantic line.

The poet, after hailing the great avatars of the ages, proclaimed this legacy of revelation was not enough. She needed, she said, to east her own self into the Cosmos . . . "to unlock that door which stands already open, and enter into the presence of that which I cannot imagine."

"I require to behold the eye of God . . . I require answers to which I have not yet learnt the questions."

With which pearl of wisdom the dial-a-poem service, after a mild advertisement giving the telephone number, went off the air.

Agog for more, I asked the operator to allow me another poem. Nothing doing, I would have to make another call, he said.

So I contented myself with being left with the thoughts of a chatter-up of angels.

Then came what was probably the most expensive poem — at R6.30 for three minutes — ever heard in South Africa. It is untitled because, as the poet, whose name was not disclosed, explained she had "only finished it last night."

By MANUEL CORREIA

IN THE United States there is a poet who cannot be satisfied until she speaks with angels, I learnt yesterday.

I'm no angel. But I had the urge to try the new Dial-a-Poem service for the culture-hungry started this week by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The puzzled operator who dialled New York 212-956-7032 for me, said he thought he was hearing things. He was. The recorded voice of the poet herself.

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This is AMERICA

It had to happen—
dial-a-revolution!

NEW YORK, Thursday

FEELING a little oppressed today I rang the latest New York service . . . Dial-a-Revolutionary. I heard every permutation of rebellion—from Chicago Seven conspirator Abbie Hoffman telling college kids to get their guns—to poet Allen Ginsberg philosophising about revolution.

Kathleen Cleaver, wife of exiled Black Panther field marshal Eldridge Cleaver, gave her version of the death of Panther Bobby Hutton in a confrontation with West Coast police.

"A tear gas canister hit Eldridge . . . Bobby Hutton came out first with his hands up in the air . . . He was viciously shot down by a volley of machine-gun fire. No question as to whether he had a gun or not. He was murdered."

Poetess Diane Di Prima advised young revolutionaries to learn how to make Molotov cocktails and "be prepared at any time to die."

I was through to the Museum of Modern Art for this earful of what is tantamount to treason. Twelve tape recordings of work by revolutionary poets form part of a current exhibition "Information" and may now become a permanent feature of the museum.

After a basinful of sedition I felt like ringing Dial-a-Wig. Instead I rang Dial-a-Prayer and got an opposite commentary on our rebel friends and a clergyman wanting us to thank God for our life, knowledge, and freedom.

DAILY EXPRESS, LONDON, ENGLAND, SEPTEMBER 4, 1970

CHATTING UP THE ANGELS CAN BE COSTLY

By MANUEL CORREIA

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NATIONAL REVIEW, OCTOBER 6, 1970

■ For one thin dime (slightly more from out of town), you can bring the revolution right into your homes. New York's Museum of Modern Art has set up a dial-a-radical service consisting of six hundred tapes by such types as Eldridge Cleaver and Bernardine Dohrn. So if your kids yearn to learn to make bombs and seek for reasons to throw them at things, just have them dial 212-956-7032. But don't you worriers who wouldn't want your daughter to become a Weatherwoman fret too much. Given the condition of New York's phone service, she probably won't get through until she's old enough to know better.

These days, anyone can dial a telephone and receive recorded messages, ranging from dial-a-prayer to dial-a-poet. At the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, a new wrinkle has been added: You now can dial-a-revolutionary.

This service, if it can be called that, offers recorded messages by Kathleen Cleaver, Weatherwoman Bernardine Dohrn, Abbie Hoffman Allen Ginsberg, and other members of the radical left. One message, recorded by a radical poet, admonishes listeners to "meditate, pray, make love, be prepared to die at any time." Hoffman urges his listeners to arm themselves, and Mrs. Cleaver gives a highly biased account of how Black Panther Bobby Hutton died in a gun battle with police—it was all the honky fascist pig's fault, y'know. All told, callers can hear 12 different tapes replayed each day.

The dial-a-revolutionary project was set up in conjunction with a museum exhibition on information and communication, but it will continue after the exhibition closes. So far, 78,000 calls have come in the Dial-a-Revolutionary, and the Museum's phone bills run \$280 a month. No doubt sponsorship of this service will assure the Museum a favored position in the Third World: Come the revolution, perhaps the Museum will become the communication center to convey even more radical rhetoric to the masses.

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Wake Up, America...

ALAN DALE

SPECTATOR, BROOKLYN, N.Y., SEPTEMBER 13, 1970

Museum of Modern Art
Finances Revolutionary Messages!

On September 4, 1970, Dick Cavett told the Nation about a telephone service people could dial to hear a "revolutionary poem." Cavett added - "You can hear Abbie Hoffman reading a poem, or you can hear Eldridge Cleaver reading a poem he wrote or something, and I thought it was a gag and I called it. It's real!"

Cavett also nebulously described it as "part of a thing, I don't know what it is. The Museum is behind it or something." (Whom are you kidding, Dick?)

LET US BE SPECIFIC! These are the facts: the telephone service that was "advertised" without charge, coast-to-coast on the ABC Network by Cavett consists of revolutionary messages which include Abbie Hoffman telling college kids to get their guns; Kathleen Cleaver vowing that the Black Panther Party shall prevail; Weatherwoman Bernadine Dohrn announcing that her group will bomb a symbol of "American Imperialism"; Diane Di Prima giving young revolutionaries some special advice: "There are those who can tell you how to make Molotov cocktails, flamethrowers, bombs, whatever you might be needing. Find them and learn...It is even possible on the East Coast to find an isolated place for target practice...Meditate, pray, make love, be prepared at any time to die."

These messages are prepared by the *Giorno Poetry System*. (Poetry?) Why pays for this? The Museum of Modern Art!

According to *Giorno* - "The program costs the museum \$280 a month for phone calls and tapes." *Giorno* said, "At this point, with the war and the repression and everything, we thought this was a good way for the Movement to reach people." *Giorno* also said the service would be continued by the Museum after the exhibit closed.

Giorno's comments, and several of the preceding "messages" were reported in the *New York Post* of September 2.

DAVID ROCKEFELLER is chairman of the board of the Museum of Modern Art. He is the chairman of the board of trustees of the institution that pays for this telephone information that is utilized by those whose purpose it is to overthrow the Government, to bomb private property, and to assassinate police and anyone else who stands in the way of the Revolution.

According to the *N.Y. Post*, a spokeswoman for the Museum said there had been no complaints about the revolutionary nature of the messages. We can sure as hell change that! You have every right - in fact it is your duty to demand from David Rockefeller and the Museum of Modern Art that they explain why they are paying the bills for The Revolution!

The address of the Museum is 11 W. 53rd St., New York City. Perhaps you could get a group of people together and visit the Museum - and ask the questions in person. Ask for the director of the Museum or someone in the executive office. Don't be satisfied to be patronized by a secretary or a guard. Talk to someone in charge. Perhaps you could convince them that they are subsidizing terror and treason. Of course, I don't think they believe they are financing Mary Poppins, but maybe they're just stupid and not really traitors. Remind them what the Panthers have promised to do, and what they have already done. Remind them what the Weathermen have done with their bombs. Remind them that the people they finance seek to overthrow the Government. Ask the people in charge of the Museum if they, too, seek the overthrow of the Government. If they say "no," ask them why they

pay the tab for those who do. If they say "yes," they are traitors. There is a law against treason.

One thing we must do. We must learn who is for the Republic and who is against it. You owe that to yourselves and to your children. The final confrontation is inevitable, and when it comes, knowing your enemy may save your lives!

NOW, IF YOU WANT INFORMATION about matters such as this, there is also a telephone number you can call to receive messages directed to those who want to save the Constitutional Republic. The number is 273-6500. It is a service called "Let Freedom Ring!" There is a different message each week - and you may call anytime, day or night, including Sundays. Tell your friends. You should hear the other side of the issues. You must decide what is truth and what is conspiracy and treason.

Meanwhile, according to the Fairness Doctrine of the Communications Act, ABC should also "give a plug" to this other telephone service. I leave that simple broadcasting matter to the individuals who bring you "Let Freedom Ring!" If they want any information, they could contact me at The SPECTATOR.

I SUGGEST THAT YOU read this column once again before you put it away. Ask yourself if you will just sit still while the enemy systematically prepares to destroy you and your Country with the financial aid of the Leonard Bernstein and The Museum of Modern Art - and the promotional aid of people like Cavett and the networks. Think of the major publishers who feed the kitty of Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, and Cleaver by publishing their books. Think that the money will be used for The Revolution, and for killing "pigs" and assassinating the President, senators and J. Edgar Hoover. (These are their promises, not my opinions!) Think of the celebrities who support and finance anarchists, murderers, and traitors. Think of the dead policemen, and the bombings, and the intimidated campuses, and the arsenals being created across the country to be used against the police, the Government - and you!

There is a Revolution going on while you're sleeping! You want it that way? No? So, what are you going to do about it?

WAKE UP, AMERICA!!!

LIFE COMMENT

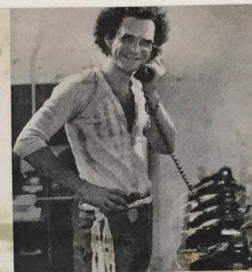
No dialogue in
Dial-a-Culture

POETRY ON THE TELEPHONE

If you stroke a cat about nine and a half million times, you generate enough electricity to light up the largest American flag for about one minute.

I heard these statistics the other day over my telephone, through a service called Dial-a-Poem which is temporarily turned off but is bound to crop up again soon. Since my phone had broken down three times last summer, due to overloading of lines and equipment, I have doubts about the utility of such enterprises. But thousands of recorded services are now in use across the country, including more than 3,000 in New York City. Like some modern Delphic oracle, the telephone not only offers bulletins on traffic jams, weather and bargain sales, but reaches out to fortify the Inner Man. For crusaders who want to locate a picket line there is Dial-a-Demonstration; for artists, Dial-a-Model; and for souls in distress, Dial-a-Shoulder. For stargazers, there is Dial-a-Satellite, telling you where to look for flying hardware; and similarly, for ornithologists, Dial-a-Bird.

Of the lot, Dial-a-Poem is at once the most sophisticated and controversial. The service was installed in New York's Museum of Modern Art as part of its recent show *Information*, a display of ways and devices for servicing information. The lines about cat-stroking are from a poem by Ted Berrigan, one of 50 New York bards—all spouting their own works—who could be dialed 24 hours a day.



Dial-a-Poem's Poet Giorno

The poetry geyser in fact emerged from a row of 12 unattended phones in the museum's attic. Each had its own tape-recorder box, playing a single poem when dialed. The tapes were changed daily. Your call went first to phone No. 1. If it was busy, your call was switched automatically to No. 2, and so on to No. 12. The only hitch was that if you wanted to hear several poets, you might get stuck helplessly on No. 1. I began dialing early one morning and heard Bobby Seale over again seven times. And he isn't even a poet.

The phone company charged the museum \$284 for the 12 installations and in addition collected a monthly rent plus the standard 10¢ a call. The poets, as usual, didn't collect a cent. On some days, astonishingly, 8,000 people called, taking poetic potluck with whatever line was open. Most of them came during office hours when employees could call and listen at the boss's expense.

Dial-a-Poem has been installed twice before (by the Architectural League of New York and by Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art) and each time it has kicked up a ruckus, either because of its occasional use of taboo words or its spurts of radical propaganda. This in itself, I think, is a backhanded tribute to the power of Dial-a-Poem. Most of the transmit-

ted material had already been printed, with no public outcry. But over the phone it sounds so much more direct that steps were taken to abolish it. At least four members of the Modern Museum resigned in disgust.

The originator of Dial-a-Poem is a young underground poet, John Giorno, who makes tapes of his poet friends. Not too fussy about what poetry is, or is not, he includes bits from William Burroughs novels and speeches from Eldridge Cleaver, Abbie Hoffman and Bobby Seale. Yet the bulk of Giorno's grab bag is actual poetry from such hands as Allen Ginsberg and, unexpectedly, John Cage.

In principle I am receptive to such electronic blessings as Dial-a-Poem, receptive but wary. When fears beset me that, typical of our age, the contraption is outshining its content, I take heart from a recorded phone encounter I had with Dial-a-Prayer, a booming service that is sponsored now by many churches throughout America. "Oh, God," said the voice of Reverend Donald McFerren of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, praying into a tape machine, "let us never be afraid of a new idea or un-receptive to a new thought, lest we pull down the shades of our mind and exclude Thy light."

But I'm still wary. The trouble with dialing any recorded voice is that it doesn't give us a chance to talk back. It doesn't even know we exist. The phone system is sometimes called an exchange. But there's no exchange. Ironically, the glorious gadget that promotes human communication serves also to emphasize human isolation. If you had had Homer in your house, reciting the *Odyssey*, you could cheer or boo him, or ask him to recite over that bit about the Cyclops eating the sailors. Or if you needed spiritual solace, you could probably persuade your local Reverend to visit you. But the taped phone call doesn't hear your invitations.

Dial-a-Poem, and such, suggests the little man who wasn't there. And the little man is the listener himself.

by Tom Prideaux
LIFE Theater Critic

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series/Folder:
	KM	V.C.13.6*

IF AN exhibition called "Information" doesn't give you any, what have you got? At the Museum of Modern Art's elaborate new show so titled, it seems next to impossible to get any clear notion of either the museum's purpose in putting it on, or the ideas and spirit moving most of its participating artists.

A few things do come across loud and clear. A printed placard on the wall offers a statement by Andy Warhol: "In the future everybody will be famous for 15 minutes."

The very first item you see on entering the show is a pair of transparent plastic ballot boxes, offered as the work of Hans Haacke, over which a sign reads: "Would the fact that Gov. Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?"

Visitors are supposed to vote "yes" or "no" and drop their ballots in the appropriate box. One may wonder at the humor (propriety, obviously, is too archaic a concept even to have figured) of such poll-taking in a museum founded by the Governor's mother, headed now by his brother and served by himself and other members of his family in important financial and administrative capacities since its founding 40 years ago.

"Information," says the museum's announcement,



Art and the Artist

EMILY GENAUER

Now you can't fault artists for that. But what the show really suggests is that, feeling uneasy and obsolete in a world of instant communications dominated by calculating, copying, telex and all sorts of other machines, artists have decided boldly to move into the scene.

They're going to use it to their own expressive purpose, a legitimate and challenging idea if they've the imagination and sufficient technical know-how to do it.

Or they're going to put down the whole thing, which is also legitimate and challenging, if they've the wit and inventiveness to carry it off.

* * *

Actually neither approach—if these were the approaches—has worked. The show is full of elaborate gadgets, like an Olivetti contrivance called a "visual juke box," which is as big as a carousel and offers viewers 40 individual closed-circuit screens in which they can stare at paralyzingly dull films.

Some of the gadgets are simple ones, like a shelf of dial-a-poem telephones (that don't work).

And some are just words, like a blown-up telegram on the museum walls which reads: "Particulars relating to the information not contained herein constitute the form of the action," and signed by the artist, G. Koz.

lov. Or a sign by Vita Acconci which announces that since the artist is in a show at the museum and can use it as a post-office-box during the show, he's having his mail forwarded there. His "work" then, is the service performed by the post-office, delivering the mail, the act of the sender in mailing it, and his own in picking it up.

So, you figure, the whole show has to be a put-on. Only it can't be that easy. There are 150 artists from 15 countries represented in it, and I'm not ready to believe that that many people all over the world, not to mention the museum staff, would waste their time, energy and resources on a huge, terrible, unfunny joke.

Besides, another project, of similar nature, organized by the Smithsonian Institution and the Jewish Museum, and called "Software" will open in mid-September at that museum. This one will include the work of nineteen artists questioning how "personal and social sensibilities" have been altered by the "Cybernetic Revolution," and involve solar-powered radios, transmitters, teletype equipment, computers, or just documentation and proposals that are purely "conceptual."

The fact is that a revolution is going on in the world of art, a revolution which says that communications and ideas are all, and that form and image, as artists have given them to us from the beginning of time, are finished.

In view of the issues worrying the rest of the world, this may seem a revelation of consuming insignificance. It may also turn out to be about as permanent as a Roman candle. On the other hand, there were a couple of young fellows in Paris around 60 years ago, named Picasso, Braque and Gris, who decided cubes were more interesting than anything. And art never looked the same again.

* * *

If the new movement really takes off, it may be that art critics of the future will require diplomas from M.I.T. as basic equipment. In the meantime artists ought to get them. Judging from the Museum of Modern Art show most of them seem as knowledgeable in the new techniques as kids playing with erector sets.

Meanwhile they're thinking big thoughts—about ecology, pollution, war, sex. Why, if there are no forms around, just concepts, won't words put together by poets, or philosophers, or even

journalists, work as well as words by artists? Because, some of them were telling me at the museum the other day, the concepts themselves, even if they're just digits on a sheet of paper, are visual. They differ from traditional art-objects in that they don't objectify sensation, but stir sensations that will be opened, and lead on to the next step, which is creative thought.

It all sounded obscure enough to be deeply meaningful, until I was led to do a little thinking of my own. And it seemed to me that artists in the past have very rarely meant for their objects to embody sensation and do no more.

The viewer contemplating a Rembrandt, or even a Picasso, was supposed to respond in his senses and then go on to think. The trouble with most exhibits in the Museum of Modern Art is that they provoke neither the senses nor thought.

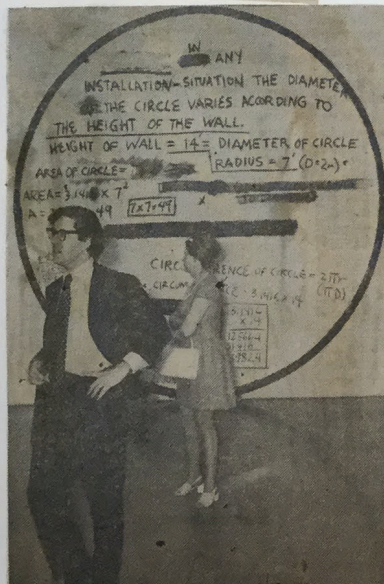
And yet there is something brewing there. The Museum's error may lie in its not waiting, in its impatience to

make news, for the brew to be ready for tasting.

* * *

Which leads me, ironically, to the one aspect of the new art that even now interests me. Art in our day has become an object to an appalling degree. An object to be bought and sold for large sums of money; an object to be used as an opening wedge to social position; an object to be exhibited in museums, so that, if it's sufficiently strange, it will draw headlines and crowds sure to win the museum larger financial support and make its impresarios international figures.

In this context there's satisfaction in seeing something claiming to be a legitimate art expression that isn't an object and can't be traded, or even preserved (for this last let us be especially grateful). The emphasis is on creative process—if that's what this really is—all the way. It still has for museums as a newsmaker, but I can't imagine there will ever be a way to eliminate that.



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Excerpts

Evening Sun, Baltimore, Maryland, July 19, 1970
Art notes, by Barbara Gold

The Museum of Modern Art in New York can usually be depended on for a summer survey that would make a trip worthwhile. This year's show "Information," is a collection of photographs, statements and ideas that can be appreciated almost as much by reading the catalogue as by visiting the exhibition. It is a gargantuan art-magazine style report on earthwroks, waterworks, events, and actions that have taken place during the past two years.

"Information" could alleviate one minor cause of summer doldrums, however: there's never much mail. Opening the mailbox is a big letdown. Three of four artists can fill that yawning space. They aren't showing much in the actual exhibit, but they are offering art you can send for:

Paul Pechter, 196 East 3rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10009 has a list of "referential material" which he will send if you send him a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Jeffrey Wall, 5 Dell Farm, Ruislip, Middlesex, England, will for \$1 send a "Landscape Manual" that documents a drive he took through the countryside.

A third artist has provided a box in the New York Museum where visitors can drop envelopes so he can mail them art.

All this sounds a bit silly, but maybe that's great for summer. I don't know if these artists have proved anything about mails as a work of art or as one of the systems that are important to our lives, but sending for things is always fun.

Express, Red Oak, Iowa, September 21, 1970
Congressman Bill Sherle reports to the 7th Iowa District--Dial-A Radical.

The tax-exempt Museum of Modern Art in New York City is spewing out a telephone recording of radical anarchist propaganda.

John Hightower, Director of the Museum, confirmed that recorded statements from hate-monger Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panthers' Minister of Information, are being played as a part of the current exhibit on "Information."

Also immortalized on tape in Weatherwoman activist Beranardine Dohrn, who, like Cleaver, is a fugitive from justice. Miss Dohrn reports that her group will bomb a symbol of "American imperialism" and informs the listener that "there are those who can tell you how to make Molotov cocktails, flamethrowers, bombs, whatever might be needed. Find them and learn..."

Besides the tax break, the Museum received a quarter of a million dollars this year from the New York State Art Council. The Council receives direct federal support from the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, which this year earmarked \$70,000 for them. Not surprisingly, a spokesman for the Museum admitted to me that they intended to apply for direct federal aid from the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities in the near future.

Thus the question of priorities in spending again becomes paramount. Should the federal government dish out funds for a tax-free organization which, among its many pursuits, engages in the blatant dissemination of information calling for the violent overthrow of our government? We know how the people feel. The question is how the National Foundation will react.

Post, New York, N.Y., September 11, 1970
Buckley blasts militants, by Warren Hoge

Buckley (James L.) also played a tape recording used in a recent Museum of Modern Art exhibit called "Dial A Revolutionary." The speaker, thought to be Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, exhorts blacks to arm themselves and assault "the racist power structure."

Commented Buckley: "There are certain things which responsible institutions do not go out of their way to sponcer. Simply because those things are in the public context, inflammatory and dangerous. To sponcer them tends to legitimize them."

Science News, Washington D.C., July 11, 1970
Opinion surveys--Asking the right questions.

"Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?" This question, in the form of an art exhibition confronts visitors at the "Information" exhibition that opened last week at New York's Museum of Modern Art. The visitor has the opportunity to respond to artist Hans Haacke's exhibit with "Yes" or "No" ballots that are dropped into a transparent box. So far the voting has been loaded in the "Yes" direction.

Haacke's exhibit serves both to convey information to the potential November voter--Rockefeller's support of Indochina policies--and to shape the direction that the voter will cast his ballot: against Rockefeller.

Art and Artists, London, England, September, 1970
New York, by Gregory Battcock

At the Museum of Modern Art the special summer exhibition is entitled "Information" and includes works in the catalogue that aren't in the show. It is an art exhibition that cares more for communication that it does about art. The only thing the show really needs, besides all the clever documentations, statements and ideas that it already contains, is a little disrespect, a little outrage.

"Information" raises all sorts of questions that pertain directly to an art exhibition process. However, the show itself is not as effective as it should be because it accepts certain values that should also be questioned. In this show what is important is that the works included were, for the most part, made especially for the Museum of Modern Art and for this exhibition. Thus the works are intended to exist within a frame of reference--the Museum of Modern Art. However, the negative potential--the energy that could have been created had the works required confrontation with the Museum--was rarely considered. The works should have been made against the Museum, rather than for it.

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New York Letter

Information

by DON McDONAGH

An untidy and nearly unclassifiable gaggle of media presentations has been assembled by the Museum of Modern Art under the blanket title of *Information*. While many of the films, video tapes, recorded telephone messages, telegrams, written instructions and television monitors provided us with some information about the artistic process in the raw, a stronger impression was left that artists were indirectly informing galleries and museums that their days were numbered.

The materials of the show are those of the mass society's communications systems and the art object such as the painting or the piece of sculpture were noticeably absent. Nearly everything is reproducible mechanically by photocopyers or tape machines and the copy is identical with the original. What is not reproducible—the Sol LeWitt's drawings on the museum walls, is doomed to destruction when the show is ended. There is little that could be remotely sold for a substantial price and carted away. The art is of the moment or the specific locale.

What most of the participating artists, including a few art critics and in the case of Yvonne Rainer a choreographer, attempted to do, was to present primary art materials in the form of logical concepts to the viewers without the inter-position of a made object. Rather than actually make something the artist tells the viewer about something that he proposed to do or explains the rationale behind a series of photographs, clippings or personal actions. Artists set themselves a problem such as performing a constant action at precisely the same time for a number of days or hours and later explaining what their intent was. Then what appeared to be a series of unconnected fragments of newspapers or photographs are revealed as an intelligent and systematic sampling of these items. Without such a verbal crutch however the materials would remain unintelligible.

For the most part the offerings seemed slight and deficient in aesthetic nourishment, celebrating intent rather than fleshed out reality. The "works" tended to tell us something about the artist's life and style of creative approach rather than present the finished result. The effect was the deprived feeling one might experience from reading an excellent musical score but never actually hearing it. Hints, portents of possibility, admiration

for a particular line of attack and so forth were teased up by the show but with few exceptions nothing akin to the satisfaction of realized form could be experienced.

The artists represented were drawn from all the Americas, Africa and Western Europe. Many transmitted their contributions via commercial communications systems and others sent instructions for exhibits via regular mail. In a display of such inclusiveness there were members of entries which had tenuous connection to the main thrust of the show but which afforded some pleasure. One of these was Robert Breer's igloo-shaped sculpture on invisible wheels. It roamed around the sculpture garden outside the wing that the rest of the exhibits were in, changing direction whenever it met resistance. The interest of the piece was the extreme slowness at which it navigated its errant course. Moment to moment watching yielded nothing but viewing after a lapse of time revealed the amusing hidden fact that it was not static. At last one saw and did not have to be told, the information was conveyed by the work itself.

Other artists invited viewer participation. A television booth with a programmed question would present an entering subject with a query and the resultant answer was broadcast over a monitor to those outside. They in their turn were photographed by a hidden camera and had their images presented on an adjoining monitor just as they were peering at the subject in the booth. It was one of those unsettling closed circuit systems where observers become the observed and then are shown themselves caught in the act.

The show seemed to function best as a corollary to the creative act. Some parts of it were much like first drafts or rough sketches in providing documentation for the curious and other parts of it presented a great deal of personal information about the artists' travels or current interests. What it failed to do was present a coherent body of work, but only the footnotes to one.

London Newspaper

ONE OF THE exhibits at the Museum of Modern Art in New York is an open box in which visitors are asked to place their suggestions. Above the box are the following instructions: "The total state of our physical and cultural context is causal for our present ideas."

If you wish to participate in focusing ideas from this context select any one of your present ideas.

Record the idea on an information card and put it in the information storage area (the box).

At the end of the exhibition the artist will decompose this work by thinking each idea and reducing it until only one general idea remains.

Among the ideas written on cards and placed in the box were: "React", "Revolution in Vietnam" and "Hard work never hurt anyone—try it."

London Newspaper



Documentation of Richard Long's wood and landscape (1967), at MOMA

Breaking Frame

Recently a French artist dumped green stain into the East River. The purpose of such off-the-wall ephemeral art is the passing of "information," and *Information* happens to be the name of the new and very major show opening at MOMA. The show will consist of documentation of ecological work, renderings for possible, impossible, or imaginary projects (i.e., "earthworks" executed in the desert). There'll be environmental situations, of course, and something called a "visual juke box," which shows films. As part of the show there will be activities all over the city as well as in other countries, and the info on these will be transmitted to the museum. Modernly.

"INFORMATION"/MOMA/July 2-September 20

By Linda Winer

New York

● JOHN BALDESSARI has a note on the wall at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It reads: "The world has too much art. I have made too many art objects? What to do?"

So he wrote a note about it, hung it on the wall at the museum, and called it "Art Instead."

Kynaston L. McShine, associate curator of painting and sculpture and the man responsible for the first minimal art show several years ago, was asked to compile an "international report," narrowing down the strongest stylistic movement among younger artists during the last three years. He found them generally less concerned with "embalming the idea in an 'object,'" and more interested in simply distributing the idea itself.

Result: "Information," an open ended collection of both the pure thoughts and the object-embalmed thoughts that are traveling thru artist minds around the world, to be distributed to any receptive receptors in the museum thru Sept. 20.

So I took my paper ballot over to the sign that asks: "Would the fact that Gov. Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?"

and deposited it into the appropriate slot in the Plexi-glass voting machine. Not only did I participate in the creation of the art experience, per se, but I also have probably invalidated the entire event. I can't vote in New York.

Ready with power, I moved on to a wire hopper just to the left of an Andy Warhol quotation, "In the future everybody in the world will be world famous for fifteen minutes." There, a sign invited me to immortalize a thought on an index card, quite possibly so someone will have it when my time comes.

And so it goes, thruout the show. Dial-a-poem, become a part of Hello Oiticica's environment by snooping thru his

burlap covered people's "Nests," or choose a movie on an enormous circular "Visual Jukebox," ostentatiously wearing an olivetti logo. [Information, isn't it?]

Not all the artists ask the viewer to participate.

Sol Lewitt, for example, requested four draftsmen, employed at \$4 an hour for four hours a day for four days, to draw straight lines within four adjacent squares, four inches long, using four different colored pencils, each using just one color and working on a different square each day. He got it.

Vito Acconci will have his mail delivered to the museum thru the show's run, so that his mail becomes part of the exhibit and the museum guard becomes a mail guard to protect against a federal offense. Mr. Acconci "performs" the piece by going to the museum to pick up his letters.

The N.E. Thing Company, Ltd., awards certificates to art objects of "Banishment for Eternity to the Rank and File of Aesthetically Rejected Things," and certificates to acts of "Elevation for Eternity to the Realm of Aesthetically Claimed Things." Its president stakes a territorial claim inside the arctic circle by urinating on the ice. A photograph of the event in the exhibit catalog is the art object.

In fact, the catalog itself is an art object; an essential part of the information show. Each artist was asked to participate—either with material related to his part in the show or with something completely independent from it.

There are, of course, some signed blank pages. A few enigmas such as Keith Arnatt's "The content of my work is the strategy employed to ensure that there is not content other than the strategy." A blowup photograph of a red bread mold, several poems by Yoko Ono, plus a circle drawing experience which you are to mail to her in care of the Empire State Building.

There are blank pages for the reader to fill in.

Chicago Newspaper

Art You Can
Watch, Read,
Choose, Dial

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Happenings In The Arts

'Information' International Report On Activity In Current Exhibit

Question: When is an art exhibit not an art exhibit?

Answer: When the Museum of Modern Art chooses to make an international report on the recent activity of 150 young artists from 15 countries, titled "Information."

Kynaston McShine, associate curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (New York City), who has put together the show and accompanying catalogue explains: "Many of the highly intellectual and serious young artists represented here have addressed themselves to the question of how to create an art that reaches out to an audience larger than that which has been interested in contemporary art in the last few decades. Their attempt to be poetic and imaginative, without being either aloof or condescending, has led them into the communications areas that 'Information' reflects."



By
Nacie
Salny

The only common denominator in this controversial show is that all the artists are trying to extend the idea of art beyond traditional categories. The material presented is considerably varied and often rebellious. Considering the general social, political and economic crises of 1970, Mr. McShine finds their expressions apt and fitting.

Since we have no choice, he finds it necessary to move with the cultural stresses and preoccupations. "The art cannot afford to be provincial, or to exist only within its own history, or to continue to be, perhaps, only a commentary on art,..."

Thus we found the strangest, most disorganized and least aesthetic "art show" yet encountered. Several pieces in the exhibition can only be realized with the active participation of people either in or outside the Museum. Stig Broegger (Denmark) has placed low wooden platforms around the galleries and in other parts of the city and metropolitan area; the exhibition includes photographs of people's reactions to these objects — using them or watching others use them. Can you think of anything less interesting?

Group Frontera (Argentina) has set up a television tape recording booth in the Museum; visitors answer questions and not only become the subject of TV video tape recording, but also watch themselves live and on delayed tape on TV screens in the galleries. Their intellectual aim "to formulate a theory of the role of mass media in the identification of a society's culture," will fall short if they are counting on the young people who were using and abusing their project, much to the consternation of the guards, when I was there.

Poems, selected by Giorno, have been recorded and can be heard on phones in the galleries or by calling (212) 956-7032 from anywhere. Hans Haacke, German born New York artist, has set up transparent plexiglass ballot boxes to take a political poll of museum visitors.

Other works consist of documentation—in the form of good to "phony" photographs, drawings and scribbles, or just written instructions as that of the New York Graphic Workshop (formerly located in Morris-town) urging visitors to send a self-addressed stamped envelope if they wish to receive "something" at the close of the exhibition.

Probably the biggest boondoggle of all is the information machine or "visual jukebox" contributed by Olivetti industries. More than 40 films and video tapes, from the Museum's collection, of the minimally structured type (non-narrative, an extension of cinema verite ranging in length from three minutes to eight hours) were to be viewed through this side-show attraction.

This machine typified my frustration with the whole show as I darted from peep hole to peep hole to get some "message" only to find that most of it had broken down and wouldn't communicate with me. Contrary to Marshall McLuhan's theory, if there is any aesthetic knowledge to be gained from the whole project, it can be found more readily in the "Information" catalogue than in the galleries.

If you would have a go at it for yourself, it can be seen until September 20. There is no admission charge on Mondays.

'Against art'

'Information' display

By Louis Chapin

New York

Not long ago, as reported on this page, members of the radical Art Workers' Coalition came to a convention here and plowed abruptly into the best-laid plans of the American Association of Museums. Some of the same people reappeared at the recent opening of a Museum of Modern Art exhibition called "Information." Nothing they did then, however, could challenge this or any other museum as directly as does the show itself.

Kynaston McShine is the museum's associate curator of painting and sculpture; he has managed to assemble the random works of some 150 people from 15 countries for whom neither painting nor sculpture is of any particular concern at all.

Here are a few things that have concerned them: The writing out of "a number between zero and one," which amounts to 205,714,080 digits, precisely arranged over 25,974 pages, occupying 28,5714 hours of print-out time (Siah Armajani, United States); a series of identical low, wooden platforms placed without permission in and around New York before and during the exhibition, with considerable documentation as to their placing and use (Stig Broegger, Denmark); various rural locations, shown in photographs, declared to be sites for "non-building, subterranean buildings, or modifications of the surface" (Hans Hollein, Austria). And so on.

Some information is abysmally (and at times scatologically) rudimentary, some of it murky intricate, some of it both, most of it studiously inconsequential. If it does represent the wave of the future, then it would seem that modern museums will have little more to raise money for, curators will have nothing new to curate, and "art workers" would be foolish to waste any more time coalescing.

Yet when you boil it all down, you come to an attitude that can no more be ignored than can the coalition's disheveled protests. Here and there the attitude is positive: The "Group Frontera" from Argentina has set up a recording booth in which you are videotaped while answering such a question as "When do you joke? Why?" or "What does the word 'comfort' suggest to you?" Outside the booth are other cameras and screens which enable you and everyone else to watch yourself watching the tape played back. It's pleasantly gamelike and rubs the edges off people a bit—as does the show as a whole—though the rather weighty pur-

pose is "to formulate a theory of the role of mass media in identifying a culture" through "more or less original messages" that emerge through these media from the indiscriminate masses.

Against things

At the opposite end of the scale, the specifications for skimming a stone on a pond are limpid enough to tell the (pardon the quality of the experience: "The tool must fit the hand... The pond is still—like a piece of uncut wood. The tool is active—like a chisel. The tool's path merges with the pond's surface. The tool cuts the pond. The tool sinks to the bottom of the pond." Randy Hardy took a decent little photo of the rippling result.

In general, and in keeping with the times, the attitude is against things; against physical permanence, against quality and form as components of art, and against feeling (other than political) as a motive in art—in fact, against art. As Keith Arnatt says in the catalog, at the foot of a page of photos showing himself casually sinking into the Monmouthshire sod: "The content of a work is the strategy employed to ensure that there is no content other than the strategy."

Conceptual art, as this is termed at a less splashy show that anticipated the MOMA by three months at the New York Cultural Center on Columbus Circle, often includes photography in its strategy. Right next to "Information" at MOMA (all three of these shows continue into September) is a backward look called "Photo Eye of the 20's," and it adds perspective. Its examples separate into two quite distinct directions of thought: One, under the leadership of Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray, favored the manipulation of photographic elements so as to bring the camera nearer to painting and collage. Moholy's "photograms" eliminated the camera entirely and worked directly with sensitized paper. Alvin Coburn's "Ezra Pound" was an early experiment in such manipulation.

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INFORMATION

DIAL-A-POEM
(212) 956-7032by Giorno Poetry Systems
12 lines, 50 poets
The Museum of Modern Art

DIAL-a-REVOLUTIONARY

The practice of dialing for the weather has been expanded to dialing for help to intended suicides, to one minute sermons, and to other more or less helpful or inspiring information. That the New York Museum of Modern Art should install a "dial-a-revolutionary" at a cost of \$280 a month for telephone bills and tapes to disseminate revolutionary information frankly floored us.

The service was organized, we are told, by a poet named John Giorno. New Yorkers can hear Kathleen Cleaver on a Black Panther killing, Weather-woman Bernadine Dohrn on bombing a symbol of "American imperialism," Yippie Abbie Hoffman telling high school kids to get their guns, poetess Diane di Prima advising young revolutionaries to meditate, pray, make love, be prepared at any time to die, or Allen Ginsberg chanting mantras - addresses to Hindu gods.

New York has always been an easy mark for radical doings, but that the service should get 78,000 calls in two months, an average of 130 a day, was a high, even for New York. Giorno started the service as an "exhibit on information," but he says the museum will continue it after the exhibit closes.

It is permitted under freedom of speech, but there is nothing that compels a museum of the standing of the Modern Art to lend itself to such a blatant tool of revolutionary propaganda, if not recruitment. It is incredible that the Museum's Board sponsors and finances those who seek their deaths and the destruction of their "imperialist museum," as well as of their native land.

DISPATCH, ONEIDA, N.Y., SEPTEMBER 19, 1970

Museum of Modern Art features
Dial-a-Revolutionary service

NEW YORK (UPI)—If revolutionary rhetoric is your bag, no longer do you have to search out a street demonstration or tune in your TV news in the hopes of finding it. You can dial Revolutionary at (212) 956 7032.

New Yorkers have long been able to dial a demonstration, a prayer, a model (nude or clothed) or a steak.

Now they can dial Kathleen Cleaver giving her version of how Black Panther Bobby Hutton was killed in a shootout with police; Weatherwoman Bernadine Dohrn saying that

Weatherman will bomb a symbol of "American imperialism." Yippie Abbie Hoffman telling high school kids to get their guns; revolutionary poet Diane di Prima advising young revolutionaries to "meditate, pray, make love, be prepared at any time to die," or Allen Ginsberg chanting mantras.

The Dial-a-Revolutionary service was organized by John Giorno, a poet, for an exhibit on "information" at the Museum of Modern Art. It costs the museum \$280 a month for phone bills and tapes. The poets and revolutionaries donate their services. During the

almost two months of the exhibition the service has received 78,000 calls. It offers 12 different tapes daily.

Giorno said the service would be continued by the museum after the exhibition closes later this month. He said originally the service was modeled after a Dial-a-Poet service started in Chicago early last year and tapes included different kinds of poetry.

But now "more than three-fourths of the time (is devoted) to radical poets and movement people because what they have to say is so important now," Giorno said.

Opinions of Other Writers

Revolution Can Be Dialed Into Effect

New Yorkers can now dial a telephone number and hear the latest in radical rhetoric from such revolutionaries as Kathleen Cleaver, Abbie Hoffman or Allen Ginsberg.

This "dial-a-revolutionary" service was devised by John Giorno, a poet, for an exhibit on "information" at the Museum of Modern Art. Those participating have donated their "services" but it's costing the museum \$280 a month for phone bills and tapes.

During the almost two months of the exhibition, the service — which offers 12 different tape recorded messages a day — has received 78,000 calls.

We suspect that most of the tele-

phone calls to hear Kathleen Cleaver giving her version of a Black Panther shooting, or Abbie Hoffman urging high school students to arm themselves, or Allen Ginsberg "doing his thing" are from curiosity — seekers rather than persons seriously interested in keeping up with the latest revolutionary "line."

But why one of the world's leading museums would extend its blessings — and its cash — to such a dubious undertaking is an even greater mystery to us than the more traditional question of why the same institution spends the vast sums it does in purchasing some of the junk currently being passed off as "art." — Huntington Herald - Advertiser.

MUSEUM MAY KEEP
DIAL-A-POEM PHONES

Public response to a novel telephone service, part of a current art show, "Information," at the Museum of Modern Art, may induce museum officials to retain the service after the show closes on Sept. 20.

Since July 2, when the exhibition began, patrons using four museum house telephones and outsiders calling 956-7032 have heard some startling messages from well-known figures through Dial-a-Poem, as the system was called when first used last year at the

Architectural League of New York. The Dial-a-Poem roster of contributors now includes many radical figures and writers, many of them denouncing government policy and advocating violence, some in poetry, others in prose.

The service was organized by John Giorno, a 33-year-old New York poet, as part of the museum exhibition in which 150 international avant-garde artists are taking part. A museum spokesman said that the telephone service, recording messages by 50 left-wing contributors, had drawn only one letter of complaint.

Dial-a-Radical
Gives Leftists
New Soap Box

By JOSEPH MODZELEWSKI

Maestro Leonard Bernstein and other in people had tea with the Black Panthers a few months back, lending a little of their urbane chic to the revolutionary movement.

Now Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Abbie Hoffman, Kathleen Cleaver and lesser radical harbingers are using the Rockefeller's telephone, sort of.

It's all part of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art called Dial-a-Poem, which gives the listeners two solid minutes of taped revolutionary rhetoric from contemporary radicals.

\$284 a Month

The museum, which has banker David Rockefeller as its chairman and Gov. Rockefeller as one of its trustees, pays \$284 a month for the tapes and telephones, which are the brainchild of Village poet John Giorno, 33.

Giorno reasons that all revolutionaries are, at heart, poets, and should be heard by as wide an audience as possible.

Since the opening of the exhibit on June 13, more than 78,000 art devotees have used the four olive-drab telephones on the first floor of the museum at 11 E. 53d St.

"Trustees Freaking Out"

According to Giorno, the museum was thinking of extending the dial-a-radical show past the Sept. 13 closing date for the rest of the exhibits, but now, he says, "some of the trustees are freaking out."

Callers who do get through can hear Cleaver condemn the American way of life, Abbie Hoffman's anarchy spiel or any one of 12 tapes that are changed daily by Giorno.

The revolutionary rhetoric can also be heard from outside the museum by dialing 956-7032, 956-7037 and 956-7076. Aspiring radicals should be patient, though, as the numbers are usually busy or not operative. (The revolution you have dialed is not a working number.)

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The "Information" exhibition that occupied the Museum of Modern Art throughout the summer displayed a glass mechanism for polling visitors on a statement by Governor Rockefeller about Vietnam; this animated ballot box remained on the acceptable side by being a visually stimulating artifact. But a Black Panther distributing literature—also an information-disseminating mechanism—would be ruled out on the ground that he is beyond the frontier of the aesthetic. Perhaps if the Panther were set in a frame or enclosed in a plastic case. . . Obviously, the rule of "artistic expression" is inadequate to exclude politics as strictly as the earlier rule of art could, and if pressure mounts, the museum's ban will have to be enforced on completely arbitrary grounds. This is another way of saying that in regard to social issues the museum today is intellectually demoralized.

In Hightower's perspective, which evidence indicates is typical of museum avant-gardism, art institutions are on their way to becoming totally integrated into social activity, except for its political aspects. The museum wishes to "serve the community;" in this it is already political. But its service must be confined to the aesthetic or to the aesthetic side of things—for example, paintings on the exposed walls of slum buildings. Having helped to dissolve art into life, the museum wishes to segregate life as art. But when painting and sculpture are made equal to other forms of "visual experience," including Christmas turkeys, what grounds remain for denying the demands of militants that excellence in art be subordinated to the notions of "relevance" put forward by women, blacks, peace fighters, "younger artists"? When everything has found its way into the museum, the place of art will have to be outside it.

Listening to Hightower, his television interviewer appeared to gain the

impression that paintings and sculptures had become superfluous at the Museum of Modern Art. "If you had your way," she asked, "would you move up to the older museums in the country what are now the Old Masters of modern art?" The director thought this "a really ticklish question" but decided that for practical reasons it was not expedient for the Museum to get rid of its art collection at this time.

Like the director of the Museum, its "Information" exhibition took the offensive against painting, and in the name of the aesthetic. It invoked political crisis to discredit putting paint on canvas, but the exhibition itself had no political point. Consisting of varieties of electronic communication devices and their screens and punch cards, huge blowups of magazine art reviews, recorded poems by Bobly Seale, spectator-questioning booths, slogans, photographs, number games, "Information" was an aesthetic coddling with politics as a substitute for thinking about it. In a book issued by the Museum in conjunction with the exhibition, Mr. Kynaston McShine, who directed the show, called attention to "the general social, political, and economic crises that are almost universal phenomena of nineteen-seventy," and he indicated that, in the light of torture in Brazil, imprisonment in the Argentine, and shootings in the United States, "it may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paint from a little tube to a square of canvas." Recognition of the existence of historical crisis by artists and critics is a welcome change from the sealed-off formalism of the nineteen-sixties; there are indications that the latest fashion of the art world, even for the most stubborn hierarch of pure abstraction and "quality," is to be "politically concerned" (but not political). Still, McShine's description of painting, down to his reference to the shape of his imaginary canvas, echoed the impoverished formalist conception and repudiated not a particularly empty kind of painting but painting itself.

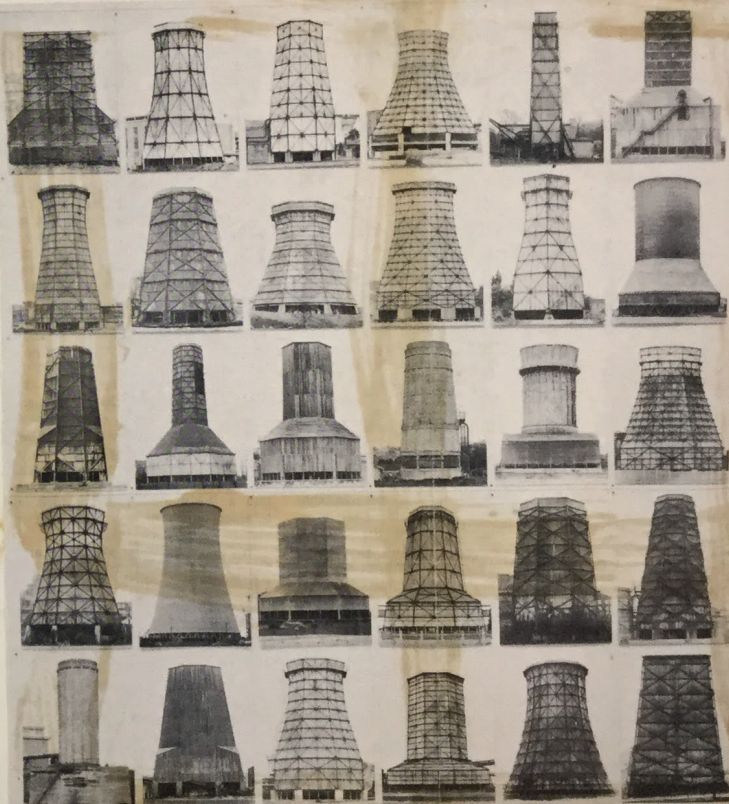
At the same time, "Information" was in no sense a call to join up and go fight against tyranny and war, as left-wing works in the thirties urged people to do. The exhibition used a political argument to reinforce an aesthetic that, like Hightower's diffused "artistic expression," could provide a negation of art. Such exhibits as rows of computer digits, a telephone with which one could dial a poem or Walter de Maria's wall-sized self-advertise-

ment in a clipping from *Time*, could hardly be more effective against police brutality in Rio de Janeiro or Los Angeles than a painting, no matter how non-political, or de Maria's sculpture of a bed of spikes (not in the "Information" show). What was at work in "Information" was the eagerness of the Museum to welcome a kind of up-to-dateness in which the role of painting and sculpture would be reduced. That this was a paramount motive of the exhibition is indicated by McShine's portentous yet not unfamiliar observation that "the whole nature of collecting is perhaps becoming obsolete. And what is the traditional museum going to do about work at the bottom of the Sargasso Sea [Mr. Hightower's "visual experience that the spectator may not get anywhere else"], or in the Kalahari desert, or in the Antarctic, or at the bottom of a volcano [this should be one place the museum might want to stay out of]? How is the museum going to deal with the introduction of the new technology as an everyday part of its curatorial concerns?"

The dilemma of the museum is that it takes its aesthetic stand on the basis of art history, which it is helping to liquidate. The blending of painting and sculpture into the decorative media, the adulteration of styles, the mixing of genres in order to create an "environment" for the spectator have completed the erosion of values derived exclusively from the art of the past which was begun by the avant-garde art movements. What is needed to replace those values is a critical outlook toward history and the part of creation in contemporary culture, politics, and technology. Aesthetics does not exist in a vacuum. The museum seems unaware how precarious it is to go as far out from art as it has on no other foundation than its simple-minded avant-gardism. In the direction it has taken, nothing awaits it but transformation into a low-rating mass medium.

—HAROLD ROSENBERG

Anonymous Sculpture, 1961-1970, Cooling Towers—on display



This display of cooling towers as functional art is on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The photos were made and put together into this art piece by Bernhard and Hilla Becher, of Germany. The function of cooling towers is discussed at right of photos

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INFORMATION

by John Perreault

A work of art creates information. It can also transmit information, but here the manner of transmission creates information as well as transmits it: the angle of transmission, the language of transmission.

It is a commonplace by now that most people know about art through information (writings, photographs) about art, rather than through direct perception of actual art works. This is usually viewed as something negative. But why not make the information about art the art

itself? If handi-craft is not important and self-expression is not important and if the way a piece looks is not important, then it must be that the idea is all-important. If so, why not merely present the idea in the most direct way possible?

If one assumes, as I do, that the business of an artist has, at least on one level, to do with communication, then it follows quite easily that, given the fact of our print and image media and its world-wide network, the most efficient way to communicate is no longer the creation of objects, murals, paintings, but through these media.

There are other variations and considerations. An artist may wish to do large outdoor works that are inaccessible; here verbal descriptions and photographs must suffice. Sometimes the photographs are art works in their own right. Sometimes they are an integral part of the art work as a whole. Sometimes they have no real relationship with what the artist considers to be his actual work.

Also, some artists believe, as in the words of Douglas Heubler, that there are already enough objects in the world. (There may indeed be enough objects in the world. There certainly are more than enough people. But somehow I doubt that there is enough art.)

Also, not only is it easier to transport or transmit words than objects, words, it seems, tend to last longer than art objects. Perhaps this shift of art into a conceptual and consequently verbal mode is an indication of a survival mechanism called forth or created by present sociological and political situations.

Most of what we know of Greek painting, for instance, is through verbal descriptions. There may come a time when all that some future civilization will know of late 20th century art will be through the writings of Harold Rosenberg or Clement Greenberg or that which has

appeared in *The Village Voice*. The thought is a little frightening.

I do not mean to suggest that all artists should stop making objects. Art objects are still viable and I am sure that whole groups of young artists are already turning out sculptures and paintings that in the coming years will command our attention. The fact is, however, that presently a good number of very serious artists are not making objects, *per se*, but doing something else that is very interesting and new.

"Information," an enormous group show which recently opened at the Museum of Modern Art, is an excellent survey of what these artists are doing. It is a show that will undoubtedly infuriate or confuse or bore some. I found it impressive and inspiring. No one interested in contemporary art can afford to miss it. There are works by more than 150 artists. Regular readers of this column and close followers of contemporary art will recognize a great many of the artists, but there are several new discoveries. The show is international in scope. There are artists from Germany, Holland, Italy, England, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Yugoslavia, etc., some of whom are being shown in New York for the first time.

"Information" was selected by Kynaston McShine, who it will be remembered organized the important Primary Structures show at the Jewish Museum several years ago, a show that called public attention to a kind of art that has become known as Minimal Art. "Information" is as

important as Primary Structures was then.

In his excellent catalog, McShine relates that he was asked to put together "an international report" of the works of younger artists and then found that the show had to be "narrowed down to what seemed to be the strongest 'style' or international movement of the last three years." He wisely elected to call his show "Information" rather than Conceptual Art or Documentation Art, wisely because more divergent art works could fit under his title than could under a stricter, more limiting one. The structure of the show is open-ended and inclusive rather than exclusive.

The show can be divided into at least four parts: short films shown in the so-called visual juke-box provided by Olivetti; photos, documentations, instructions, etc., on display in the Museum; the catalog; and works such as Stig Broegger's platform placed at various spots throughout the city and Daniel Buren's red and white vertical stripes which will be affixed to city buses.

The films I found difficult to concentrate upon. It was difficult for me to figure out which film I was seeing and after a while I just didn't care. On the other hand, I can think of no other solution to film-showing besides the tried and true movie theatre situation.

I know that it is unfortunately necessary for museums to solicit and accept contributions from corporations. I question, however, the appropriateness of the name Olivetti being so prominently displayed. Surely, a small wall inscription would have been in better taste. An advertisement is an advertisement. In a museum, it looks even more like an advertisement.

The catalog was done by offset printing and was, wonder of wonders, ready for the opening. Each artist was given free reign in regards to his own

contribution. Some artists are represented solely in the catalog. The catalog is a show in itself. (Seth Siegel's books and catalogs have stood on their own, being equivalent to exhibitions, and this March Athena Spear's "Art in the Mind" show at Oberlin College took the form of a book also.)

For New Yorkers and those who have access to New York I highly recommend a visit to the show. For others, I might suggest that the "Information" catalog is full of valuable information itself, and art works on almost every page.

To pass on some information about "Information" and to give the reader at least a "flavor" of the show, I'll briefly describe some of the pieces in the show that I find of particular interest.

Sol LeWitt's wall drawing was made directly on the wall according to his instructions: "Within four adjacent squares, each 4' by 4', four draftsmen will be employed at \$4.00/hour for four hours a day and for four days to draw straight lines 4 inches long using four different colored pencils: 9H black, red, yellow and blue. Each draftsman will use the same color throughout the four day period, working on a different square each day." Another wall piece is by Mel Bochner and is a black chalk circle drawn on the wall.

The size of the circle is determined by the size of the wall and all the arithmetic involved in "figuring out" the piece is included within the circle. John Van Saun's wall piece, "Breakthrough," is of a different kind. He threw himself through a 4 5/8 inch thick wall.

Joseph Kosuth's "One and Three Chairs" is a real folding chair, a photo of that chair, and the dictionary definition of "chair." There are also negative photostat blow-ups of the definitions of "water," "object," and "meaning," in the familiar Kosuth manner.

There are slide projections of a Michael Heizer earth work and photo-documents of Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, constructed recently in the Great Salt Lake of Utah. George Brecht offers plans for moving islands, ice-caps, etc. Adrian Piper provides the museum-visitor with a blank book and a pencil with which to do their own things. Vito Acconci has arranged to have all his mail forwarded to the museum where it is on display until he picks it up. Paul Fechter displays a mat runner above which is dangled the statement that the mat you are standing on "displaces 483.281 cubic inches of air."

John Baldessari, among other projects, displays cookies made from the ashes of his paintings which he has burned. Gilbert and George, the sculptors (Englishmen in their New York debut), are represented by pages from their pamphlet "Underneath the Arches." Gilbert and George have a representation for among other things mechanistic dances performed at rock concerts. Here are some statements from their pamphlet: "We would honestly like to say how happy we are to be sculptors. . . . It is important for new sculptors to come to terms with the modern limitations of sculpture, apparent only through the feeling of the eye. . . . With the tears streaming down our faces we appeal to you to rejoice in the life of the world of art." Because so much art lacks a sense of humor, needless to say Gilbert and George have already collected a number of

fans.

For the first time in New York we also get to see the work of the Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica, known to me for his street events and his marvelous cape-pieces. Here he is represented by "Nests," a kind of crawl-in environment, constructed on three levels of wood and burlap. Some of the cubicles are closed off and some have pillows and things inside of them.

Some of the works in the show are, surprisingly enough, political. Erik Thygesen's "With Every Good Wish from Richard Nixon" consists of a photo so inscribed and a collection of photostats of a political and sociological nature. Ira Joel Haber's wall work consists of the pages of a 10 cent pamphlet about the Presidents of the United States. The pages are stuck to the wall with masking tape and arranged in four nine-page rows. He suggests other arrangements, but "if this work is to be repeated after Richard Nixon leaves office, then the only possible arrangement would be one row of 37 pages." Hans Haacke's "Poll of MOMA Visitors" is even more directly political. He offers a kind of voting machine. The question posed is "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?" The day I was there last week the tally was No, 70, to Yes, 5100.

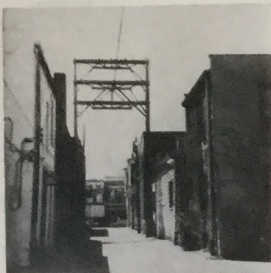
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John Perreault, *Harmony Hall, Iowa City, Iowa* (Sept. 1969).



John Perreault, *North Dubuque, Iowa City, Iowa* (July 1969).

Informative Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art

by GREGORY BATTCKOCK

Imagine: 1. an art exhibition that started out by inviting artists' contributions without anybody having seen the works first; 2. an exhibition with a catalog that will illustrate over 100 works—many of which will not be included in the show; 3. a catalog that lists artists that aren't represented in the show at all; 4. an exhibition that includes works that are not included; 5. an exhibition that is all about a new trend in art but that doesn't try to invent a label for the newly discovered trend.

Kynaston L. McShine's summer show at the Museum of Modern Art is just such an exhibition. The show is called "Information" and is not only representative of the new trend that sees museum exhibitions as exercises in art criticism (And why not? Art turned into art criticism a long time ago; the critics got left out of the picture.) but places the curatorial folk in roles previously assumed by the critics. "Information" goes even one step further. Up until recently our modern curator had been content with the job of sniffing out new trends in art and identifying them through the exhibition process. Now the new curator (as opposed to the old curator who still throws together "retrospective" type exhibitions which are exercises in *art history* rather than *art criticism*) assumes a broader responsibility that extends beyond the formal realm of art. The new curator is more concerned with communication than with art; he is interested in information processes primarily and his job is to try to accommodate his new concern to the traditional structure and ambiance of his medium—the art museum.

That is the central problem encountered by new curators and, as one would expect, the problem has not been completely understood (it is just being discovered) and the resultant exhibitions are full of inconsistencies. It should be pointed out that our new curators (they include Jennifer Licht who did the recent "Spaces" show at MOMA, Seth Siegelaub who helped out with the recent "18 Paris IV.70" show on the Rue Mouffetard, and Pierre Restany who did "Art Concepts from Europe" at Bonino.) are taking chances and aggressively seeking out change; nearly everybody else sits

back and waits for change to arrive and then promptly welcomes it with open arms.

McShine is something of a Johnny-come-lately to the new camp. So is his museum. Nevertheless his contribution is considerable. He has threatened the boundaries that delineate the traditional art exhibition system of information distribution and that's good. On the other hand, few summer visitors to the museum will find the show all that enthralling. Why?

The emphasis isn't on traditional aesthetic merit and criteria as far as the art is concerned. There is no formal, aesthetic analysis of the painterly qualities of the works, for example. There is a shift in the aesthetic sights and the introduction of some rather mild merchandizing problems. However the artists in the exhibition are, in general, still hell-bent on their own ego identification. That wouldn't have to be bad—if at least it were accompanied with genuine innovation in the realm of outrage, say, or humor, or scandal, or insult or indignity—but alas there is little deliberate attempt at real disrespect in the show.

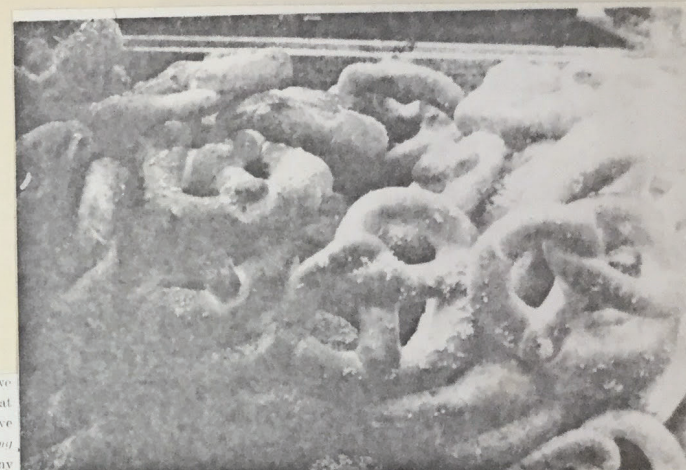
A little disrespect is what the show needs to get off the ground. The Guerrilla Theater people and the Guerrilla Art Action Group have introduced more progressive visual disrespect to the Museum of Modern Art in recent months than all their exhibitions thus far this year. There may not be any protests accompanying McShine's exercise in informatory experiment, and that may be too bad. "Information" is another example of liberal innovation in art and communication theory that simply isn't negative enough. Despite its progressive title and its number of artificially progressive art works, "Information" is a traditional exhibition that only partially threatens prevailing information concepts. It is rooted more in the past than in the present. The "movement" isn't going to get any-
"I should like to point out before anybody else does, that I haven't seen the completed, installed exhibition. I have met with Mr. McShine at the Museum and have examined the pages of the catalog. I have seen some of the works at other locations and have discussed some works with contributing artists."

place until it stops believing in the power of positive thought. If we believe in positive action we must, automatically, believe that certain actions are negative—otherwise there could be no positive in the first place. However, if we believe that there is *no such thing* as a negative action we would then be liberated from the tyranny of positive thought and behavior. The new Conceptual and Anti-Art artists are on the verge of this discovery. McShine could have helped them by forcing them to move further in the direction they are headed but, alas, his misplaced respect for objective criticism and "objective scholarship" (which he shares with his colleagues and trustees) prevented him from doing so.

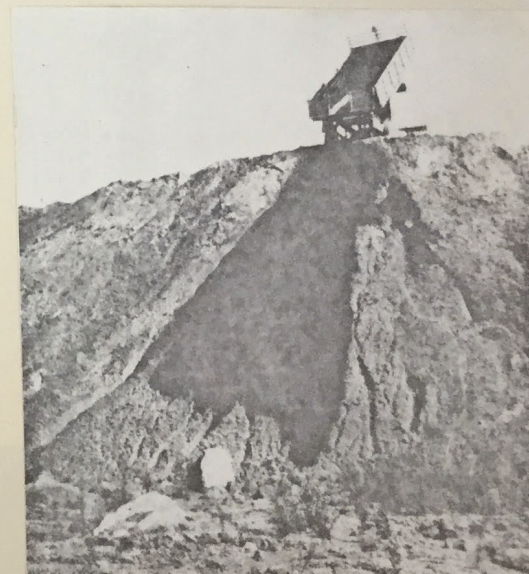
If there can be no such thing as a negative gesture or action in art, then why are we hung up with so-called positive behavior? The destruction artists made their point by defeating their intentions. They demonstrated that, in art, there is no destruction. All art is destruction.

Technological discovery has rendered traditional methods of information distribution and reception obsolete. Yet frequently we still depend upon concepts that were developed by (and that meant something to) Classical Greece. Electrical systems have killed the theater and the novel. They have introduced television and the telephone. The implications are still not understood; yet they have already resulted in movies on jets, transistorized tape decks and colleges of Packaging Technology that turn out executives who work on Madison Avenue. Perhaps it would have been preferable if McShine had entitled his show "Mis-information" not because that's what it is but because that's what it should be.

If the show was entitled "Mis-information" some of the artists would have probably refused to participate. Their "integrity" would have been at stake. After all, they reason, we must be constantly on the lookout for a "put on." And there is the myth of quality to worry about. In fact, bombing in Indochina and shootings at home negate "integrity" in art. The gradual spreading of repression and the erosion of even the desire for true freedom have wiped out our qualitative distinctions in art; McShine and



Ira Voel Haber, *Pretzel Landscape* (1968).



Robert Smithson, *Asphalt Rundown* (October 1969). Coll. T. Aftab, Rome. Courtesy Dwan Gallery.

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BOOKMAKING

"INFORMATION," a hotly controversial exhibition of a mass of miscellaneous materials representing "recent activity of young artists"—visual, mechanical, aural—has just closed (September 20) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It contained items from more than 150 men and women from 15 countries, materials selected by Kynaston McShine, assistant curator of the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Accompanying the exhibit was a catalog, "Information," 8½x11 inches, 208 pages, adhesive-bound, with a paper cover printed in green and with green end-stain and front-stain on the pages. Copy—allusive rather than explanatory—is typewritten, and the text and lavish illustrations are unevenly and poorly printed throughout, by offset.

Explaining the exhibition in an advance release, Mr. McShine said, in part, "Several pieces in the exhibition can only be realized with the active participation either in or outside the museum." In a note on books and graphics in the show, the museum office stated:

"The exhibition catalog itself is considered a necessary adjunct to the show since each artist was invited to create his own contribution either directly related to the actual work in the show or independent of it. Some, including the art critic Lucy Lippard, Art & Language Press, Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, Yoko Ono, Yvonne Rainer, and Ian Wilson, are represented only in the catalog and not in the show itself.

"Many other portions of the show are concerned with books and other

aspects of the print medium. Art and Project, founded in Amsterdam in 1968, is represented entirely by copies of their bulletin. On Kawara's "I Met" (1968-1970) is a series of five books concerning people the artist has met in the last two years. John La-tham distilled the book "Art and Culture" by Clement Greenberg, into a small vial of liquid which he shows along with letters and other documentation.

"Michelangelo Pistoletto is represented by 'The Last Famous Words' (1970), a photo-enlarged replica of his book entitled 'Le Ultime Parole Famose,' (1967). The book is in Italian and English and is exhibited so that visitors to the exhibit may read it. Among Edward Ruscha's contributions is 'Every Building on Sunset Strip' (1966), an accordion-fold book which opens to 27 feet and includes photographs of all the buildings on Sunset Strip in Hollywood."

Other printed materials included in the exhibition were: booklets, text panels, postcards, telegrams, photocopies, silkscreened poems, dictionary definitions and a photographic enlargement of a page from *Time* magazine. Also on view was a copy of a newspaper edited by Stephen Lawrence, who printed a special edition for the show.

Among "participation" items or "events" in the show were these: Group Frontera, Argentina, set up a TV tape recording book in which visitors were recorded and could watch themselves both live and on delayed tape. Poems selected by an artist, Giorno, were available by dialing on phones in the galleries. A German, Hans Haacke, polled Museum visitors about Nelson Rockefeller's candidacy for re-election as governor of New York and reported the results; that was Mr. Haacke's entire exhibit. A Brazilian artist, Olívia, built a 12-foot "nest" for the public to climb and sit upon.

Other materials, it was explained, consisted of "documentation—in the form of photographs, photostats,

drawings or written instructions—of works that have or have not taken place."

Mr. McShine contended in a statement: "The general attitude of the artists in this exhibition is straightforward, friendly, coolly involved, and allows experiences which are refreshing . . . These artists are questioning our prejudices, asking us to renounce our inhibitions . . . Some artists have attempted to extend themselves into their environment and to work with its problems and events. Some have become aware of their own bodies in a way that has nothing to do with the accepted idea of a self portrait, but more with the questioning and observing of sensations. Others have embraced natural phenomena in ways that are at times romantic and at times bordering on scientific."

The museum announcements also noted: "The increasing use of the mail, telegrams and Telex machines for transmission of works themselves and of ideas is represented in the work of many artists in the exhibition."

Many films were shown—more than 40, from 3 minutes to eight hours in length, being seen on Olivetti's "information machine." Mr. McShine commented, "The films and videotapes . . . are often described as 'minimally structured,' which means that the content is non-narrative and that the style, while almost an extension of *cinéma vérité*, is like so much of the other works in the show, simply a method of distributing the visual information that interests the artist."

The meaning of the show in terms of art and informational media methods was debated during the summer by a number of critics.

Culture Collision

Nowhere is the clash of cultures sometimes referred to as "the generation gap" more painfully obvious than in the juxtaposition of several recent exhibitions running concurrently in New York at The Museum of Modern Art. Imagine exhibiting simultaneously "Information," a compendium of conceptual art; the Cubist sculptures of Alexander Archipenko; a memorial show of the works of Barnett Newman; and a continuous showing of a film of bank robberies. The logical question (as if logic were still an issue) is whether this incredible range of material from copy-machine throwaways to some of the most beautiful and profound paintings of the twentieth century can all be housed under the same roof as belonging to the same category of experience, the one we used to call "art."

At the risk of revealing my own generational alliances, I must say I don't think so. The aspiration to keep pace with change leads institutions to extend themselves, both physically and intellectually, beyond their practical limits. In the name of "relevance," such an exhibition as "Information" is assembled—with all the best intentions of serving new tastes and new publics. But the counter-culture ethos of "Information," dominated by a giant plastic Nickelodeon advertising a typewriter company, is the only excitement in the show. The confusion here is the idea that the ephemeral, personal moment is of interest to a public larger than that of the artist and his immediate circle.

The error in sponsoring "Information" is more understandable, however, than the commitment to documenting the minor chapters of the major modern movements responsible for the Archipenko revival. A competent if derivative artist, Archipenko gained his reputation largely from the surprise that a genuine European Cubist sculptor lived unknown and unsung in America from 1923 until his death in 1964.

The power and originality of Barnett Newman's sculpture, "Here II," part of the memorial exhibition honouring the distinguished American painter, is even more striking in contrast with the conventionality of Archipenko's forms. A principal source for the directness and simplicity of Minimal art, Newman executed large sculptures during the 'sixties that may be seen as the ultimate critique of Minimalism, for Newman, unlike his heirs, could leave simplicity with sophistication, directness with subtlety, reductive form with intense feeling.

The death of a great individualist like Newman is more than an art historical loss. The man who stood alone and created art out of his own experience (so he could have something to look at, he once said) can not be replaced by all the "information" about art in the world. To Newman and his generation it still seemed possible to rebel against the past while remaining within the Western tradition. Judging from "Information" and the innumerable future versions of it, such as The Jewish Museum "Software" exhibition of data-processing systems, few younger artists continue to hold that view. The peculiar oddness of the moment is that we are watching the death of our traditional culture as outstanding individuals who rose above the crowd, like Newman, pass away, even as we witness the birth of another culture dedicated to the ephemeral and the temporary, which has no use for excellence, individualism, or the past.

VOGUE, OCTOBER 1, 1970

VOGUE'S SPOTLIGHT

Art

BY BARBARA ROSE

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY

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'Information' shows creative art ideas In Breaking Tradition With a Flair

By MILES A. SMITH
AP Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—Just what it has to do with art may baffle the layman, but the current exhibit titled "Information" is presented by the Museum of Modern Art as a serious international review of what young artists are experimenting with these days.

More than 150 men and women from 15 countries have had a hand in the event. The display will remain on view through Sept. 20.

This sort of art does not involve paintings, prints, sculptures or constructions in the usual sense.

In fact, this art does not necessarily involve the creation of an object.

The artist conceives an idea and makes some notes about it, or some descriptive instructions, and hangs them on the wall. Whether anyone turns the idea into an object is of no particular importance. In a sense, this exhibit might well have been titled "Ideas." Some of the art is known as "conceptual."

A number of pieces in the show involve the active participation of persons either in the museum or outside it. In that respect, the idea resembles a "happening."

Kynaston McShine, the associate curator who prepared the exhibit and its catalogue, says "Many of the highly intellectual and serious young artists represented here have addressed themselves to the question of how to create an art that reaches out to an audience larger than that which has been interested in contemporary art in the last few decades."

"Their attempt to be poetic and imaginative, without being either aloof or condescending," he says, "had led them into the communications areas that 'Information' reflects."

Communications media—photographs, pamphlets, television, telegraph, telephone, photostats and films—play a major part in the show.

Some of the works are related to ecology, and consist of photographs of a natural part of the landscape. Robert Smithson's "Spiral Jetty" is an example. It

is a photograph of a coil of rock, earth and minerals at Great Salt Lake, Utah.

Whether the artist proposes changes in the landscape, or accepts it as it is, is a matter of choice.

Or the artist may make a sketch of a proposed structure that may not be feasible to build. One example is a sketch for a monument that would cast a shadow across the whole state of North Dakota. Another artist presents a series of photographs showing how sunlight moves across the floor of his studio as the hours pass by.

Joseph Kosuth's "One and Three Chairs" consists of a photographic enlargement of a chair, a photographic enlargement of a dictionary definition of the word chair, and the actual chair itself.

In the catalogue he explains his art in this manner:

"Every unit of an (art) proposition is only that which is functioning within a larger framework (the proposition) and every proposition is only a unit which is functioning within a larger framework (my art) and my art is only a unit which is functioning within a larger framework (the concept 'art') and the concept art is a concept which has a particular meaning at a particular time but which exists only as an idea used by living artists and which ultimately exists only as information."

Vito Acconci has set up a post office box in the galleries to receive mail. "I perform the piece actively by going to the Museum to pick up my mail," he says.

Paul Peckler has prepared handbills telling the visitor that anyone wishing to locate his contribution to the exhibit should mail him a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

There is a large, circular structure called a "vision jukebox" containing peephotos through which the visitor may see odd bits of film—for example one piece of film shows a pair of hands rubbing against each other.



Robert Smithson's photograph, "Spiral Jetty," is among art currently shown at the Museum of Modern Art's "Information" exhibit, a serious review of what young artists are experimenting with these days.

Left: Computing a wall.
Right: the visual juke box.
The revelation of a revolution

TIME, SEPTEMBER 14, 1970



"Self-Burial" is the last in a series of photographs of Keith Arnatt's "Self-Burial" project and shows only the artist's head protruding from sand and gravel.

Modern Art Museum Show Different

By PAUL STEINER

NEW YORK (PSS) — Where else but in a medical textbook could you see a giant magnification of a splinter stuck in someone's thumb?

At Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art... where else?

The blow-up, by Dennis Oppenheim, is part of the exhibition called "Information," an international report on recent activity of over 100 young artists from 15 countries, including Brazil, Yugoslavia, Japan, West Germany and Switzerland.

One exhibit so large that none can miss it is called "visual jukebox" and includes the work of Robert Breer of Palisades. The "jukebox" is a round, umbrella-like structure containing 40 individual screens through which

one can view, peepshow-style, films of various quality and interest. Among the other avant-garde filmmakers represented here are Bruce Conner, Christo and Les Levine.

"THE ONLY common denominator is that all are trying to extend the idea of art beyond traditional categories," said a MOMA spokesman. "These young artists—painters, sculptors, filmmakers—are trying to be poetic and imaginative without being either aloof or condescending. It's led them into new areas that our show reflects."

Information consists of documentation of ecological works (such as Christo wrapping Australian cliffs in plastic, Walter de Maria digging trenches in the sunparched desert, Dennis Oppenheim dropping deep magenta dye into a Caribbean cove), suggestion for possible and "impossible" projects, photographic series which record ideas and 1,000 objects you can look at, sit on, squeeze through, sleep in, peek into, relate to, speak into, write on or listen to.

WHAT IS probably most amazing about the show is that it is taking place at all—and in the world's most prestigious modern art museum. That prestige, in fact, is the main reason that Robert Polidore, 19, of Montreal, is exhibiting his "18 Traffic Light Changes" there.

"I want to get a grant to make a new film," he explained. "This will give me prestige. It's that simple."

Almost all the foreign artists were enthusiastic, however, about the degree of artistic freedom in America. Adolfo Bronowski and Ines Gross, members of Argentina's Group Frontera (which displays a TV recording booth where visitors become the subjects of video tape records), said that in Buenos Aires their type of art could not yet be granted a museum showing.

"We don't even have a gallery that specializes in light and electronic art," Adolfo said. Ines, who was enjoying her first visit to New York, observed that, "At home, people are more alike, even if their skin color differs. Here you have a much greater variety of people. That's what I like."

Long-haired Helio Oiticica of Brazil also noted that he's never had a chance to show

his environmental experiments anywhere except here and in London.

"It's fantastic to work with American museum officials and technicians," he said. "They are so much more efficient and responsible."

HELIO'S OWN part of the show consists of a 12-foot high nest comprised of 23 cells of wood, burlap and curtains, where visitors are invited to climb, rest, sit and contemplate.

Vibeke Steineger, a 22-year-old Norwegian, declared, "Artists back home are still so occupied with their own things, they have not yet assimilated what's being shown abroad, especially in the United States. Eventually they and our public may become more aware of it."

Among the most unusual exhibits:

A blow-up of Andy Warhol's portentous TV-oriented prophecy: "In the future everybody will be famous for 15 minutes."

Photos of Keith Arnatt's "Self-Burial" project, the last in the series showing only his head protruding from sand and gravel.

Sculptor Walter de Maria's contribution: a gigantic, wall-size blow-up of a Time magazine article about him and his "Bed of Spikes" sculpture.

Mei Bochner's giant graffiti filling another: a circle in black chalk filled with words and numerals describing its dimensions.

IRANIAN-BORN Shah Armajani's representation of computer activity, made by stacking a printout weighing 500 pounds, standing in a 9½-foot tall column of 25,974 pages, and representing 28,574 hours of print-out time.

Donald Burgoyne's documentation of the pregnancy of one Mrs. Geoffrey Moran, showing her belly getting gradually larger.

All the films and pieces will be at MOMA until the end of September, unless they disintegrate, decompose or blow a fuse. But none was as temporary as that by Rafael Ferrer of Puerto Rico: big blocks of ice stacked in the museum's garden. The strange sculpture was the vow of the opening reception early this month, and hardly a minute passed without some longhair fondly stroking it.

LIFE, AUGUST 14, 1970

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