



“Rewriting History: Artistic Collaboration Since 1960.” In Cynthia Jafee McCabe. *Artistic Collaboration in the Twentieth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984; pp. 64-87.

Text © Smithsonian Institution. Used with permission.

accords with a desire to see human beings change world order. When we see a subscriber to the great person theory in the present, such as Barbara Tuchman, we are all intrigued, I think, because we so desperately want to believe that individuals do control the world and that history is not mindless attrition, some effect caused by innumerable people unsuspectingly reacting to a sequence of events. We like logic and the force of human emotions, and we want to be convinced that Napoleon was important, because, lurking under that conviction, is the assumption that if he can initiate world events, then, perhaps, we too can have an effect, however small, on the world around us.

The great person theory has enjoyed a wide following, but this approach is historically rooted in the Romantic period. If we divide the world into two types as did people in the nineteenth century, we might say that the Romantic wishes to distill the universal in personal terms whereas the Classicist values group order and rationally verifiable assumptions about reality. The former obeys personally intuited directions, while the latter subscribes to societal-based attitudes. The former approach has given rise to the great person theory, and the latter one is a necessary assumption of Marxist historians. In the last few years, the former has become more and more the prerogative of popularizers, and the latter serves as the basis for the approach of historians who use census reports, local history archives, and statistical summaries to catch the flavor of human drift. There has been an "Upstairs Downstairs" reversal of history. We are now more concerned with the so-called real people—the butlers, cooks, and maids—than with the gentry. We tend to look at

history as attrition rather than as a whim, and we are more and more attuned to how large numbers of people participate in world events rather than how the few are motivated and affected. Napoleon is beginning to appear more the creation of the people, the nexus of their desires, than a willful individual: he may act but he is also very definitely acted upon.

Even though historians have generally accepted social history as a legitimate approach and are finding it a fruitful means for sifting through past events, art historians have been reticent to give up their beliefs in individual genius. For all intents and purposes, art history is still locked into the great person theory, which is more appropriate to the Romantic era and the nineteenth century than the Post-Structuralist movement. Art history's concern for quality is the most probable reason for its retarded growth. In art history we dwell on the unique and invoke genius with great regularity. While all important works are unique and significant and artists might well exhibit in their pieces the type of inspiration that we generally deem genius, they do subscribe to dominant styles—form languages that they learn to speak—and later improvise and finally alter. When we subscribe to the concept of genius, we may be attempting to record the awe that we feel before an important work of art and the consequent reverence we have for an artist's abilities, but we do not, I believe, adequately deal with the situation at hand: we mystify and shroud much more than we clarify. Some Marxists and a few historians of architecture and photography have helped to make inroads in the overruling concept of genius, but as important and as revealing as their studies have been, they

are still too few in number.² We need more studies of vernacular architectural styles, for example. It would be extremely worthwhile to know more about the common suburban split-foyer home, about its origins, development, and involved system of signs. The study that University of Syracuse professor Grace Seiberling is making of the compositional devices and subject matter of nineteenth-century British amateur photographers is, to my way of thinking, most elucidating.³ In an era when an aristocracy was the norm, we might look to specific individuals as originators of new ideas, but in our corporate and media-dominated world, new concepts are frequently spearheaded by committees. We still have great contemporary works of art, but I would speculate that they are no longer the creation of individuals: to saddle an artist with the responsibility of creating *ex nihilo* is absurd and inhibiting. Artists respond to established form—to conventional styles in painting and sculpture. When they create in these media, they can assume an established way of looking and reacting to the world. When artists innovate, they do not originate a totally new language. Rather, they find a means to alter the existing one, and their works become critiques of this language. When they make works, they assume a certain type of viewer response, and when viewers in the form of critics or historians write about works of art, they give artists necessary feedback—they complete the communicative act that constitutes art. In this system the work of art is a response to a pre-existent attitude as well as an initiator of new responses. Artists create art, but culture, which is a dialogue, is created by all. If we fetishize a work of art into a masterpiece and an artist into a genius, we

break off the dialogue because we remove the art from the level of discourse and make it absolute. We discourse about art to comprehend its special qualities, and we can come to know these qualities by testing and differentiating them. To function, art must participate in a dialogue; if it doesn't, it becomes, as Marcel Duchamp pointed out, an exercise that may be universally valid as form but no longer available as content.

This exhibition is an initial step in changing some predominant ideas about artistic genius and masterpieces. Positively it seeks to reposit our predominant paradigm about artistic creation and to suggest that not all artists create in a divine frenzy, that not all art is akin to Moses's clay tablets, that not all important art is an absolute, an ultimate commodity that must be appreciated but not studied as a historical manifestation. And negatively because it seeks to establish the fact that works of art by committee can be just as important as those conceived by one person, that a corporate identity is just as important as is a unique one, this exhibition may persuade people that art is still concerned only with masterpieces and geniuses. If it simply substitutes the group for the individual without causing us to reassess basic attitudes about art's meaning, we would lose a rare opportunity to look at art's function and see how it establishes and maintains connections between people. Art is, of course, a visual means of communicating with people so that they can digest discrete aspects of reality, see themselves in relation to the new forms of reality, and be transformed by them. The artist transforms the visual language and is changed by his or her transformation, as well as by the recorded responses of

critics and the impromptu reactions of friends. To exist, art must have an audience and a means of feedback so that artists can know if they are communicating what they think they are creating. Each new work of art is a critique of old art and also of verbalized response; it is an attempt to come closer to a specific view of reality.

Before discussing particular forms of artistic collaboration that have occurred since 1960—my assigned task—it would be beneficial to examine briefly some reasons why we have wanted to keep our artists individuals. Recently, I had the opportunity to see how some collectors treat artists as individuals. At a Sunday afternoon gathering in a small town near Cologne, West Germany, some prominent collectors were holding a fund-raising benefit for a German artist living abroad. Although all the collectors were dressed in a chic but conservative manner, the artists were outfitted almost like clowns. For them a special license existed. Like the proverbial king's fool, his appointed court wit who had free rein to speak and joke even with the king, the artist in modern society is expected to advertise his or her nonconformity. Artists do not have to adhere to our standards of decorum and dress, but they must meet our now clichéd standards of artistic individuality. They must be unique, and yet they must follow the rules we have evolved for unique people, which is nonconforming dress and a familiar manner even with strangers. Picasso understood this need of a bourgeois public to see its sages as fools when he clowned regularly for interviewers and photographers. Andy Warhol, sporting silver hair and regulation denims, used to ask interviewers if he had lied enough. And Robert Motherwell bemoans the fact that he is

Bob to everyone. In addition to being kings' fools, artists may also be equated with rulers of certain ancient societies who had absolute autonomy as long as they never touched ground, i.e., prosaic reality. If they dared to break this taboo, they would be immediately killed. Likewise contemporary artists are geniuses if they conform to our expectations of uniqueness. But if they resemble us too closely, artists throw in jeopardy our own values. We seem to need individuality in the form of artists and works of art—in the form of unavailable, acted out dreams. Thus artists compensate for our largely undifferentiated society and offer us alternatives which they may take seriously or parody but which we have permitted and also helped to create.

In our consumer-oriented society where individuality is equated with taste and is essential to the perpetuation of the marketplace attitudes that determine our world, we have a superficial rather than an in-depth concept of individuals and their uniqueness. It's almost as if, with the population explosion of the 1940s and 1950s, people have become cheap and human values less prized. When artists appear as clowns and eccentrics, they both tempt and repel us. We may fantasize about their lifestyles and yet, I suspect, we really do not wish to participate in anything so unconventional: we perversely like to read about Picasso's many wives, Jackson Pollock's alcoholism, Arshile Gorky's suicide, Joseph Beuys's political battles, and Carl André's asceticism, but we want to contemplate them from afar. Even though Beuys continually reminds us that we need a political system to free us and enable us to develop our creative selves, I think we tame his ideas by becoming fixed

on his antics and by considering him a magician with many more tricks to pull out of his felt hat. We speak of “creative” in hallowed tones, but rarely do we want to create, if creation involves radically re-evaluating ourselves and our world and facing the fact that there may be no reasonable answers. Creative enrichment is for children, senior citizens, and the institutionalized. It is available only to so-called normal adults, as a possible avocation. Creative enrichment, like artistic identity, in the end becomes something for someone else: a panacea or an alternative lifestyle, therapy or a symbolic act.

Probably other cultures did not have full-fledged individuals either. But few, I think, have made such a cult of individuality and yet have so little understood it. We prize what we don't have. Our art in the nineteenth century—particularly realist portraits and novels that were created in the midst of a most oppressive and dehumanizing industrial era—extolled the advantages of the individual. We need only compare Alain Robbe-Grillet's omnipresent but nonexistent heroes of the 1950s and 1960s with those three-dimensional, readily identifiable figures, conceived almost as caricatures, that populate the novels of Dickens and Balzac to understand the great need in the nineteenth century to conceive believable types, the need to resurrect in prose what, I suspect, never really existed in urban life. The French theoretician Jacques Lacan has shown us that psychologists have traditionally posited a bucolic type as the ideal for an emotionally healthy individual. We wish to be integrated personalities, the kind that might be developed in rural circumstances where people are known from childhood, known through their family, and known

within a relatively cohesive group where differences are seen in highest relief. Such integrated and distinct individuals might exist, but they are not recognized in our transient society where people's personalities have come to resemble brand-name products. It is my belief that the individuality of the artist started to achieve cult status in the early nineteenth century in the Romantic era, particularly in France where artists helped to evolve an art-for-art's-sake attitude and tried to purge themselves of the crassness of the middle class and the overwhelming sameness of existence. Artists became dandies, self-proclaimed aristocrats by virtue of their refined sensibilities and extremely subtle tastes, which distinguished them from the common crowd. If they wore black, then their black frock coats sported a slightly different cut, wider or narrower lapels, whatever the style among the real cognoscenti might be. Even Gustave Courbet, the realist, the self-proclaimed socialist, felt the need to distinguish himself from other artists and the rest of humanity by his grandiloquent Assyrian-styled beard, his resounding proclamations about the nature of unidealized reality, and his revolutionary fervor that encompassed both politics and aesthetics. Though he might have dressed like a worker, Courbet never wanted to be mistaken for an ordinary laborer; he wanted instead to ennoble workers and make them into the new individualized aristocrats of a future proletariat.

In the nineteenth century no one wished to dispense with individuality as an inconvenient category and recognize that it was often an inappropriate security blanket to which people retreated when they felt that they were coming close to the brink of mass production and mass humanity.

Individuality, I would venture to say, was as artificial a category as the idealized view of fourteenth-century Europe that excited such Gothic-revivalist architects and designers as A. W. Pugin and William Morris. These men thought they found in the fourteenth century a type of Christianity, simplicity, and egalitarian reliance on the virtues of the individual, a utopian dream for the future and also an escape from the deadlocked capitalist struggle that they believed was robbing their contemporaries of essential freedoms and humanity. Individuality, then, is a historic term, a category for dispelling some of the ills of industrialization that threatened people in the nineteenth century. Because art symbolizes the state of society, its aspirations as well as its needs, it became in the last century a significant way to manifest the cult of the individual. It could present portraits of individuals as did Courbet who pictured them with bulbous noses and rolled-up sleeves or the Impressionists who infuriated contemporaries because they made the prosperous middle class an undistinguished type, part of the mass of everyday heroes of modern life. But art could more fully incorporate the cult of individuality by manifesting it in the person of the artist. At the end of the nineteenth century many artists celebrated or suffered their individuality as a central aspect of their art: Paul Gauguin self-consciously assumed it in his updated versions of the Romantic hero in South Sea Islands dress, and Vincent van Gogh was a manifestation and victim of it. So great was the need for this type of individual that when some of Vincent's letters to his brother Theo were published, shortly after the latter's death, people

clamored to see the paintings, to recognize this severely alienated but true individual, and to collect work by him. The fetishizing of Vincent van Gogh's paintings as direct indicators of his personality is highly ironic, for it points to the fact that individuality in the modern era has been achieved only at a great expense: alienation from the mainstream and solitude, which is not peaceful reflection but is a self-imposed, essential, and nonescapable recourse. When people regard Vincent van Gogh as somehow present in his art, I think of the late middle ages when people clamored for the hair, fingernails, and bones of saints because these relics would somehow remind them of significant religious ideals or else would somehow intercede on their behalf and assure them of God's holy favor. Individuality in the nineteenth century and even still in the twentieth is a form of residual spirituality, which frames the self with the type of reverence that once was thought appropriate to the cult of the saints. Knowingly or not, artists have attempted to fulfill society's dreams of a believable individuality.

If individuals in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sense are inconceivable in today's terms, and if we have misjudged our art and attempted to find it a means of relieving pressure in our automated, ready-made, and standardized culture, then we need to look back, as this exhibition and catalog are trying to do, and reassess artistic innovation from a different perspective. We might find, for example, that some of the most accomplished art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries recognized the significance of mass production and posited a new and

healthy form of participative art modeled on medieval guilds. We can look at William Morris's writings, the workshops of the Shakers, Die Brücke artists who helped to revive the medieval medium of woodcuts, the Wiener Werkstätte, and Bauhaus and understand that creation was shared. Even Picasso's and Braque's work on Cubism can be considered an outgrowth of this tradition, as is Der Blaue Reiter, De Stijl, and, surprisingly, Dada and Surrealism. The last two are loosely structured organizations of artists who focus on a common goal and are consequently modeled on the workshop or guild approach even though both consist of artists who are pursuing romantically oriented subjects. Coming after the Surrealists, the Abstract Expressionists constituted a romantic revival. Not really an organized group, the Abstract Expressionists were joined only by a common allegiance to individually intuited knowledge. They established a new standard for individuality and a concept of it as a divinely inspired gift but an incredibly difficult burden that frequently resulted in periods of extreme depression, bouts with alcoholism, and suicide. In Abstract Expressionism the individual became a channel through which the uneasy, almost insane temper of the times was distilled: Motherwell associated the loss of his own youthful idealism with the cessation of the Spanish Republic and consequently named a series of paintings *Elegies to the Spanish Republic*, and Jackson Pollock's respite from alcoholism parallels the euphoria felt throughout the world after World War II and resulted in the frenzied ebullience of the drip paintings.

If one were to think of artists who epitomized the cult of

the individual in the early sixties, without doubt the strongest contenders would be Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock. For many people, Picasso's individuality was a product of his showmanship, fame, and longevity. Anyone who had been friends with Gertrude Stein in the early years of the century, who loved African sculpture when most thought it exotic junk, who helped to form the international School of Paris, and who had that many wives and companions had to be an individual, didn't he? Of course. But the Pablo Picasso in *Life* magazine had little to do with the Picasso who was lifelong friends with Spanish and French poets, who was a Communist, and who constantly parodied and sustained the grand tradition.

More consistent with the current idea of individuality in the United States of the 1960s was Jackson Pollock. Because he culminated in art the tradition of the Existential hero, the disaffected, super-macho type popularized in fiction by Dashiell Hammett and in film by Humphrey Bogart, Marlon Brando, and Paul Newman, he makes an excellent starting point for discussing new attitudes toward the role of the artist that developed in the 1960s and 1970s. To the French, I'm sure, Pollock manifested characteristics of the Camus and Sartre heroes that they admired so much. Slow to act, taciturn, melancholy, and then suddenly explosive, Jackson Pollock, the man possessed of demons that he exorcised in paint and of an almost painful need to experience both life and art to its fullest, clearly demonstrated the Cold War desire for resolution of conflict and for the sheer will to act in the face of complete absurdity. Similar to the characters played by Bogart and

Figure 32

Jasper Johns (American, b. 1930), *Painted Bronze*, 1960, painted bronze. Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.



Brando, Pollock was a loner. He lived on the fringe of society, choosing to alienate himself by grandly and yet somewhat sullenly and resolutely showing his disdain for wealth and convention by doing such things as appearing drunk and naked at a party.

Although Jackson Pollock's individuality was authentic, it still belonged to a type. Probably not self-conscious—even though he certainly at times assumed poses—Pollock's character was predictable; it belonged to the Romantic tradition and continued a model of alienated hero first developed by Lord Byron, a hero who was separate, sullen, and rustic in behavior. Frequently he came from the East and was consequently dark, with disheveled hair, black intense eyes, a surly unruliness or brooding intensity that fascinated women who wished to subdue him. This Byronic hero received popular treatment in Heathcliff, Emily Brontë's hero of *Wuthering Heights*, who is of questionable background, perhaps even of gypsy stock, and who embodies, throughout the novel, the natural wildness of the English moors. Although Pollock came from the West rather than the East and was a product of good, solid Anglo-Saxon and Scotch-Irish stock, he manifested many Byronic characteristics. At times wild, he seemed to manifest the still untamed traces of the American West, and his drip paintings, which now seem nervously rococo in their lavish, playful tracers and delicate colors, looked at the time sublime maelstroms in paint. In the sixties we still accepted the cult of individuality and its direct, untrammelled manifestations in spontaneously applied brushstrokes that quickened with feeling, paused with hesitation, and sometimes became possessed with the bacchanalian revels

of Jackson Pollock. He was the last believable Romantic hero and, to my way of thinking at least, the last convincing individual in art.

After Pollock, artists continued to participate in the Romantic myth of the self at the expense of trivializing it and appearing mundane. When Helen Frankenthaler attempted to emulate Pollock by posing on her hands and knees pouring and sponging paint, she looked more like an ad for Spic-n-Span than an artist. And Jules Olitski in Barbara Rose's film on the sixties resembles hired help when he steadfastly pushes a squeegee loaded with paint and gel across a wide expanse of canvas.

The most interesting artists coming after Pollock recognized the myth of the individuality of the artist as simply another convention to be dealt with, and they gave it the *coup de grace* by presenting it ironically as the subject matter of their art. Jasper Johns excelled in debunking the Romantic cult of the self that Pollock epitomized. In *Painting with Two Balls* (1960), Johns pokes fun at macho posturing in paint; in *Painted Bronze*, also done in 1960 (fig. 32), he presents the two Ballantine beer cans that would be requisite for a real two-fisted guzzler; and in *Thermometer* (1959), he includes a long thermometer for registering the heat of inspiration that is supposedly incorporated in a work of art.

While Johns made fun of individuality and the inability of art to fully register it—after all, painting is only convention—other artists began to look to new attitudes toward the self that are in line with their times and to form new images of the artist as both collaborator and corporate thinker.

Because it is highly conscious, the attitude toward the self

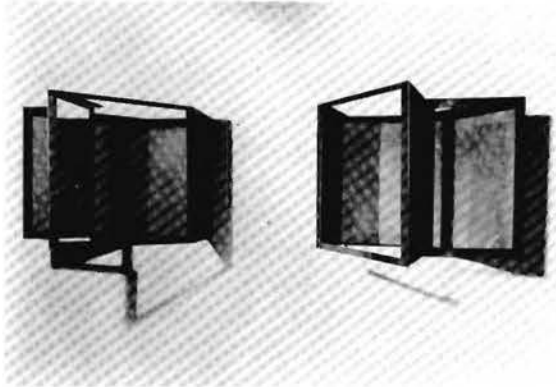
that Andy Warhol assumed in his art is tragic. And also in the Hegelian sense Warhol's approach is tragic: he knows that right will not win out, that he is doomed to being less than the Abstract Expressionist man, that in a very real sense he is a nonperson. This nonperson is developed over time: Warhol has an affair with his television and is wedded to his tape recorder. He is the new media-dominated nonindividual who accepts the conventional role models that mass advertising and mass productions offer him. He becomes as vapid and two-dimensional as the Hollywood-generated images of Troy Donahue, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley that populate his silkscreened paintings. Assuming the role of a product on the order of Coca-Cola, he is standardized, packaged, and readily identifiable. Warhol dramatized this new nonperson/product by sending a double on the university lecture circuit. When accused of defrauding the public, he cryptically and prophetically said that the double could be a more believable Andy Warhol than he.

Warhol's nonself dovetails with his corporate or collaborative work. Instead of making art in a studio, Warhol produces it in the factory. He has a host of assistants who carry out his ideas assembly-line fashion. His great dream is to make as many paintings as Picasso, only he wants to create them in a couple of years rather than in a lifetime. Warhol depends on the so-called mistakes his assistants make with a squeegee, causing Marilyn's face to be blotted out in sections and thus giving the work a mechanical, mass-produced look and making Norma Jean a nonperson and a victim of the inexorable processes of mass production, mass advertising, and mass consumption.

With his Factory, Warhol initiated a new form of collaborative art that did not seek so much to evade the ramifications of mass production as to accept the premise of industrialization that includes an equation of humanity with machine and a loss of the concept of self as a creative, fully integrated personality. Warhol takes these dehumanizing aspects of modern society and uses them. He seeks not to change modern society so much as to symbolize its questionable values, to be truthful about them, and to avoid comforting people with a false sense of self. Warhol's collaborative art is in dramatic opposition to the Romantic work subscribed to by the Abstract Expressionists. It is yin to their yang: a negative whose full definition can only be elaborated once its positive is named and clearly understood. Although Warhol's collaborative art stands in opposition to Abstract Expressionism, it defines a type to which artists in the sixties and seventies responded, an art that is tough minded, resistant to simple interpretation, consistently ambiguous, and thought provoking. Warhol's collaborative productions seem to be an offhand denial of individuality, and yet they elicit strong feelings about the role of the individual in modern society, the personality of the artist that becomes a product for the art business.

Warhol's collaboration made an entire range of participative creation possible. Although the Minimalists were his contemporaries and were already involved with shapes that could be industrially fabricated, they did not seize hold of the importance of collaboration until after Warhol had initiated his silkscreened productions. The Minimalists were trying to find a *sine qua non* for form.

Figure 33
Robert Smithson (American, 1938–73), *Enantiomorphic Chambers*, 1965, mirrors and steel. Collection unknown, photograph courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York.



They wished to find simple, perfect, replicable shapes and were not at first concerned with elaborating on the nature of the artist's collaboration with industrial fabricators. Even when they admitted the importance of their collaborators, they regarded them as extensions of their materials, as concerns of the media and not as participants in a dialogue.

Only Robert Morris, who viewed his sculpture as possible elements in dance productions with Yvonne Rainer, clearly understood that a reductive, almost anonymous, geometric-shaped sculpture suggested a new role for art and for artists, who were less geniuses in closed back rooms than rediscoverers of basic elements. In *Column* of 1961, Morris initiates a new type of collaboration that depends on viewer response. Because *Column* is so reductive—it is made of wood, painted a light gray, which seemed to Morris a noncolor, measures six feet high, and appears to be definitely a static object—it causes viewers to reconsider the role of sculpture and the meaning of art. Sculpture, in Morris's terms, is less an ordained experience than a catalyst for one, less a presence than a conduit for allowing viewers to come to know themselves through art. As Annette Michelson and others have pointed out, Morris's art offers observers an opportunity for phenomenological investigation, for questioning artistic function, examining their assumptions about art, and coming to terms with the fictive arena of space surrounding a work of art and the real but vicarious space enveloping it.⁴ *Column* becomes art through its context: in a city street it would be an object, in an art gallery a reductive piece of sculpture, and in a distant jungle an alluring and unfamiliar presence. *Column* is a

proposition about art, and its status is continually in question; in order to be art, it has to be accepted as part of a social contract that depends on collaboration with viewers.

In *Enantiomorphic Chambers* (fig. 33) Robert Smithson continues Morris's concept while making fun of it. If art consists of perception—if, in other words, it is a dynamic exchange between work of art and viewer, then Smithson turns perception into its opposite, nonperception, and plays on visual blindness. His form of collaboration depends on viewers looking at *Enantiomorphic Chambers* and regarding the obliquely placed mirrors that reflect the state of mirrored reflexiveness, of viewed blindness, so to speak, as art. Used to seeing art as a fictive realm to be looked into, viewers must examine this work as a functional equation for art in which perception equals the comprehension that art is a narcissistic proposition of self-reflection.

Both these works by Morris and Smithson and, to a great extent, most Minimalist art depend on an active, investigative viewer. If one wishes to look passively at Minimalist objects, to be delighted with ingratiating formal qualities, one will be disappointed. However, if a viewer wishes to understand how sculpture is similar to and yet different from ordinary objects, then Minimalism is a perfect vehicle. This art works against the dominant formalist mode of seeing as aesthetic pleasure and presents viewers with challenges. When one considers that, beginning in the fifties and continuing into the sixties, television was enjoying its heyday and was turning a generation of people into passive bystanders, it's interesting to consider the

Figure 34

Edward Kienholz (American, b. 1927), *Still Live*, 1982, mixed media installation, Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco.



compensatory role played by Minimalist objects that caused viewers to react, to consider why an industrially fabricated form could be art and not just an inert piece of high technology. Even though this viewer-activated art has continued to be important in the past two decades, it has not assumed as significant a role as in the early sixties when Minimalist art appeared to be so completely static and mute—a thing in a gallery.

As with any other attitude, this viewer-response type work has its decadent counterparts, the most memorable being Edward Kienholz's *Still Live* (fig. 34), a piece made in Berlin in 1974, and a play on the genre "still life," which in French is sometimes called *nature morte*. To characterize the time bomb that Berlin has become and to dramatize, perhaps, Heidegger's acceptance of death as a necessity to appreciating life, Kienholz together with Nancy Reddin wrote the following statement that accompanies *Still Live*:

I have long been interested in making an environment that could be dangerous to the viewer. This year's A.D.A. exhibit, with invitation extended by the committee has provided such an opportunity. The piece is called STILL LIVE and consists of a barricaded space 10 meters by 10 meters, that is guarded at all times against accidental entry. Inside is a steel wall background with a comfortable group of furniture (armchair, table, lamps, magazines, etc.) placed before it. Six meters in front of the chair is a black box mechanism containing a live cartridge and a random timer triggered to fire once within approximately the next 100 years. Detonation may be this instant, tomorrow, next week, 14 years, etc. No one, including

myself has any idea when the explosion will take place, but if the blue warning light is flashing you can be assured that the timer is running. The environment is completely safe for the casual observer. Danger can only come if one is sitting in the chair or crossing the line of fire at the moment of detonation. The odds are astronomical against injury, but the possibility does exist. Viewers may enter the work only after signing a document stating that they fully understand the risk they are taking. No one under 21 years of age will be permitted entry under *any* circumstances and proof of age will be required at the gate.

I have been asked with some justification why I would build such a piece. My purpose is certainly not death. Quite the contrary, I would hope that this work may be able to invoke new and positive responses to the wonders of life.⁵

I had an occasion to see this environment when it was reconstructed for the Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco, in 1982, and I was fascinated by the reactions of people who sat in the chair facing the black box loaded with a live cartridge. Even if they appeared at first to be taking the situation lightly, within a few seconds they would undergo a perceivable change. One woman who sat down casually in the chair looked through a magazine and intended to read an article. Her movements, at first smooth, became jerky and quick, and even though she did not glance at the black box, her tenseness and half-hearted laugh at the taunts of a friend outside the barricade gave away her fears. Another viewer, a young man, attempted to challenge the black box

by staring at it. In the beginning he seemed cavalier, but within seconds he changed, I think, because he realized that he was not staring at just a black box with a firing mechanism but was looking at himself and considering the possibility of his end. Even though I was embarrassed at seeing another human being stripped of psychological defenses, I did question him after he left the barricaded area. At that point he had regained some composure and tried to shrug off the whole experience. But he did look deeply moved and preoccupied. To exist as art, *Still Live* needs an art environment and contemplative viewers who are willing to see the symbolic ramifications of the work and not just dwell on its sensationalist qualities. Viewers who put themselves literally in the center of the work, as I was afraid to do, actively collaborate with the piece. They become actors who assume an assigned role, only they play it for real.

In recent years couples have become important collaborators. Edward Kienholz has attempted to collaborate with his wife, Nancy Reddin, but has achieved little success. Although he has included his wife's name as co-creator, he has not yet allowed her to have great impact on his style. The art is clearly created in the Edward Kienholz mode, with some input from Mrs. Kienholz. Nancy Reddin Kienholz recognizes this problem, and in a panel at the American Sculpture conference in Oakland, California, in 1982, she said that there was little difference in the role she played in the art before she was recognized as collaborator and after, except that she now had to participate in panels and defend the art publicly. While the artist/viewer collaboration is a successful aspect of his art, Kienholz's inclusion of his wife

is not yet resolved. His collaboration results more in a workshop situation than in a freely expressive and intensive creative relationship in which both artists are willing to take risks and go beyond the already formulated, macho-ego-dominated work for which Edward Kienholz has become recognized.

Among the more prominent couple-collaborators are the Bechers, Christos, Harrisons, Oldenburgs, and Poiriers. Some are acknowledged collaborators, others are forced, and still others seem to be innovative and integrative, depending on the complete cooperation of both members. Although the Oldenburgs' collaboration is acknowledged, it is probably forced because the style belongs to the husband, and the wife, Coosje van Bruggen, is serving more or less as an in-house curator who helps to select sites and define projects. The collaboration seems to be productive and worthwhile but it, like the Kienholz team, is still the product of the male and represents an occasion of allowing "the little lady" an opinion. Both acknowledge a need for pooling resources and for getting beyond the confines of an isolated and packaged ego, but the collaboration does not accept the ramifications of its premises. The art is more a workshop production than a collaboration, the wife more an assistant or sounding board than an innovator. In fairness to Oldenburg, I should point out that he has always been prone to officially recognize contributions made by assistants. His first wife, Pat, perhaps one of his most important assistants, sewed the canvas *Giant Hamburger*, helped with some *Good Humor Bars*, and in general made the large stuffed sculptures of the 1960s possible. But, the ideas were all Oldenburg's,

Figure 35
Anne and Patrick Poirier in their studio, Paris, 1980.



even though Pat may have made a suggestion here, a tuck and a seam there.

Differing from the Oldenburgs, the Christos (see fig. 24) have never formally acknowledged their collaboration as co-creation. The ideas are Christo's; the financial organization Jeanne-Claude's. Because of the nature of his work, which is formal, political, and economic, Christo, I think, should give his wife more credit. Although Christo does not include his wife as a full collaborator, he has, unfortunately, in an effort to be democratic, tried to make the engineers and technicians implementing his projects part of his aesthetic team. When he states in his film *Valley Curtain* that the work doesn't belong to him but is the creation of all his helpers, I believe that he is misjudging the situation and is attempting to make the assistants the modern-day equivalent to John Ruskin's medieval stonemasons, those rustic types who were each supposedly given his own capitol to design and carve. Just as Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals were highly engineered creations that kept the contributions of individuals firmly in check, so Christo's monumental projects are subsumed under his own whims and under the very able fiscal management of his wife.

While the tentative collaborations of the Oldenburgs, Kienholzes, and Christos seem remarkable because of the attempt to make the living partnership of marriage a workable, creative situation, the collaboration of Hilla and Bernd Becher (see cat. 85–88) seems less intriguing as a relationship and much more a matter-of-fact proposition. Their collaboration, a Minimalist-inspired activity with definite post-industrialist overtones and a healthy dose of archivist zeal, has taken on the character of a research

team. They are recording a passing era of industrialization, and they are honoring a host of anonymous architects by making sure they remain practitioners of a common style, adherents of the type of building that governs each ensemble. This quality of anonymity, of cataloging types rather than emphasizing individual production, is a *modus operandi* for the work and for themselves: the subject matter reinforces the matter-of-fact, low-key interest in work and the submerging of artistic ego into a pattern that accords more with systems theory and permutations than with the idiosyncracies of two individuals who are attempting to forge a new concept of a collaborative self. Their shared identity is an *a priori* not an *a posteriori*, an established fact, not an essential outcome. And so for the general public the Bechers seem to be only names for the traveling team of documentary photographers or conceptualists who are careful to approach their subject directly and to emphasize similarity of vantage point so that one sees one cooling tank in almost exactly the same manner as one sees the others that have been lined up in the assembled set. With the Bechers, sex is never a question; the anonymity of their production, the mundaneness of their conception, and the documentary nature of their activity all work against exposing the individuality or sex of the artist.

Although Anne and Patrick Poirier (fig. 35; see also cat. 107) appear to be at the very opposite antipode from the German Bechers, being romantic instead of realistic, interested in fantasy rather than fact, and working with elaborate reconstructions of the mythic battle between the gods and other giants, a subject that has haunted them for

years, the Poiriers are, in many respects, similar to the Bechers. Anne and Patrick Poirier have formed a corporate or workshop style; they have reduced their palette to the oppositions of black and white, and they have even accentuated this reductive look in their daily lives by choosing to wear only black and white clothing. For all the romantic overtones of their art, it is carefully researched and dependent on a working knowledge of ancient Greek civilization. Their art, similar to that of the Bechers, is concerned with aftermath, with a time of nostalgia when monuments are turning to ruin. Although the Bechers are most closely attuned to conceptualists in terms of the straightforward look of the information they cultivate, they betray a certain undercurrent of romanticism when they feature desolate buildings falling into disrepair. Similarly, the Poiriers seize on the archaeologists' mode and recast the famous Giulio Romano *Fall of the Giants* at Palazzo del Tè into a more factual setting. The fantasy is there, but it is held in check, tempered by research of ancient types, and sustained with a subtle humor that recognizes the entire production as preposterous and playful, as somehow ludicrous in the late twentieth century and yet meaningful because it takes humor and myth seriously. The Bechers are similar to children playing the role of serious researchers, while the Poiriers are adults who wish to cultivate again the magic of childhood.

I believe that collaboration in the 1960s was largely modeled on corporate types. When it was successful, it depended on artists working in committees and coming to a consensus about specific problems. When functioning on the corporate model, artists were more think tanks than

individualized egos; their aim was to change and mold society, to envision new possibilities, and then to attempt to implement them. These artists were less concerned with discovering themselves than with learning about the world. This collaborative type was epitomized, I think, in the innovative but miscalculated Experiments in Art and Technology, or E.A.T., as it was known, which was co-founded in 1966 by Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Klüver, a scientist working with Bell Laboratories. In their newsletter of June 1967, this group's intentions were concisely enumerated:

E.A.T. is founded on the strong belief that an industrially sponsored, effective working relationship between artists and engineers will lead to new possibilities which will benefit society as a whole.

The idea was wonderful, and many artists and scientists throughout the United States responded to it enthusiastically. The main problem, as I see it, was that connections between art and science were either forced or trivialized, and neither group really knew enough about the other's agenda to be able to bridge differences and forge a new type of work that was neither art nor science but something in between. An outgrowth of the ebullience of E.A.T. was the carefully engineered and painstakingly organized exhibition *Art and Technology*, which was masterminded by Maurice Tuchman.⁶ The idea of pairing artists with corporations was a splendid one, but the optimism of the approach, which was spearheaded during the sixties when prosperity and a belief in art as progress and pageant was at its height, was out of kilter with this

nation's very real anxieties that became apparent in 1968 and affected the country through the early seventies when inflation, ecological upsets, and dwindling energy sources caused people to start doubting the possibility of a bright new world through technology.

In the sixties artists were more concerned with style than with individuality. If they were individuals, then they were famous as personalities (that is, nonindividuals or brand-name products like Andy Warhol). And their individuality was equated with a distinctive style. In art history classes style was presented as the cornerstone of the discipline: students learned to make accurate and intelligent stylistic analyses, using such preferred terms as "balance," "juxtaposition," "recession," "fictive illusion," "mass," "value," "contrast," and "intensity of hue." And *Artforum*, the major new art periodical of the sixties, contained essays by Michael Fried and Kenworth Moffett that abounded in such stylistic terms as "inviolable surface," "deductive structure," "presence," and "actuality," with discussions that emphasized the minutiae of composition, color, and support. The sixties, then, culminated a period obsessed with style, with formalism as it is now called, and the pre-eminent formalist was and still continues to be Clement Greenberg.

Personally, I think Greenberg, in the past few years, has been taken too much to task for the excesses of his approach and not lauded enough for his accomplishments. I believe his entire influence on the art world could be approached more positively if we recognized him as an artistic collaborator and considered criticism, even prescriptive criticism, to be essential at times to the

production of art and not ancillary to it. If we consider art a form of communication and not just a static object, then we need to recognize that its communication will of necessity be two-sided. Artists need to know what they have communicated: they need feedback from critics who function as ideal viewers, as informed and perceptive individuals who complete art's communication by responding to it in prose. So important is the critic's role to the creation of art that I would like to venture the idea that great art cannot be created unless the artist has an enlightened critic in the form of writer, patron, or close friend who will try to articulate in words—that is, make conscious—the experience of viewing art and deciphering its content.

Although I have earlier taken Greenberg to task in the article "Against a Newer Laocoon" that I co-authored with Barbara Cavaliere,⁷ I would now assess his contribution differently. Greenberg, for example, may not have been the first to recognize the significance of Jackson Pollock's art but he did champion Pollock, and, in the process, helped him to achieve a confidence in himself that enabled him to experiment in new directions. And although Greenberg may have hindered more than he helped William Baziotes whom he counseled to let his paintings cook, he did seek out Baziotes's work as significant, and he did attempt to understand its special quality that is attained by glazing. Some artists have told me that Greenberg fulfilled a most important function because he would help them select works for an important show. Even though he counseled, for example, Kenneth Noland to exhibit the more colorful *Targets* first and the monochromatic ones later, thus fooling

history and giving a false, reductive, linear type of development to this series of works, he did imbue Noland and Morris Louis with essentializing their ideas and finding a way to work with the inherent means of the medium. And even though Greenberg frequently oversteps the normal bounds for a critic by giving artistic advice, helping in fact to create the work as when he makes suggestions to Anthony Caro about a formal problem or counsels Helen Frankenthaler on ways to crop her stained canvases, he does dramatize the critic's role as an arbiter of taste, disseminator of ideas about sensibility, and popular forum for art. Critics do not simply tell artists what to think; on occasion they participate in the creation of art by enabling artists to comprehend the uniqueness in their own work, to deal with its significance, understand the system of values it presupposes, and comprehend the way that their art functions in society. If artists take their creations on faith, if they intuit ideas and then develop them, if feeling is their guide, then they desperately need a response, and that response in our society has been assigned to the critic, who has in actuality two ideal audiences: artists and viewers.

The impact critics have had on the art world is significant but difficult to calculate. Even though Harold Rosenberg may have misjudged Action painting, he did help to make the ethics of risk a legitimate concern for a generation of artists attuned to existentialism. And Leo Steinberg's reading of Jasper Johns helped to make the tendency to literalize, to find material equivalents for art's function, a *raison d'être* for art in the fifties and sixties. Lawrence Alloway's connection with the British Pop art movement and his conspicuous presence at the Guggenheim Museum

in the sixties have to be considered in any serious appraisal of Pop art in the United States. Lucy Lippard's Marxist attitude and her concern with feminism have helped artists outside the mainstream to define their goals and reassess their prospective audiences. Donald Kuspit's interest in the Frankfurt school and his desire to understand the political basis of art and the ways that powerful constituencies have affected it have in turn had an impact on artists who are concerned with articulating systems of value and mirroring power centers in the art world. And Robert Pincus-Witten's diaristic approach and phenomenal ability to coin new jargon such as "Post-Minimalism" can be considered a creative restructuring of the art world and a repositing of its stance vis-à-vis the sixties, formalism, and the impersonality of the art world. With each of these critics one can build a case for the creative function of criticism. Whether a critic initiates a style or is only important in modifying it is a moot point. And whether critics help to initiate a new era or are merely products of their own times is also open to question. But I should point out that these same arguments about the role of the individual and the impact of determinism have been debated for over a century.

We are living in an age of criticism. Many of the most important new orientations toward the world have been formulated by critics. In particular Structuralism and Post-Structuralism (better known as Deconstruction), the theories of Jacques Derrida, have been of great importance. As one would expect, much contemporary art participates in Structuralist and Deconstructionist ideas. One of the most obvious Structuralists is Vito Acconci who in his early

Figure 36

John Baldessari (American, b. 1931), *Blasted Allegories (Colorful Sentence): Yellow (Violet) and Black (White)—Yearn Bashfully (Green)*, 1978, photographs mounted on board. Courtesy Sonnabend Gallery, New York.



works reduced myths to series of formal operations on his body. Playing on the idea of the Greek deity Apollo who represents the sun, wisdom, and new beginnings and has been traditionally symbolized by the omphalos or navel, Acconci pulled hair from around his navel for the film *Openings* (1970) and thus created a modern, mundane image of new beginnings, of opening oneself literally to one's first connection with life, the umbilical cord. And the Deconstructionist attitude that attempts to undermine conventional fiction or ellipses in literature is an important working proposition for John Baldessari's *Blasted Allegories* (fig. 36), a series of images from popular media that are coupled with misaligned captions, causing one to puzzle over the works and regard art as a radiant surface and not a transparent, easily decipherable set of signs.

One could argue convincingly that critical collaboration is nothing more than simple influence, and I would agree that there are definite influences that suggest mutual support and not simple derivation of one idea from another. Maybe, with the Structuralist and Deconstructionist examples cited above, we are dealing with influences. But I would like to propose that collaboration is, in essence, nothing more or less than influence positively perceived as part of an ongoing cultural dialogue. Almost a decade ago when I taught my first course at Yale University, I announced to the students that art history is a negative discipline because it takes the positive idea of creation and turns it into sources and influences. Instead of dwelling on the new and innovative, we are always trying to take the conservative approach and see precedents for a particular motif. We write art history without exclamation points because we are

afraid to dwell on originality and understand how it can be as enormous as a Kierkegaardian leap or as slow and minute but still as inexorable as glacial drift. I believe that our negative emphases, coupled with their opposite, a Romantic belief in genius that has imbued art since the Renaissance, have put artists in an impossible situation. We have encumbered them with an obligation to prove us wrong and to show through their art that the isolated ego is the mainstay of creativity. All this negativity and compensatory posturing has led to an impossible situation for artists who frequently believe, as Robert Motherwell has so poignantly suggested, that they must create themselves and their art anew, that they must forge a completely independent and revelatory style. And Mark Rothko, following Charles Baudelaire, would have added that a legitimate style should be as much a surprise to its creator as to its audience.

How much easier and satisfactory is the collaboration idea! A concept of creating that does not separate but instead integrates, that does not make ego the subject but instead is attuned to some function outside the individual, isolated self. Collaboration, as it has been structured since the 1970s, is to my way of thinking largely responsible to the tenets of the feminist movement, to the desire to find a new model for successful human behavior that does not depend on aggression and booty but instead is concerned with more human and fulfilling needs that can be grouped under the terms "nurturance" and "community."

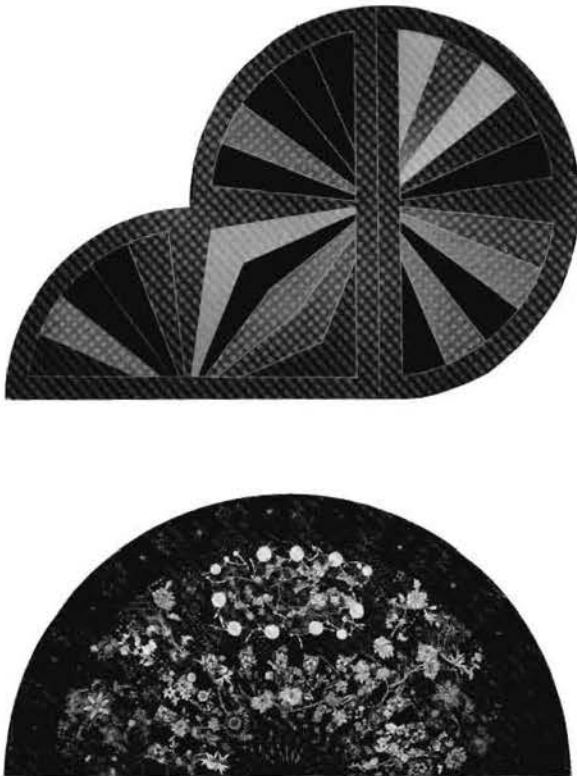
In the early seventies the feminist sensibility caused the big, brash canvases of the late sixties to undergo radical changes. One needs only to consider the differences

Figure 37

Frank Stella (American, b. 1936), *Darabjerd III*, 1967, synthetic polymer on canvas. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

Figure 38

Miriam Schapiro (American, b. Canada 1923), *Black Bolero*, 1980, acrylic and fabric on canvas. Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York.



between Frank Stella's Protractor series (fig. 37) and Miriam Schapiro's fan-shaped canvases (fig. 38) to realize that the immediacy of the former works, which were instantly recognizable, almost preformulated gestalts, were replaced by works similar in shape but vastly different in appeal, works that invite viewers to come close and study the surface of cloth, sequins, paint, and remnants of patchwork and embroidery created by anonymous women in the past. Although Schapiro seems to appeal to Stella's immediacy and design, his large distancing permutations on basic shapes, his art that functions best in the lobbies of anonymous late-modern steel and glass buildings, she humanizes her art by incorporating in it the work of other women. One might argue that she is no different from Picasso who used newspaper, rope, wallpaper, and oilcloth in his collages. But I think her collages are less radical juxtapositions of industrially fabricated materials and much more concerned with the accretion of women's traditional handicrafts, their very personal creations for their families and friends. In a series of prints entitled *Anonymous Was a Woman* (1977), Schapiro memorializes this tradition by using such pieces of handiwork as crochet as the object matter of her prints. In my opinion Schapiro is involved in a most important form of collaboration when she recognizes this largely unhonored domestic tradition and uses it as the subject and sometimes the media of her art.

In contrast to Schapiro, Judy Chicago is less a collaborator than an enterprising businessperson. When she farms out china-painting and embroidery, she may attempt to dignify the participation of the women in the South and Midwest by mentioning their names and towns

of origin, but she is not really allowing them to collaborate fully in the work. The designs are definitely Chicago's; the women are still taking in sewing; and the entire process reminds me of Stella's Italian family outside New York City who worked on his designs for the Protractors. To have a woman stitch a design is no different from having Lippincott industrially fabricate it. Whether the workers have ideas about French knots or welds matters little; their participation is limited to that of technician, and the art is still very much the prerogative of the artist.

Even though the feminist movement did not turn all women artists into collaborators, it did affect some, and it did represent a new definition of self that is interactive rather than inclusive, open rather than closed, a self that would be less an isolated ego than a participant in a community-directed function. Many women's collaborations exist, and several of the most important Suzanne Lacey has organized around specific causes or events. In 1977 she put together a task force in California to dramatize the issue of rape. The piece, titled *Three Weeks in May*, consisted of a rape crisis center where information on the numbers and locations of rapes was recorded. In addition, performances were staged in the Los Angeles area to emphasize the problems of rape and the significance of these violations. The work was political, social, symbolic, and media oriented. More recently, in 1982, in San Francisco, Lacey worked with a committee of local artists and volunteers to bring together as many different constituencies of women as possible and have them meet for one evening in a department store where they could discuss their problems, their roles, their satisfactions, and their disappointments.

Assembled that August evening were senior citizens, administrators, housewives, members of ethnic groups, and prostitutes. The work was a celebration of women's working lives, and viewers were invited to walk through the store and examine the groups and listen to their conversations. In this kind of collaborative performance, the work becomes the spontaneous interaction of separate individuals. No longer is the artist portraying her own ego or dwelling on some fantasy; she is now building on traditional women's roles of community organizer, shopper, and hostess.

The feminist movement has been an impetus to the collaboration of Helen Mayer and Newton Harrison, a wife/husband team, who for over a decade have been creating ecological art. Taking the feminist goals of cooperation, integration, community, and nurturance, and the ecological concept of listening to the needs of the environment, they have evolved a mythic/poetic/scientific art. In their recent narrative *The Mangrove and the Pine* (cat. 106), they have studied the effects of the alien Australian pine on the ecology of the Barrier Islands off the west coast of Florida. Brought to the United States to protect orange groves from winds and cold, the Australian pine has become a weed. Although they resemble the beautiful long-needled pines of Cézanne's beloved Aix-en-Provence, these trees have become ecological disasters in Florida where they edge out the mangroves that created the Barrier Islands and thereby disrupt the coastline of these protective islands. Implicit in the Harrisons' presentation of the battle being waged between the pines and the mangroves is the idea that other aliens such as human beings have interrupted the ecological balance of this area and have attempted to make

these islands, which are naturally always in flux, into permanent areas where lots can be sold and condominiums and suburbs established. The Harrisons ask for a new understanding of the need to collaborate with nature, and they help to manifest this need directly in their art by collaborating with each other. In this manner the subject matter reinforces the means by which the art is created, and both become part of its plea for integration, for listening to the needs of the landscape, and particularly for viewing the environment from a perspective different from our usual anthropomorphic one.

In the late seventies more and more artists became disenchanted with the old, established romantic conception of art that was conceived as a manifestation of one individual's sensibility, a sentient being, and a precious object that would be an accoutrement to the rich. Although the middle and lower classes might have their mass media art in the form of television, particularly, I think, in the form of commercials that provide a repeated litany for human behavior, artists have recently recognized that the avant-garde has been trivialized to the point of fashion and titillation and has little to do with the broad populace. When a fashionable magazine on the order of *Town and Country* or *Vanity Fair* can term itself "avant-garde," one knows that the concept of "avant-garde" meaning progress and innovation is a clichéd idea. I think artists in the seventies also recognized that in our materialist society art becomes just another group of objects and that experiences are oftentimes more captivating and moving than things.

Two New York groups that have found challenging alternatives for disseminating art information are Fashion

Moda and Colab. Both groups have moved away from the traditional sales-oriented gallery system to establish a new form of interactive art. So attuned are we to the gallery system that we fail to realize how recent the appearance of commercial galleries really is. Although art was sometimes sold in paint shops, and in the seventeenth century the Dutch certainly found a means for selling art to great numbers of people, commercial galleries as a prime means of exhibiting and selling art are a mid- to late-nineteenth-century development that parallels, in France, the Impressionists' decision to circumvent conservative, official salons. Commercial galleries became great successes in the late nineteenth century, as can be seen in the eventual financial success of the Impressionists who took their ideas to the marketplace and let it be the final arbiter of taste. Now, after a century of commercial galleries, artists are finding the marketplace a limited patron because it dictates creating and selling luxurious goods that will appeal to ensconced powers rather than allowing for art simply to provide new and radical schemes for symbolizing modern life. (As I write this, I am leery of using the terms "new" and "radical" because they have been so co-opted by tradition. We now have to invent new terms for new art, because "new" means orthodox and conservative. Just as Post-Modern is a reaction to formalist Modernism and not to innovative art, so the death of the avant-garde is a rebellion against now-established vanguard truisms.)

Stefan Eins, the main organizer of Fashion Moda, has chosen to take art out of a bourgeois marketplace and relocate it in the lower-income South Bronx where it is

shown in a storefront museum. Crossbreeding young SoHo vanguardists with locals in the South Bronx who talk about what art means to them, Eins has managed to make us aware of vanguard art's previously limited group of supporters and its possibilities for an enlarged audience. By bringing together local artists, citizens, downtown artists, and critics, he has managed to circumvent some of art's insularity. The paradigm that he is evolving is a collaboration between artists and audience whereby one can learn from the other, and the resultant art will represent a genuine and necessary mode of catalyzing communication and reacting to it. The ongoing collaboration between sculptors John Ahearn and Rigoberto Torres is exemplary: urban sophisticate and South Bronx folk artist have joined forces to document blacks and Hispanics living in Torres's neighborhood.

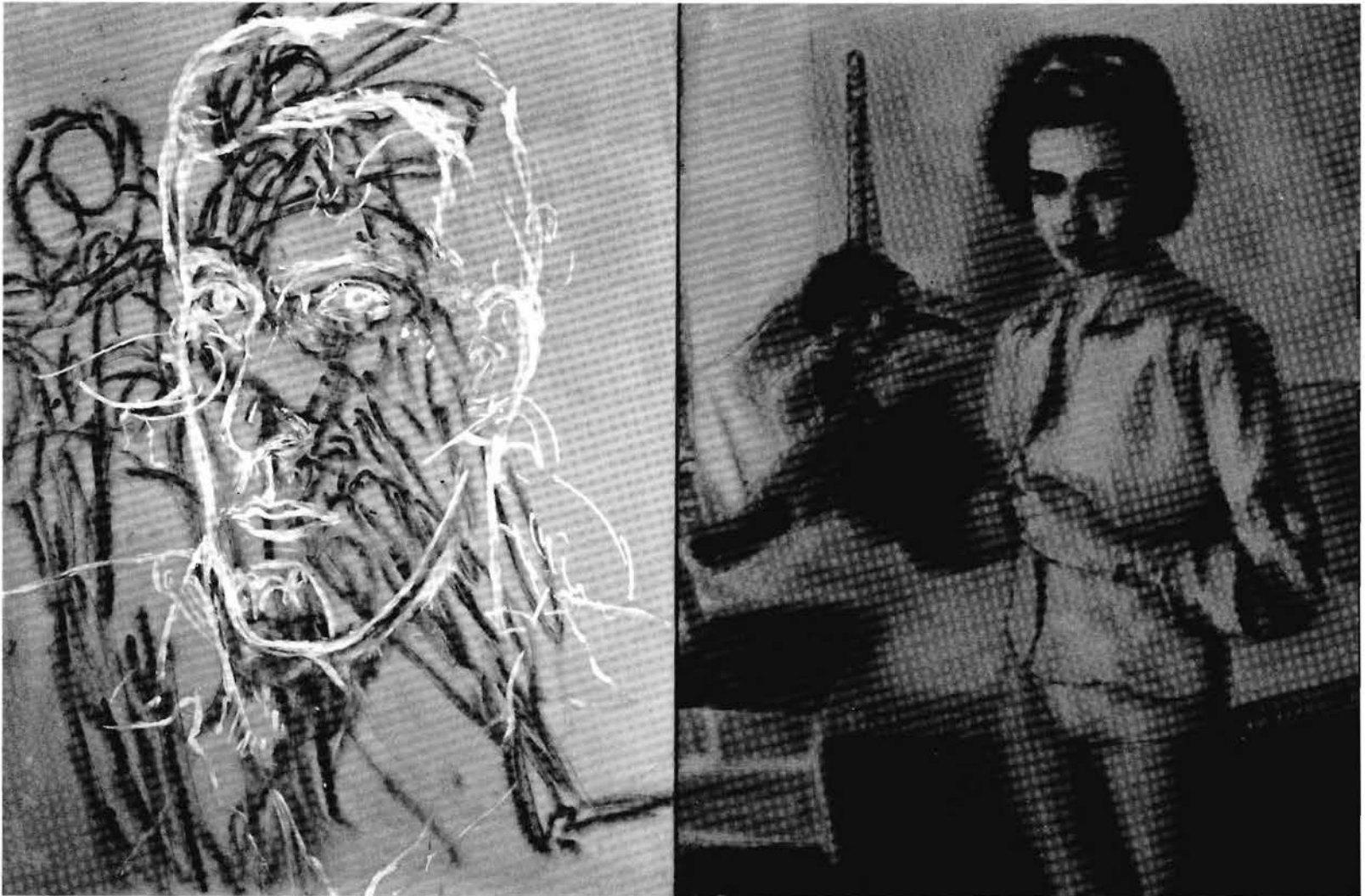
Colab, short for collaboration, consists of approximately thirty-five artists (some of whom also exhibit at Fashion Moda) who have grouped together to form large shows. Their most notable piece, the Forty-second Street exhibition, took place in a deserted massage parlor that they turned into an impromptu museum. Much of the power of the work derived from its seedy ambience, which lent authenticity to diverse kinds of work harking back to the fifties' California art of Bruce Conner and Edward Kienholz. Attempting to be *enfants terribles*, albeit with a decorative touch, Colab artists included images of rats running up a staircase, environments using refuse found in the building, and a small museum bookshop cum gallery that sold multiples, artists' books, and catalogs. Although much of

the work looked *déjà vu*, seeing it in such a context as a Forty-second Street massage parlor transformed it into a remarkable site-specific project. The piece, then, was a collaboration between various artists who played down their individual personalities, and it was also a collaboration between artists and a particular site, which played an enormous role in legitimizing the work and transforming it from a merely titillating experience to a much more challenging confrontation with a specific unsavory place. Almost always attempting to avoid being linked with fashion, modern art has attempted a number of strategies to declare its significance and authenticity. And it seems to me ironic that the Colab group has managed to be both fashionable and authentic by choosing a site that becomes a major factor in the work. As Rosemary Mayer, an artist sometimes associated with Colab, once told me, "The pre-eminent material of the eighties may well be satin, which combines high-fashion elegance with low-brow burlesque sleaze." Colab's Forty-second Street show exudes the sensibility of fashionable sleaze and has helped to usher in the eighties.

Most examples of collaboration that I have discussed have to do with cooperative ventures between consenting parties. Probably one of the most notable ventures in collaboration, the famous addition Julian Schnabel made to David Salle's *Jump*, 1980 (fig. 39), has to do with denigration or criticism. According to the most popular version of the story, Schnabel and Salle exchanged works, and Schnabel decided to make an addition to Salle's piece, to complete it, so to speak. Given the painting by Salle in

exchange for one of his own, Schnabel reversed the order of the two panels constituting *Jump* and superimposed a large portrait of Salle. Not so much an act of destruction as a collaboration, Schnabel's addition is actually consistent with Salle's style. In his art Salle formulates a number of conventions that are discretely placed so that they will remain conventions: color fields resembling Ellsworth Kelly, grids looking like early Judd objects, illustrations reminiscent of the Ashcan painters, cartoons of Bugs Bunny, signs on the order of late Kandinsky compositions, and images of women who seem to be traditional artists' models or humiliating sexual stereotypes. By keeping these individual styles separate and yet allowing them some interplay with the other elements, Salle sets up a painting equivalent to Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction; he breaks apart fictive illusions and shows us that the reality of the work of art is a group of consistent and believable conventions. All Schnabel did was to enter into a dialogue with the conventions already established by Salle and add one of his own. And by entering this dialogue, Schnabel deconstructed Salle by breaking down the finely poised composition of interconnections and finely balanced oppositions and showing that a contrapuntal composition scheme that played figure against field and flat image with three-dimensional construct was at work. Even though Salle deconstructs Modernism, he still appears to believe in it; and he is careful to parody its conventions while continuing to create a decorative and relatively flat type of painting that is at home with formalist art. Because Schnabel often transforms modern art's traditional flat and matte

Figure 39
David Salle and Julian Schnabel, *Jump*, 1980, acrylic on canvas.
Courtesy Mary Boone Gallery, New York.



background into shimmering velvet, which connotes lushness, fashion, and decoration, he breaks down this convention. And in his collaboration with Salle, while he does not use velvet, he does employ his decorative and almost parodic Abstract Expressionist paint strokes, a convention for feeling rather than feeling itself, to offset Salle's cool finesse.

In the past two decades, collaboration has not been art's mainstay, but it has provided artists with an alternative way of looking and reacting to the world. Sociologists remind us that our society is dynamic, not static, and is concerned with acquiring experiences rather than objects: we are still materialistic, only we wish to purchase those items such as vacations, lessons, computers, dinners, and video games that will allow us opportunities to see, learn, and grow. If this is true, and I certainly think it is, then collaborative art enables both artist and viewer a more involved and dynamic experience than earlier art. With collaborative art, we can no longer assume that we are having an aesthetic and private meditation on the distilled sensibility of another person. When we look at a collaborative work of art, we are examining a dialogue or conversation between artists. And we do not dumbly gaze, awestruck with aesthetic pleasure; we must participate by thinking about the interaction that takes place and actually start interacting with the art ourselves. In many works, this new dynamic mode of seeing and perceiving art can be demonstrated. I remember several years ago that Shelly Silvers, a Cornell student, was developing a concept of art as a social contract. Around campus she placed a number of deliberately dumb dating

game posters with attached postcards enumerating places to be filled out or colored in and an address of a local post office box. Although the games seemed at first to be a new psychological test for assessing and later matching personalities, they were so inane that they had to be considered gratuitous. Placed in an everyday public space—bulletin boards in university buildings and local coffeehouses—the work was art only if one chose to consider it art.

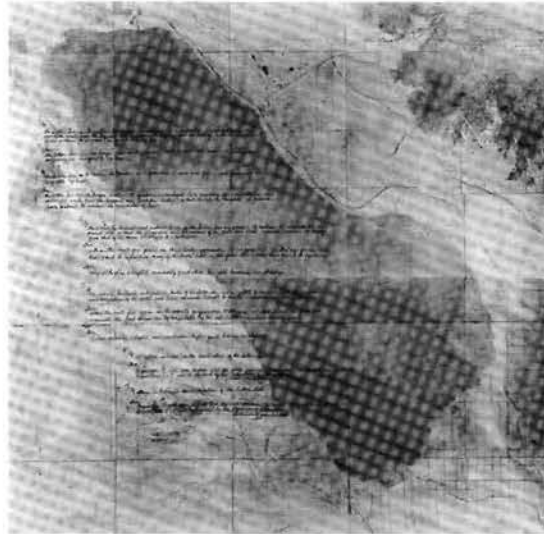
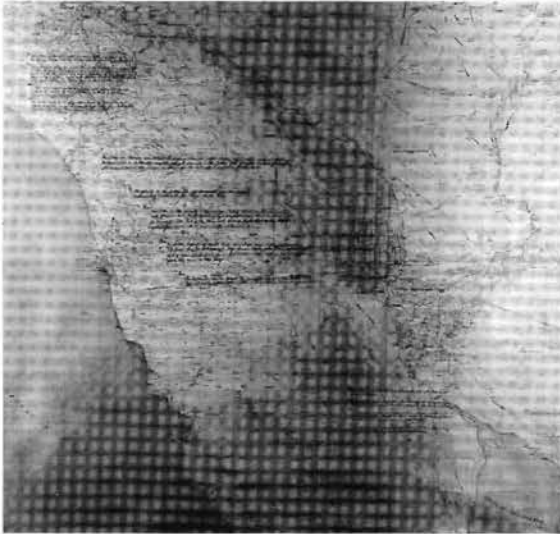
Similarly the political events of the Art Squad, a Philadelphia collaborative, can be taken as either art or politics or both depending on viewer reaction. The Art Squad has taken film footage of nuclear explosions and of Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims and shown them on walls of Philadelphia buildings, interrupting outside diners and forcing casual bystanders to think about the significance of these images. By avoiding traditional art spaces that tend to serve as bracketing devices, as decontextualized spaces for aesthetic pleasure, and not as a means of confrontation, the Art Squad attempts to shock people into accepting the horrible reality of nuclear war. On the anniversary of Three Mile Island, Art Squad members dressed as nuclear radiation testers and demonstrated at Center City shopping areas. Janet Kaplan, an Art Squad member, has summarized the focus of the group as "an artist's resource bank that offers skills to other political groups in need of visually powerful graphics or events for demonstrations, flyers, etc.; and an action/resource group that develops performances, exhibitions in non-traditional locations and other events, to reach the widest possible audience."⁸

Figure 40

Helen Mayer Harrison (American, b. 1929) and Newton Harrison (American, b. 1932), *The Fifth Lagoon, Second Version: The Voice of the Lagoonmaker*, 1978, mixed media on canvas. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

Figure 41

Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, *The Fifth Lagoon, Second Version: The Voice of the Witness*, 1978, mixed media on canvas. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.



Likewise, in Helen and Newton Harrison's *Lagoon Cycle* (begun approximately a decade ago and continuing to the present), the viewers are given a specific role. They are readers of information and speculators about two characters, the Lagoonmaker and the Witness, who discourse throughout the cycle on the meaning of change and ways of approaching nature and correcting environmental problems (figs. 40, 41). Both of these quasi-mythic figures argue, joke, exchange roles, and describe the increasing importance of the metaphor of the estuarial lagoon, the tentative habitat, symbolizing modern life, where fresh and salt water mix and the majority of aquatic animals meet and reproduce.

I met with Pierre Alechinsky in his studio outside Paris in the fall of 1982, and we discussed the term "collaboration" and tried to find another word that could be used in its place. Long involved in interactive works with other artists (see fig. 42 and cat. 67, 68), with poets, and even with history in the form of nineteenth-century letters acquired at Paris flea markets, Alechinsky kept repeating to me that "collaboration" is an inappropriate term because, in Europe at least, it has the connotation of conspiring with the enemy: "Collaborators were those who helped the Germans!" At one point in the discussion, Alechinsky went over to the corner of his studio, pulled out a recent catalog of work, and signed his name first with his one hand, then with the other. Then he gave the catalog to me, saying, "This is what we need—a word that will express clearly and succinctly what it means when one hand knows what the other hand is doing."

Figure 42

Karel Appel (left) and Pierre Alechinsky working on their collaborative series *Encres à deux pinceaux*, Alechinsky's studio, Bougival, France, 1976.



I respect Alechinsky's statement and am sympathetic with it as far as it goes. But I frankly think, as I have tried to show in this essay, that collaboration is oftentimes so open-ended and pervasive that it is not consciously recognized. Sometimes critics collaborate with artists, artists with other artists, artists with viewers, and all of us with history. Collaboration can be a conspiracy, and it can be open. It is important because it allows all of us to break down barriers, to cease being locked into a monolithic and largely materialistic definition of the self, and to recognize art as dynamic rather than static, part of a discourse and not an absolute, connected with history and people and not simply a decontextualized masterpiece. Of course, artists conceive and make art, but all of us collaborate in creating its cultural role. We can remove art from its context and aestheticize it as significant form, and that too is a possible way of dealing with it in a difficult, changing world that needs definite anchors even if they are only manifested sensibilities. But we can also recognize that art plays an important function of symbolizing reality at a particular time; to function it requires numbers of people pooling their common interests to think about it and assess it. In this manner art becomes collaborative, and it also becomes culture.

NOTES

1. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974).

2. In particular, I am thinking of Walter Benjamin and Robert Venturi. But there are a number, including the early art historians Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin, who were concerned more with ways of assessing historical change and understanding period styles than they were with individual genius.

3. Grace Seiberling, *The Amateurs: Sources of Innovation in British Photography 1850-1860*, exh. cat. (Rochester: George Eastman House, forthcoming).

4. Annette Michelson, "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression," in *Robert Morris*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969), pp. 7-89.

5. Edward Kienholz and Nancy Reddin, "Artist's Statement," Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco, August 1982. The piece was first exhibited in West Berlin in 1974. After two days it was confiscated; through the help of the American Embassy, the artists were able to recover their work. The work has been exhibited at the Louisiana Museum in Denmark.

6. Maurice Tuchman, *A Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967-1971*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971).

7. Barbara Cavaliere and Robert C. Hobbs, "Against a Newer Laocoon," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 8 (April 1977): 110-17.

8. Undated (1983) letter to the author.