THE HOUSE OF DUST
BY ALISON KNOWLES

365 FIFTH AVENUE AT 35TH STREET — THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY   CENTERFORTHEHUMANITIES.ORG/JAMES-GALLERY

PROPOSED BY ART BY TRANSLATION (INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM IN ART AND CURATORIAL PRACTICES)

ALISON KNOWLES AND AY-O, CHLOË BASS, KEREN BENBENISTY, JÉRÉMIE BENNEQUIN, GEORGE BRECHT, HUGO BRÉGEAU, MARCEL BROODTHAERS, JOHN CAGE, ALEJANDRO CESARCO, JAGNA CIUCHTA, CONSTANT, YONA FRIEDMAN, MARK GEFFRIAUD, BEATRICE GIBSON, EUGEN GOMRINGER, DAN GRAHAM, JEFF GUESS, GEOFFREY HENDRICKS, DICK HIGGINS, TOSHI ICHIYANAGI, NORMAN C. KAPLAN, ALLAN KAPROW, FREDERICK KIESLER, NICHOLAS KNIGHT, KATARZYNA KRAKOWIAK, MIKKO KUORINKI, THEO LUTZ, STEPHANE MALLARMÉ, ALAN MICHELSON, YOKO ONO, NAM JUNE PAIK, JENNY PERLIN, NINA SAFAINIA, CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN, MIEKO SHIOMI, JAMES TENNEY, SRDJAN JOVANOVIC WEISS, EMMETT WILLIAMS.
—
CURATORS: KATHERINE CARL, MAUD JACQUIN AND SÉBASTIEN PLUOT

WED, SEP 7, 6–8PM
EXHIBITION RECEPTION

Alison Knowles's computerized poem of 1967, *The House of Dust*, her subsequent built structures of the same name, and the many works it generated are the focus of this presentation. Documentation of Knowles's poem and built structures, discussions, publications, and performances are presented in dialogue with other artworks from the period—predominantly by Knowles and other Fluxus artists—exploring the nexus of art, technology and architecture in ways that resonate with *The House of Dust*. In addition, her prescient yet under-recognized project has been an inspiration for contemporary artists' and architects' responsive artworks and spatial interpretations included in the exhibition.

Knowles's *The House of Dust* is among the earliest computerized poems, consisting of the phrase "a house of" followed by a randomized sequence of 1) a material, 2) a site or situation, a light source, and 3) a category of inhabitants taken from four distinct lists. In 1968, the computer-generated poem was translated into a physical structure when Knowles received a Guggenheim fellowship to build a house in Chelsea, New York. Alison Knowles invited the artist Max Neuhaus to create a sound piece in one of the structures. She also invited the public and groups of kids to interact with the Houses. This architecture was later destroyed, restored and moved to Cal Arts Burbank, California, where Knowles was invited to teach in 1970-72. She enjoyed teaching her classes in the House and invited artists to interact with its open structure by creating new works.

Reactivating the pedagogical model proposed by *The House of Dust* (and by Fluxus with which Knowles was associated), this project at the James is the outcome of collaboration between artists and scholars in disciplines including art, architecture, poetry, literature, music, theatre, and performance. Over the fall semester, reactivations of Knowles's workshops will engage students in Social Practice Queens at Queens College and in Architecture at City College as part of their curricula. The exhibition publication includes texts by Ph.D. students in English, Art History, and Theatre at The Graduate Center connecting their research interests on this project to their dissertation topics. This project raise many questions regarding translation in the arts, the first topic of Art by Translation, the new International research program in art and curatorial practices.

Co-sponsored by Art by Translation, The French Ministry of Culture and the French Institute, Ph.D. Program in Art History, Ph.D. Program in English, and Ph.D. Program in Theatre, The Graduate Center, CUNY.
**ALL EVENTS TAKE PLACE IN THE JAMES GALLERY EXCEPT WHEN NOTED OTHERWISE.**

FRI, SEP 9, 6:30PM
PANEL

HOUSE OF DUST: A POEM IN PROCESS
—
HANNAH HIGGINS, ART AND ART HISTORY, THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO; NICOLE WOODS, ART HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES.
—
SKYLIGHT ROOM 9100.

Six years after the founding of Fluxus—in which, as the only woman, she played a pioneering role—Knowles teamed up with composer and Bell Labs innovator James Tenney to create an "application" of Fluxus' post-Cagean mobilization of language. Boundlessly generating permutations, deriving from the artist's original "score," this sprocket-holed ribbon of Fortran results, landed amid the rise of Conceptual Art,
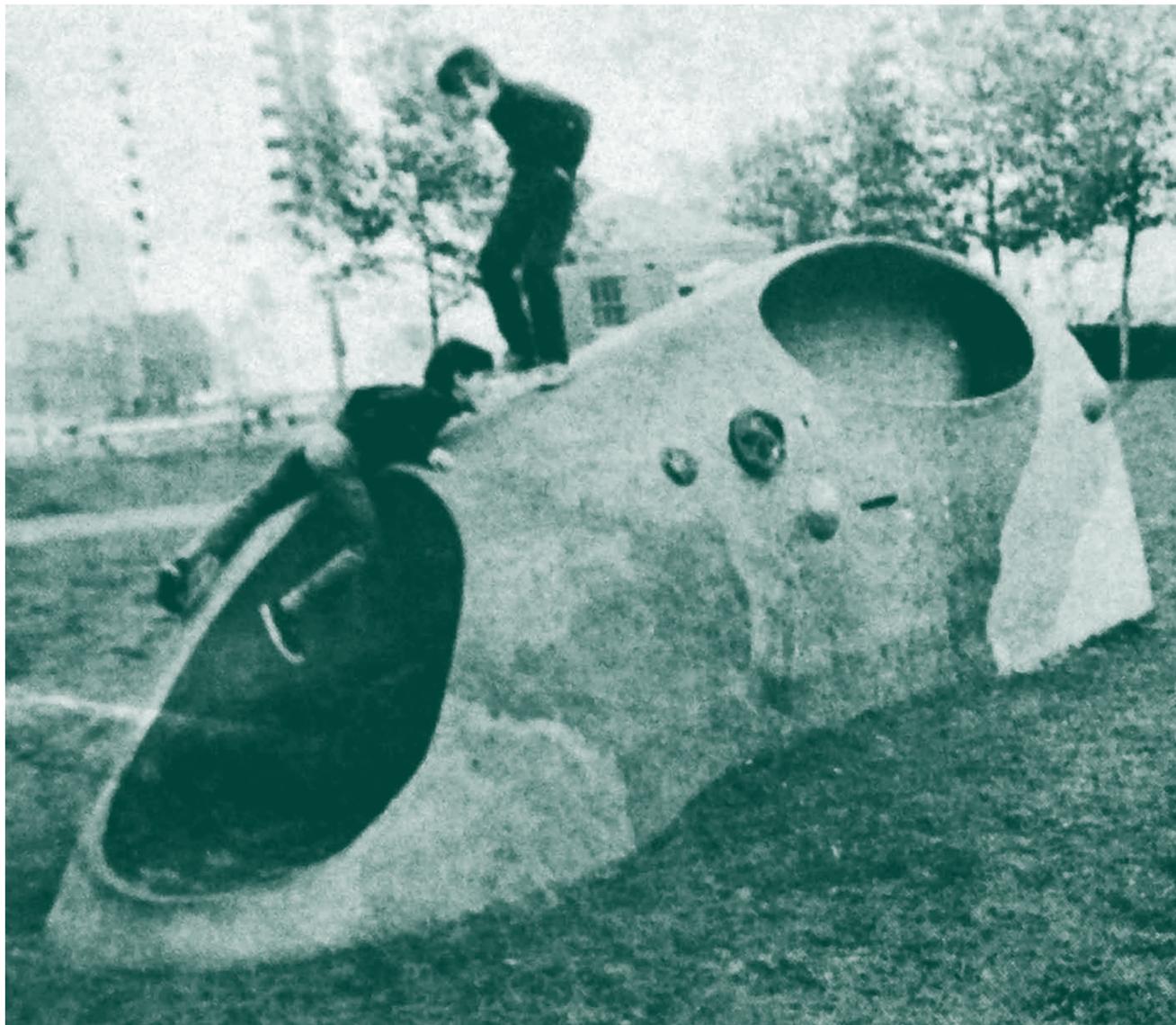
Play Sculptures and Public Art — Fɪɢ. 1   *The House of Dust* at Penn South Oct. 1969, *Chelsea Clinton News*, page 3, Oct. 23, 1969

Institutional Critique, etc. — as crucially relevant but yet to be grasped. Art historians Hannah Higgins and Nicole Woods will discuss *The House of Dust* as a "poem in process", both open and generative, with particular attention to its political resonances and to issues of participation, experience and embodiment.

WED, SEP 14, 6:30PM
LECTURE

IS IT ALIVE, IS IT REAL?
—
SOYOUNG YOON, ART HISTORY AND VISUAL STUDIES, EUGENE LANG COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS, THE NEW SCHOOL. INTRODUCTION: KAEGAN SPARKS, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY.

What is a "productive body"? How does the category of the productive body—or the unproductive body, the obstinate body—change our approach to questions of subjectivity, identity, and corporeality? In this talk, Soyoung Yoon critiques a newfound fetish for the activity or "liveness" of the human body in relation to choreographer Yvonne Rainer's most recent performance, *The Concept of Dust, or How do you look when there's nothing left to move?* (2014/5). As Rainer questions the practices by which the work of a performer is measured and valued, Yoon asks: What of the invisibility of the performer's work, in relation to the hyper-visibility of the performer's body? This evening will investigate current concerns in the practice of Yvonne Rainer, a pioneering woman of the downtown scene along with Alison Knowles in the 1960s, 1970s and continuing today.

Co-sponsored by the Social Choreography Mellon Seminar in Public Engagement and Collaborative Research in the Humanities and Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

THU, SEP 15, 6:30PM
CONVERSATION

FROM HOUSE OF DUST TO ANTITRUST
—
LUCY HUNTER, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN HISTORY OF ART, YALE UNIVERSITY; IAN WALLACE, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY.

Although the mid-1960s saw the peak of artist-engineer activity at Bell Laboratories—the research and development center that employed James Tenney and facilitated the production of Alison Knowles' *House of Dust*—the Labs' slow decline was already, if imperceptibly, under way. Bell Labs supplied research for AT&T, the telephone corporation and regulated monopoly protected by federal legislation, whose immense size and largesse enabled the experimental environment where *The House of Dust* and other artist projects thrived. Ironically, Bell Labs' ethos of freedom and minimal oversight also motivated the Chicago School economists who rallied for the breakup of the Bell System in 1984 as part of a broader platform of deregulation and free-market competition.

Ian Wallace will focus on the edition of House of Dust published by Walther König in 1968, to situate the poem between early computer-generated and computer-emulative art and the techno-utopian fantasies of expanded authorship and aesthetic experience that they accompanied. Lucy Hunter will discuss Bell Labs' artist collaborations through the lens of its corporate history, focusing on the cultural and economic shifts informing the Bell breakup, and the neoliberal turn it indelibly confirmed.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

TUE, SEP 20, 6:30PM
WORKSHOP

EXPERIMENTAL PEDAGOGY AND GAMES ON THE (PACIFIC) COASTS
—
LIZ DONATO, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; FELIPE MUJICA, ARTIST; HALLIE SCOTT, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; JOHANNA UNZUETA, ARTIST.

In 1970, when Alison Knowles moved to Valencia, California to teach at California Institute of the Arts, she transported *The House of Dust* to the school. Once installed on campus, the architectural sculpture became an alternative classroom and site for experimental pedagogical practice. The activities in and surrounding *The House of Dust* serve as a departure point for this conversation that examines experimental art and architectural pedagogies of the 1960s and 1970s that emphasized process, chance, indeterminacy, and the ludic over the production of discrete art objects from a comparative geographic perspective. How did the experimental pedagogies of the 1960's and 70's reflect broader social/technological shifts? How can the game, score, etc. challenge conventional teaching and learning? What is the continuing relevance of these pedagogies to contemporary artistic and pedagogical practice? Join Ph.D. candidates in Art History, Hallie Scott, who will provide an overview of experimental pedagogies in the Southern California context, and Liz Donato who will introduce the South American perspective. Artists Felipe Mujica and Johanna Unzueta will discuss their publication and exhibitions related to research on the understudied archive of Chilean architect Manuel Casanueva (1946–2014) of the School of Valparaíso.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

WED, SEP 21, 6:30PM
PERFORMANCE

GATHER THE HOUSE AROUND THE TABLE
—
CHLOË BASS, ARTIST.

Chloë Bass' artwork spans visual art, performance, and writing practices. Growing out of conceptualism and Fluxus, Bass' keen attention to social processes in public space, which largely go unnoticed, bring pointed visual meaning to these movements in the contemporary social context. For *The House of Dust*, Bass has produced a line of domestic materials that she will use to interact with the exhibition and its unfolding series of discursive programs, sometimes in plain sight, and sometimes nearly imperceptibly. For *Gather the house around the table,* visitors will be invited to take their place in the family, using her objects to enact everyday poetry and share a meal.

Co-sponsored by Social Practice Queens, Queens College, CUNY.

THU, SEP 22, 6:30PM
READING

A HOUSE OF SOUND AND SENSE
—
MIYA MASAOKA, ARTIST; ADA SMAILBEGOVIC, ENGLISH, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

Sound artist Miya Masaoka and poet Ada Smailbegović will share performances of sound scores they have made in response to the original computer printout of Knowles' *The House of Dust*. An accompanying limited-edition publication of the sound scores will be available at the event. Join us for an evening that builds on their wide-ranging processes that engage improvisation as well as material and bodily responses to sound and movement.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Program in English, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

WED, SEP 28, 6:30PM
PERFORMANCE AND CONVERSATION

STAGING THE CLEAN HOUSE OF DUST
—
NEW YORK NEO-FUTURISTS, ARTISTS; BESS ROWEN, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN THEATRE, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY.

What are the words that build houses on stage? What does the idea of a house mean to us as a symbol or a literal component of art and performance? Join scholar Bess Rowen as she speaks about the stage directions that build houses on stage and then challenge our conceptions of those structures and symbols. Continuing and building upon the exploration of words staging houses, Ashley Brockington, Cara Francis, and Kyra Sims, members of the New York Neo-Futurists, will present a special interpretation of some of *The House of Dust*'s text. Based on their artistic tenets in the vein of Futurism—short form, original pieces, performed by the performers as themselves—the Neos will surely make us all think about this text in a new and exciting way.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Program in Theatre and the Social Choreography Mellon Seminar in Public Engagement and Collaborative Research in the Humanities, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

THU, SEP 29, 6:30PM
READING

DWELLING, DISLOCATION AND THE DIGITAL
—
MEENA ALEXANDER, ENGLISH, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; DAISY ATTERBURY, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ENGLISH, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; IRIS CUSHING, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ENGLISH, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; DAVID JOSELIT, ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY.

How does a gathering of people within a house of poetry provide new insights on migration, belonging, and culture beyond currently-held notions of sovereignty? Alison Knowles' *The House of Dust* computer-generated poem of 1967 and subsequent architectural structures in New York and California in the early 1970s, have inspired artworks, gifts, sound environments, poetry, and performances in the late 60s and today. For this evening, poet and scholar Meena Alexander will read her new work written in response to *The House of Dust* that continues her investigations of migrant memory, dwelling and dislocation. She will be joined by art critic, historian, and curator David Joselit, who will discuss his interests in the globalized and digitized conditions of art in the 21st century. Join this evening of reading and conversation moderated by Daisy Atterbury and Iris Cushing.

Co-sponsored by the Committee on Globalization and Social Change, and the Ph.D. Programs in English and Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

WED, OCT 5, 6:30PM
WORKSHOP

WRITING CUNY THROUGH GAMES
—
COLETTE DAIUTE, PSYCHOLOGY; PHILIP KRENISKE, PH.D. IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY; JESSICA MURRAY, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN PSYCHOLOGY; LUKE WALTZER, TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY.

Writing CUNY is an initiative of faculty and students in the humanities and social sciences to nurture an interactive public voice by exploring design and uses of the academic blog genre across the community colleges. Faculty and students from this emerging blog collective demonstrate playful and serious uses of blog writing to develop affiliations, debates, and new knowledge. A few vivid examples also show how this emerging public inside a large university system can counter external public voices—like those in the media and scholarship—that have depicted the community college in negative and sensational terms. This evening will be a discussion and hands-on blogging workshop to examine our learning environments, develop strategies for critical and creative uses of digital blog technologies, and design new methods to address the challenges and goals for community colleges today.

Co-sponsored by the Narrating Change Mellon Seminar in Public Engagement and Collaborative Research in the Humanities; The Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, CUNY; Ph.D. Program in Psychology, and the Futures Initiative, Teaching and Learning Center, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

WED, OCT 6, 6:30PM
LECTURE

THE FORCE OF SMALL GESTURES: D. N. RODOWICK'S RECENT VIDEOS
—
AMY HERZOG, FILM STUDIES AND THEATRE, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; D. N. RODOWICK, HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

Known primarily for his work in philosophy and the visual arts, d. n. rodowick is also an accomplished experimental filmmaker, video artist, and curator. Deeply influenced by filmmakers such as Ernie Gehr, Hollis Frampton, and Michael Snow, as well as minimalist composers like Steve Reich and Terry Riley, Rodowick's moving image works are primarily concerned with process and performance in ways that explore fluid relations between stillness and movement, figuration and abstraction. Many of the works are produced by setting into movement series of formal parameters and then letting them play themselves out (almost) automatically in relation to randomizing elements. Although conceptual in nature, Rodowick's moving image work embraces affect through its hypnotic rhythms and a haunting, painterly beauty.

Co-sponsored by the Film Studies Certificate Program, and the Mediating the Archive Mellon Seminar in Public Engagement and Collaborative Research in the Humanities, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

THU, OCT 13, 6:30PM
LECTURES AND CONVERSATION

TOMORROW, LIFE WILL BE HOUSED IN POETRY
—
TOM MCDONOUGH, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY, SUNY; ANTHONY VIDLER, ARCHITECTURE, THE COOPER UNION; SRDJAN JOVANOVIC WEISS, ARCHITECTURE, THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK, CUNY.

Is an algorithm an author? Looking back at the algorithmic underpinnings of the poem *The House of Dust* insists on a reassessment of mathematics, technology, and calculation in art and architecture. The evening's conversation of utopias, urban mapping, and calculation will examine an array of interpretations by artists and architects of Modernist ideals of mathematical rules which were promoted by le Corbusier and others, the use of cybernetics, and on the other hand, the critique of functionalism and standardization in the 1960's.

FRI, OCT 14, 1–6PM
CONFERENCE

SCALES OF VISIBILITY IN GLOBAL INDIGENOUS ART
—
CHRIS GREEN, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; JOSEPH HENRY, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; CANDICE HOPKINS, DOCUMENTA 14; JAMES LUNA, ARTIST; FRED MYERS, ANTHROPOLOGY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY; WANDA NANIBUSH, ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO; JOLENE RICKARD, ART HISTORY, CORNELL UNIVERSITY; IAN WALLACE, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; AND OTHERS.
—
THE MARTIN E. SEGAL THEATRE CENTER.

How do the practices of indigenous artists operate within the globalized platform of contemporary art? How might art practice and art history address encounters between heritage, commodification, and difference as they take root in the careers of indigenous artists working today? Positing indigenous art as an increasingly prominent area in which issues of race, difference, and post-colonial critique are contested and made visible, the symposium brings together scholars, artists, and curators to examine the workings of indigenous art on multiple levels, including opposition with the national, contact with the international, and solidarity with the global indigenous.

The conference is presented in conjunction with the Vera List Center's *Indigenous New York, Curatorially Speaking* on Sat, Oct 15, at the New School.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Program in Art History; the Rewald Endowment of the Ph.D. Program in Art History; the Social Choreography Mellon Seminar in Public Engagement and Collaborative Research in the Humanities; and the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School for Social Research.

FRI OCT 14, 6:30PM
PERFORMANCE

FLOW
—
MARIA HUPFIELD, ARTIST.

This 15-minute performance in three parts—Felt Brick Shoes, Red, White and Red, and Going Up—focuses on the orchestration of social choreography both in and outside the gallery through the everyday sensibility of being human as practiced by Alison Knowles. Processes of walking, movement and performing rituals with natural materials are all part of Knowles's practice. This performance in the James Gallery is held in conjunction with the Scales of Visibility in Global Indigenous Art conference.

Cosponsored by Ph.D. Program in Theatre, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

FRI, OCT 14, 7:30PM
PERFORMANCES

ENTROPIC SCORES
—
HUGO BREGEAU, ARTIST; JEFF GUESS, ARTIST.
—
ELEBASH RECITAL HALL.

Contemporary economy is both predicted and produced by algorithmic systems that have become auto-generative, incomprehensible, and uncontrollable. By translating the evolution of the NASDAC into a score performed by a mechanical piano, Hugo Bregeau gives tangible expression to the evacuation of the human from economic processes at the same time as he would have us listen to the instability, increased vulnerability and crisis of finance today.

Jeff Guess' performance *Ekphrastic Objects*, presents the discussion between Jacques-Mandé Daguerre and Samuel Morse in Paris in 1839 of their now acclaimed analogical and proto-digital inventions. In this allegorical demo each of their utterances is visualised by a computer program which introduces an entropy into the their verbal exchange affecting their conversation about realist description, translation, verbal representation of visual forms (*ekphrasis*), and the relationship between 'natural' and formal languages.

Cosponsored by Ph.D. Program in Theatre, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

TUE, OCT 18, 6:30PM
PERFORMANCE AND SCREENING

ON TWILIGHT ARC, CRIPPLED SYMMETRIES AND *PERFORMANCE FOR A RICH MAN*
—
JENNY PERLIN, ARTIST, AND FILMS BY BEATRICE GIBSON.

First on this evening's double bill, Jenny Perlin will perform *On Twilight Arc*, an excursion into the early days of film and the many fantastic precursors to the color and sound of the technology we know today. Beatrice Gibson also reflects on the language of music and film in her *Crippled Symmetries and Performance for a Rich Man* both of which take William Gaddis' *JR* as a point of departure. *Solo for a Rich Man* takes place at a playground in Shoreditch contemporary London and includes music by Fluxus artist George Maciunas and Mieko Shiomi's *Disappearing Music for Face.*

WED, OCT 19, 6:30PM
CONVERSATION

CLEANING UP NEW YORK CITY IN THE 1960s AND 1970s
—
ALEKSEI GRINENKO, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN THEATRE, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; GILLIAN SNEED, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; ELIZABETH L. WOLLMAN, MUSIC, BARUCH COLLEGE, CUNY.

How do private and public responses to what is perceived as filthy shape the geography of urban living? How do social and institutional solutions designed to address and manage the "problem" of filth interface with the city's artistic capacity and production? Responding to these questions, Elizabeth Wollman will consider the cultural implications of obscenity laws for experimental and mainstream sites of performance during the period; Aleksei Grinenko will read trash and "mental illness" on Broadway stages in dialogue with the realities of the city streets; and Gillian Sneed will discuss local community resistance to the first iteration of Alison Knowles' *The House of Dust* in Chelsea for its challenge to tidy aesthetic norms. Join us for a discussion of cultural encounters with material and metaphorical manifestations of filth and sanitation in 1960's-70's New York City.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Programs in Art History and Theatre, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

WED, OCT 26, 6:30PM
LECTURE

FLUX-HOMES FOR AMERICA: ARCHITECTURE, PUBLICATION, INTERMEDIA
—
COLBY CHAMBERLAIN, PH.D., ART HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. INTRODUCTION: RACHEL VALINSKY, THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN ART HISTORY, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY.

From quatrains to construction, publication to prefabrication, Fluxkits to Fluxhouse Cooperatives: the work of George Maciunas, Alison Knowles, and other artists associated with Fluxus repeatedly established an equivalence between the printed page and the architectural edifice. In same period, architectural discourse was exploited by artists seeking to site their work in magazine spreads. This talk will uncover the role of architectural thought in transforming the terms of artists' publishing.

Co-sponsored by Ph.D. Program in Art History, The Graduate Center, CUNY.

THU, OCT 27, 6:30PM
LECTURE

HOUSE OF DUST: AGAINST THE GRAIN OF TECHNOLOGY
—
ZABET PATTERSON, ART AND DIGITAL MEDIA, STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK; JULIA ROBINSON, ART HISTORY, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY.

Artists of the 1960's employed chance, technology, and social interaction to create "compositions" that crossed the disciplines of music, poetry, visual art, and dance. As the decade progressed, the initial impulses and experiments coalesced as Fluxus, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art. A key question of this discussion will be whether it is still productive, even viable to maintain these divisions on the basis of "art movements." Art historians Zabet Patterson and Julia Robinson will discuss Fluxus practice with particular attention to the tensions of chance operations and technology and consider what the legacy of this movement is today, particularly for art's relationship to technology.

Walking while writing poetry, composing phrases to be assembled randomly, making a structure for playing in public space, gathering with students in a hand-adorned house, moving through a human-scale book are all creative acts that Alison Knowles is more or less known for. Some are her inhabitations of *The House of Dust,* the artwork materialized as a computer-generated poem and an architectural structure. Knowles's processes are often dispersed among different artistic mediums, they incessantly unfold over time, and can be experienced as exchanges or even gifts. Today there is a rising interest in the varied approaches of artists who work across mediums and over long periods of time. Knowles's expansive mode charted these paths that can now be seen in artists of a next generation. The exhibition comprises archival materials and artworks by Alison Knowles, work by contemporary artists, as well as interpretive texts and programs that all explore the threads laid out in *The House of Dust.*

"The House of Dust by Alison Knowles," as part of Art in Translation, explores Knowles's translations across processes of performance, drawing, writing and architecture working with structures of language, computation, and building. Much of this is done through propositions and inhabitation. Physical interaction with books, maquettes, poetry writing, gatherings, and games run throughout the exhibition and related programs. The exhibition also presents contemporary artworks that draw on Knowles's thinking and processes, specifically working with translation of materials and languages.

This journal and public programs taking place in the gallery during the exhibition are part of a constellation of reactivations of Knowles's pedagogical approaches through *The House of Dust.* We have taken this up at The Graduate Center through a self-organized initiative over the past year with Ph.D. students in Art History, Theatre, and English to gather research, write texts, and create public programs for the exhibition. During the fall 2016 semester, two classes based at Queens College and City College, CUNY, will be taught in conjunction with the exhibition.

A few blocks away in Chelsea in 1968, Knowles envisioned the built structure of *The House of Dust* to be used by children for play and adorned by artwork from a neighboring school. This did not come to pass. Gillian Sneed details Knowles's unrealized aspirations and the urban situation of *The House of Dust* in her text. When the structure was relocated at CalArts, she gathered with her students in the structure out in the field, which she preferred to the formal architecture of the art school. Hallie Scott takes up the contradictions between the style of architecture of CalArts and its purportedly experimental curriculum, presenting *The House of Dust* and its use on campus as a potent foil to the school's ideological use of architecture.

An early example of computer-generated poetry, *The House of Dust* builds on the early and mid 20th-century history of experiments in computation and computer language as well as the legacy of chance operations from Dada to Duchamp and Cage. Debra Lennard provides a research chronology of the precedents for such artwork in the fields of both art and computing. Ian Wallace examines the art historical context for this moment in the 1960s when artists and programmers collaborated in experimentations with computer technology. Iris Cushing looks at *The House of Dust* through the lens of poetics and the importance of women's work with language and computing.

The exhibition at the James Gallery of The Graduate Center, CUNY, provides an opportunity to experience Alison Knowles's *The House of Dust* in a variety of formats. Following are texts by Ph.D. students at The Graduate Center, CUNY, that unfurl many of these avenues that Alison Knowles has proposed in her prescient artwork.

Katherine Carl

Alison Knowles, *The House of Dust*, 1970.
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

STOP MAKING SENSE:
HOUSE OF DUST AND THE AESTHETICS OF TECHNO-UTOPIANISM

Ian Wallace

The House of Dust landed on Walther König's doorstep as a three-foot-high stack of accordion-folded computer stationery. The document—a poem written in FORTRAN IV code that produced an endless, randomized sequence of permutational quatrains—was the product of a workshop led by the engineer James Tenney in the artist Alison Knowles's Manhattan apartment in 1967. König published the poem as a limited edition the following year. At the time, according to König's recollection, the only computer in Germany that could translate Tenney's code into printed text was owned by the Siemens corporation, who, with König's assurances of the project's historical importance, generously agreed to print it for free.[1] To make the edition, König divided the original stack of printouts into sets of a dozen pages each and packaged them in clear plastic portfolios stamped with a red label that credits all three authors—Tenney, Knowles, and the Siemens System 4004—equally.

Like the plastic portfolio *The House of Dust* was packaged in, the poem itself is synthetic. It consists of a repeatable quatrain containing four basic elements selected from a predetermined list of seventy possibilities—a structural material (tin, wood, brick, etc.), a place (Japan, somewhere hot, underwater), a light source (candle, natural, electric), and inhabitants (very tall people, vegetarians, people who sleep late)—that can be combined in any permutation, producing a total of 41,800 possible combinations. Each printed page holds eleven quatrains; 3,800 pages could theoretically be printed before any given combination of elements would repeat. This is an early, technologically-enhanced version of the kinds of compositional systems that Knowles, an active participant in New York Fluxus, would revisit in later works; for instance, *Proposition IV (Squid)* (1972), which called for a performer to enact a set of object-based actions as determined by selections made from 'quadrants' of elements, colors, and compass directions.[2] However, whereas the later work's end result is determined by its participants, who must decide how to interpret the score, the magic of *The House of Dust*, as König later described it, is that the poem on its own "never stops making sense."[3]

The House of Dust reflects a conflict that played out in the relationship between art and technology in the U.S. in the mid-1960s. On one hand, the computer was imagined to provide aesthetic liberation to the human artist, offering an escape route out of Modernism's debates over the various tautologies of medium and form. This optimistic belief in the emancipatory potential of technology meant that computer systems might serve as a model for broader cultural activities, even in the absence of technology's actual use; thus the widespread artistic interest in systems theory, cybernetics, and computer-emulative practices in the postwar years. It also meant that artists could use computers to surpass the previous limitations of human capability. Although permutational poems like *The House of Dust* had been imagined since classical antiquity, never before had it been possible to actually carry out a truly endless and entirely random process of textual production.[4]

On the other hand, the computer was conceived as a creative aesthetic force unto itself, capable of surpassing human creative potential. As artists began to use computers to create visual art the same way that an engineer might have used them to process data, an aesthetics of electronic rationality emerged to challenge traditional conceptions of artistic skill and aesthetic beauty. In this sense, *The House of Dust* might be conceived as not just mechanically carrying out Knowles's poetic score, but as actually synthesizing, in the process, a new kind of authorship, independent of either poet or programmer.

At the risk of generalizing a period of diverse practices, my aim here is to provide some basic context for these two fantasies about technology's potential for aesthetic transformation. Since

1. Hans Ulrich Obrist, interview with Walther König, 032c 21 (Summer 2011), 190–197, http://032c.com/2012/walther-koenig-cologne/.
2. See Alison Knowles, *More* by Alison Knowles (New York: Unpublished Editions, 1976).
3. Obrist.
4. See Florien Cramer's online project "per.m]utations" for an interactive index of combinatory and permutational poetry dating back to 330 AD, http://permutations.pleintekst.nl/index.cgi.

A CHRONOLOGY OF EARLY DIGITAL POETICS

Debra Lennard

——— **1897** ———

In May, Stéphane Mallarmé publishes "Un Coup de dés" ("A Throw of the Dice") in the journal *Cosmopolis*. Experimenting with typographical space and layout, the poem forms an artistic antecedent for the disruption of textual space and syntax found in computer poetry.

——— **1919** ———

Johannes Baader, George Grosz, and Richard Huelsenbeck sent a telegram from Berlin to the Italian newspaper *Corriere della sera* in Milan, in support of Gabriele D'Annunzio's annexation of Fiume: one of earliest telegrams by artists on record.

——— **1920** ———

Tristan Tzara's "To Make a Dadaist Poem" (a subsection of the *Dada Manifesto on Feeble and Bitter Love*) instructs readers to cut up newspaper articles into individual words and make a poem by random selection and reorganization.

——— **1921** ———

In response to Tristan Tzara's invitation to participate in the Dada Salon at Paris's Galerie Montaigne, Duchamp sent a telegram reading: "PODE BAL – DUCHAMP." Duchamp's telegram played on "peau de balle": literally "skin of ball," or "balls to you" in vernacular French.

——— **1923** ———

The poet E. E. Cummings begins to incorporate the mechanical system of his portable Smith-Corona typewriter into the visual syntax of his poems.

——— **1928** ———

The German experimental filmmaker Walter Ruttmann is commissioned by Berlin Radio Hour to create works for radio. He creates *Weekend*: an 11-minute collage of words, music fragments and sounds, broadcast on June 13, 1930.

——— **1933** ———

On September 22, Pino Masnata and F.T. Marinetti publish the "Manifesto futurista della radio," along with five conceptual works for radio in *Gazzetta del Popolo*. On November 24, Fortunato Depero and Marinetti make the first Futurist transmissions over Radio Milano.

——— **1939** ———

John Cage composes his first work to use electronic media: *Imaginary Landscape No. 1*, one of five "imaginary landscapes" composed between 1939–52. In this composition, dampened piano and cymbal were performed along with multiple phonographs that played Radio Corporation of America (RCA) pure electronic test-tones.

——— **1948** ———

The scientist Norbert Weiner coins the term "cybernetics" with his study: *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Weiner derives the term from the Greek "kubernetes," which translates directly as "steersmanship."

——— **1950** ———

Computer art is widely acknowledged to begin with Ben Laposky's oscilloscope images. A mathematician and artist, in 1950 Laposky became the first person to use an analogue computer to create graphic images (though he had previously experimented with mathematically-based systems).

——— **1950** ———

In the October issue of the British quarterly *Mind*, Alan Turing publishes his landmark essay, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," which devotes itself to exploring the question "Can machines think?"

——— **1951** ———

John Cage composes *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*, a score for 12 radios, each controlled by two performers. Using conventional notation-notes on a five-line staff, performers adjust the radio according to a 2-1-3 rhythmic structure. The music of the piece emerges from whatever happens to be on the airwaves. To establish values for his variable parameters, Cage consulted the I Ching, an ancient Chinese system of knowledge, in which prophecy is accessed by aleatory means, through casting coins or yarrow-stalks.

——— **1956** ———

Martin Klein and Douglas Bolitho of the American technology manufacturer Burroughs Corporation use a Datatron computer console to automatically compose 4,000 pop songs based on 100 pre-existing fragments.

——— **1957** ———

The programming language FORTRAN is first distributed publicly, having been developed by a team at IBM led by John Backus.

——— **1959** ———

British scientist C. P. Snow delivers his Rede lecture "The Two Cultures" at Cambridge University. Arguing that the gap between science and the humanities should be bridged, Snow's lecture is regarded as a major step in interdisciplinary thought.

——— **1959** ———

Working within the Stuttgart-based group gathered around scientist Max Bense, German mathematician Theo Lutz produces the first computer-powered text generator, and the first work of computer poetry: the "Stochastic Texts." Lutz's poems are produced with the assistance of a program-controlled, large computer: the Zuse Z22. From a database of sixteen subjects and sixteen titles from Kafka's novel *The Castle*, Lutz's program randomly generates a sequence of numbers, pulls up each of the subjects and titles, and connects them using logical constants (such as gender or conjunction) to produce syntax.

——— **1959** ———

Beat Generation writer William Burroughs produces his experimental novel *Naked Lunch* by cutting up and remixing previously written material.

Alison Knowles, *The House of Dust*, 1970, at CalArts.
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

the publication in 1989 of Benjamin Buchloh's influential essay "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," there has been a prominent tendency to read art of the postwar period that engages with the aesthetics of technological industry as reflecting the greater processes of reification; part of the postwar "aesthetics of administration," as Buchloh argues, that reflects the subject-effects of an always already administrated society.[5] *The House of Dust*, positioned between computer-emulative and computer-generated practices, invites a different understanding of the relationship between artist, technologist, and machine; one that ultimately hinges specifically on the results of interdisciplinary collaboration, rather than art's appropriation of—or infiltration by—administrative aesthetics.

America's techno-utopian fantasies stemmed, in part, from a willingness to apply technical concepts and terms to essentially non-technological practices. For the 1966 exhibition "Systemic Painting" at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, for instance, which included works by Jo Baer, Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman, and other Minimalist painters, curator Lawrence Alloway employed the term "systemic"—a reference to biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy's "systems theory" first proposed in the 1930s—as an analogy to describe formal strategies of geometric abstraction, dematerialization, and serialization. None of the exhibited artists used technology to make their work; for Alloway, the term "systemic" instead referred to the predetermination of the complete painting, as distinct from Abstract Expressionism's emphasis on chance, gesture, and accident. Art world interest in systems theory was further fueled by the publication in *Artforum* of Jack Burnham's influential essays "Systems Aesthetics" (1968) and "Real Time Systems" (1969), which described an emerging aesthetics of environmental relationality using language that Burnham derived from a combination of structuralist theory and Norbert Wiener's cybernetics.

The influence of systems thinking extended beyond the U.S. to, for example, the U.K.-based Systems Group of the early 1970's, founded by Jeffrey Steele and Malcolm Hughes, who used mathematical models to produce modular geometric paintings that married Op art to the aesthetics of engineering diagrams. While deriving its terminology and formal qualities from engineering, systems aesthetics—or computer-emulative art—was based on abstract ideas of sober, analytical clarity while retaining the modernist emphases on individual authorship and formal innovation within the bounds of medium specificity; a particular brand of geometric abstraction associated with pure rationality, or what Rosalind Krauss has called a "triumphant Cartesianism."[6]

On the other hand, artistic practices that were truly computer-generated were largely criticized for their aesthetic shortcomings. In 1965, roughly contemporaneous exhibitions at Stuttgart's Studengalerie ("Generative Computergrafik," February 5–19) and New York's Howard Wise Gallery ("Computer Generated Pictures," April 6–24) displayed two-dimensional works produced by artists using early computer graphics processing technologies. Though these exhibitions might deserve admiration for their ambitious foresight, they were not critical successes: works by A. Michael Noll and Bela Julesz in the latter show were decried by one critic as "cold and soulless" and compared unfavorably to the notch patterns on IBM punchcards.[7] In 1968, London's Institute

of Contemporary Art hosted the better-received "Cybernetic Serendipity," which included a hanging mobile that was activated by the audience's presence in the galleries made by the inventor and cybernetician Gordon Pask.[8]

Perhaps the most successful experiments in computer-generated art were carried out on the Bell Laboratories campus in Holmdel, New Jersey. In the interest of forwarding Bell's mission of establishing universal communication, Bell Labs emphasized experimental engineering projects that focused on the electronic synthesis of visual and aural information. Its visual research department hosted, among others, Leon Harmon, Ken Knowlton, and Lillian Schwarz, some of the first artists to experiment with digital imaging, dot-matrix printing, and computer animation. Likewise, Bell's audio research department was an early center of innovation in speech and music synthesis. Bell engineer Max Mathews developed some of the first prototypical electronic instruments; he also famously programmed an IBM 704 to sing "Daisy Bell" to its own accompaniment.

If computer-emulative art like that of the Systems Group stemmed from an overgeneralized idea of mechanical rationality, this was because engineers were not often actually involved in its fabrication; and likewise, if computer-generated art was criticized for being cold and soulless, it was because it hewed too closely to engineering without an artist's aesthetic refinement. Many of the most intriguing and ambitious postwar experiments were somewhere in between the two, taking the form of collaborative, interdisciplinary projects between the arts and the sciences. To explain the prominence of such experimentation in this period, Ann Collins Goodyear has indicated the importance of the 1962 publications of George Kubler's *The Shape of Time* and Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, both texts that sought to describe the diachronic development of cultural forms via interdisciplinary investigations based on information theory and Gestalt theory, respectively.[9] Equally important to the postwar embrace of cultural interdisciplinarity, and more explicitly aligned with technological developments, was Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* of 1964, an exploration of the fundamental cultural changes engendered by technological advances in communication and the inextricable link between media technologies and forms of cultural expression. These and other texts made explicit the interrelationship between technology and cultural practices while also pointing to the potential for a culture to recalibrate its models of production and experience by combining the methodologies of previously disparate fields.

Within this context, and with the continually growing availability of technologies that had once been limited to the domain of the military, arts institutions in the U.S. and abroad began to avidly promote collaborations with industries outside art. In 1966 curator Maurice Tuchman initiated the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Art & Technology program to promote exchanges between the artistic and corporate spheres, placing both American and European artists in short-term residencies in Californian companies. The following year the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Visual Studies (C.A.V.S.), under the directorship of György Kepes, initiated a fellowship program for artists with the mission of facilitating cooperative projects that emphasized an expanded understanding of the artist's social role. Explicitly anti-market, C.A.V.S. placed special emphasis on what Kepes called "monumental scale environmental forms;"[10]

projects that were meant to benefit not only the creative pursuits of individual artists, but also their greater communities. Whereas Art & Technology and the C.A.V.S. imported artists into preexisting corporate structures, Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), founded by Bell Labs engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer with artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman in 1966, engaged experimental technology as well as experimental art, establishing connections between individual artists and individual engineers based on artists' proposals that called for specific experimental processes and materials. Unlike C.A.V.S., E.A.T. was non-prescriptive; any artist could use its services for any project, whether explicitly commercial, politically subversive, or environmental.

The House of Dust was helped along by Tenney's connection to Bell Labs, where he had spent his early career as an associate member of the technical staff under the direction of John Pierce in the Visual and Acoustics Research Department researching speech synthesis with a focus on simulating timbre; his Master's thesis, titled "Meta/Hodos," had proposed a theory of twentieth-century music as a register of speech, rather than simply an evolution of musical form.[11] Like E.A.T.'s Billy Klüver, Tenney had one foot in the tech and engineering world and the other in New York's downtown experimental art scene. Heavily influenced by the work of John Cage, he was a regular participant in the annual Fluxus festivals and a founding member of the Tone Roads Ensemble with Phil Corner and Malcolm Goldstein; he was also married to, and collaborated with, the artist Carolee Schneeman.[12]

The series of workshops that Tenney led in Knowles and Dick Higgins's Chelsea living room (also home to Higgins's Something Else Press) in 1967 was intended to introduce the basic programming language FORTRAN IV in order to explore the possibility of its application to artistic projects. Though Tenney initially intended for every participant—among them Nam June Paik, Max Neuhaus, and Steve Reich—to produce a code-based work, Knowles and Higgins were the only ones to do so. Paik, who had already begun his experiments with television sets and video tape, did produce a work inspired by the workshop, which provides an intriguing contrast with *The House of Dust*: the result is an antique Japanese book of woodblock prints over which Paik scribbled speech bubbles containing fragments of code in red pen. Whereas *House of Dust* put its technological fabrication on display—despite the fact that, as König noted, the text itself does not betray the poem's mechanical composition—Paik's piece put the inscrutability of computer code in stark contrast with ancient technology. On one page, a circle of scholars seated on tatami mats have been embellished by Paik with the words "CORE DEBUGGING MACRO;" elsewhere, a group of women in kimonos crossing a wooden bridge are labeled "TNE," "BSS," "TOV," "TSX," "TXI." To the figure on the book's back cover, Paik added a speech bubble with the letters "SOS."

Paik's woodcut book is, perhaps, prescient in its skepticism toward the supposed rationality and universality of computer code. Likewise, *The House of Dust* clearly illustrates the limitations of the "aesthetics of administration." Though the materials used for the 1968 edition published by König were meant to indicate high-tech fabrication and industrial neutrality, they have aged over the near half-century since they were made, just as the process that produced the poem has since been made obsolete by

5. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 105–143.
6. Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986), 246, cited in Zabet Patterson, "From the Gun Controller to the Mandala: The Cybernetic Cinema of John and James Whitney" in *Systems*, ed. Edward A. Shanken (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2015), 81.
7. Quoted in Cynthia Goodman, *Digital Visions: Computers and Art*, (New York: Abrams, 1987), 184.

8. See Shanken, 15.
9. Ann Collins Goodyear, "György Kepes, Billy Klüver, and American Art of the 1960s: Defining Attitudes Toward Science and Technology," *Science in Context* 17, no. 4 (2004), 615.
10. György Kepes, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, The Center for Advanced

Visual Studies, introductory brochure on the Center (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1968).
11. See Douglas Kahn, "James Tenney at Bell Labs" in *Mainframe Experimentalism*, eds. Hannah Higgins and Douglas Kahn (University of California Press, 2012), 131–146; and James Tenney, interview with Douglas Kahn, LEA 8, no. 11 (November 2000), http://www.leonardo.info/LEA/Tenney2001/tenneyinterview.html.
12. Tenney's work "Collage #2" was used as the soundtrack for Schneeman's *Viet Flakes* (1965); he also appeared as a performer in her *Meat Joy* (1964).

faster, more advanced technologies. If continuous stationery once suggested the cutting edge of deductive logic, it now resembles something much closer to Paik's antiquated woodblocks. As in Paik's piece, despite its aging materiality, what remains potent in *The House of Dust*, is its conflicted negotiation between language and sense.

BOOK/ HOUSE/ MACHINE/ MIND: A HOUSE OF DUST'S CONDITIONS

Iris Cushing

"There must be a google or two of possible variations," Emmett Williams once said when describing his iconic multimedia work *Four Directional Song of Doubt for Five Voices*.[13] The piece relies on the decisions of five performers moving through a grid of one hundred squares, while speaking the words "you/just/never/ quite/know." Williams' remark is a reminder that until recently, the word "google" meant an unthinkably large number, common parlance for something finite, yet approaching infinity. This remark also neatly presages a link between the permutational arts and the computer's role in our cultural consciousness, a link that Alison Knowles found with her 1967 computer-generated poem *The House of Dust*. Knowles' incantatory scroll exists as a conceptual pioneer, with the computer's compositional role altering the dialectic between writing and writer and upending normative constructs of authorship decades before the advent of electronic literature as we know it.[14]

The ontologies of *The House of Dust* are slippery. On first look, it is hard to say exactly *who* made the poem—
Knowles?
Tenney?
The Siemens 4004 computer?
and what precisely was made—
A text? A hypertext?
An art object? An event?
A list of houses? A list of lists?
Subsequent looks raise further questions—about the cultural zeitgeist the piece emerges from, the hermetic possibilities inherent in machines, and the ways in which machines and human minds inform one another. These are all inquiries I would like to take up here.

MACHINE

The poem *The House of Dust* was created during a time when the computer was primarily the purview of governments and scientific labs. Mystique surrounding its functionality made it an object of wonder and satire in pop culture. The Siemens 4004 computer model used by James Tenney to generate Knowles' poem appears as a character, for example, in the 1971 film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. In the scene, an earnest analyst hired to help locate the three remaining Golden Tickets assuredly announces to his employers that the computer has the answer: "We are about to witness the greatest miracle of the machine age. Based on the revolutionary computorial law of probability, this machine will tell us the precise location of the three remaining Golden Tickets." The analyst engages in a madcap "conversation" with the machine involving the punching of glowing buttons, beeps, whirrs, and bargaining from both parties ("What would a computer do with a lifetime supply of chocolate?" "I am now telling the computer exactly what he can do with a lifetime supply of chocolate.")[15] The machine possesses agency and personality in this scene, and is tacitly aware of its own recombinatory power. The computer is depicted as a knowing, self-aware, sentient being. In addition, the scene highlights a perception that humans and computers have very different material needs, and desires: what would a computer do with a lifetime supply of chocolate? The human knows!

A primary element of Knowles' innovation is her assertion of the computer as a site of material aesthetic experimentation capable of engaging domestic realities, as well as an interpretive tool whose capabilities could be managed by humans. Before collaborating with Tenney to make *The House of Dust*, Knowles was interested in "a basic poetic structure in which random bits of information fed into a machine could streamline her experiments with chance-derived imagery."[16] Thinking of this poem as an efficient way of generating imagery aligns it with Knowles' other works involving food and built environments. Aleatory means of arranging materials and images characterized Knowles' practice, and the computer only expanded her methodological scope.

BOOK

"The idea becomes a machine that makes art."

This is one of many aphorisms from Sol LeWitt's 1967 manifesto-like "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art."[17] Following LeWitt's dictum, *The House of Dust* makes the leap from using a conceptual "machine that makes art" to using a literal one. The poem's computer-generated status may be its most obviously innovative feature, but the ontological interfolds of object, event, and text realized by the piece as a whole complicate this initial innovation.

The poem's manifestation as a physical book-object created a hypertext for further physical iterations. Quatrains of the printed poem could be translated, for instance, into architecture. "A house of plastic/in a metropolis/using natural light/inhabited by people from all walks of life" describes one of two "houses" Knowles built in 1968 on the lawn of a housing co-op in Chelsea, near her home.

After printing, the computer printout scroll was divided into 500 "books" of twenty pages each and placed in individual plastic sleeves: I think of these books as the monadic seeds that gave rise to the piece's subsequent material manifestations. While each book contains recombinations of the same set of elements, the actual content of each book is singular. The books call out to works such as Jorge Luis Borges' short story "The Library of Babel"—long thought to have conceived of an information system akin to the Internet—that use textual finitudes as engines for permutational infinities.

Books were something that Knowles had been investigating before *The House of Dust*. She and Dick Higgins founded The Something Else Press in 1964, a publishing house specializing in boxed assemblages and non-traditional book-objects by the likes of Ray Johnson, Jackson MacLow, Marshall McLuhan, and Gertrude Stein.[18] Before making *The House of Dust*, Knowles had gained acclaim for another piece that exploded the commonly-accepted categorical limits of a "text"—and likewise an "artwork." *The Big Book* (1966) was a room-sized installation in the form of a massive book. Visitors could enter its "pages" (made of bonded sheeting and covered in paintings and prints) through cut-out portals to eventually make their way into an interior space that included a miniature kitchen, toilet, and sleeping area.[19] *The House of Dust* extended her practice of troubling the lines between text and place, object and event—with attendant challenges to paradigms of scale, medium and purpose.

On a visit to the Bienecke Library at Yale, I spent the day reading one of the *The House of Dust* books, reprinted from the original in 1968 by Konig Verlag in Cologne. What first struck me was the stiffness of the clear plastic sleeve, almost 50 years old, and the thinness of the paper. The book is a fragile one. The tractor-feed paper on which the poem is printed is wider than any "page" I had ever encountered. The paper was designed to function in ways unique to its own time and context, ways entirely foreign to the mechanism of the page that makes the physical platform for printed poetry. The paper bears marks of industrial handling: its hole-punched edges are indented in places where the computer clamped onto it in the printing process. The dot-matrix-printed letters that form the poem don't always fall in a straight line, but wiggle and swim slightly within their green-and-white-striped lanes. The presence of the book made the forward-march of machine obsolescence suddenly, tenderly vivid for me. I can remember, as a child, tearing the perforated edge-strips off of paper such as this and using rubber bands to bind them into makeshift cheer-leading pom-poms. Handling the book, I experienced a particular kind of aesthetic moment: the moment when an object crosses over from being obsolete in the way of junk—useless and dull— to being obsolete in a way that is fascinatingly authentic, that carries a message belonging entirely to the present moment today. It is only fitting that this simple book set into motion a cascade of forward-moving interdisciplinary transformations.

MIND

Similar to the scale and purpose of the *Big Book*, the Siemens 4004 computer was a room-sized textual mechanism, occupied by a "brain" that processed possibility—by way of machine algorithm rather than organic human cognition and experience. Tenney and Knowles chose a fitting textual and material mode to execute the poem. Developed between 1954 and 1957, FORTRAN compiling language "had been crucial for handling computationally intensive areas, such as numerical weather prediction, finite element analysis, and fluid dynamics," according to scholar Nicole Woods.[20] Of Knowles' decision to use this program, Woods says "this particular computer language was known for its flexibility and modularity in providing for compilations favored in the organization of libraries, indices, and other assemblage systems of information."

It is useful to consider Knowles' piece as an "assemblage system of information." With its modular recurrence of a set of images, the actual experience of reading *The House of Dust* calls to mind incantation, a long beginningless chant that can be entered at any point, and like Heraclitus' river, never the same way twice. In an essay on the "Agrippa" project, an early example of networked electronic literature, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum describes "... an actual message [that] exists only as a function of its relation to a larger system of potential messages."[21] Although *The House of Dust* was created from a finite system before the advent of digital networks, Kirschenbaum's approach to apprehensions of meaning can be applied to Knowles' poem. The literal significance of each individual quatrain within the poem is simultaneous with its status as one new manifestation of all of the poem's possible iterations. Indeed, the exhaustion of possibilities—a recurring theme in Fluxus, Oulipo and Situationist practices—can be seen as one message of *The House of Dust*, where each new quatrain both realizes a possibility for meaning and virtually negates the chance that the same meaning will reoccur. This feature places *The House of Dust* in the long lineage of mystical texts that practice the exhaustion of possible recombinations within a set as a means toward hermetic realization.[22]

For example, the image conjured by lines such as "a house of brick/among small hills/Using all available lighting/inhabited by lovers" has its own beauty and specificity as a *poem*, but its status as one possibility among thousands gives it the quality of *arcana*, lending the words that make up the image a renewed teleology that transcends literal meaning. Even the number of phrases in

13. As quoted Janet Zweig, "Ars Combinatoria: Mystical Systems, Procedural Art, and the Computer," *Art Journal*, (Fall 1997): 20–29.
14. Knowles and Tenney's predecessors in the realm of computer-generated poetry are numerous. The first documented program of computer poetry, "Stochastiche Texte," was made in 1959 by German mathematician Theo Lutz. Lutz, an associate of the Stuttgart group and philosopher Max Bense, used a Zuse Z22 computer to randomly organize a set of terms from Franz Kafka's The Castle into a syntactically-cohesive text. Other instances of computer poetry preceding Knowles and Tenney's work include British artist Brion Gysin's "I am that I am" (1960); German theorist Rul Gunzenhäuser's "Weinachtgedicht" (automatic poems, 1961), American Clair Phillipy's use of the RCA 301 computer to create blank verse (1963–64), and Emmett Williams' 1966 "The IBM Poem." For a chronology of early computer poetry, see C. T. Funkhouser, Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007).
15. Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, dir. Mel Stuart, Wolper Productions (1971; Burbank, C.A.: Warner Home Video, 1986), film.
16. Nicole L. Woods, "Object/Poems: Alison Knowles's Feminist Archite(x)ture," *X-TRA Contemporary Art Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Fall 2012), http://x-traonline.org/article/objectpoems-alison-knowless-feminist-architexure/.
17. Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* (1967), accessible via http://www.tufts.edu/programs/mma/fah188/sol_lewitt/paragraphs%20on%20conceptual%20art.htm.
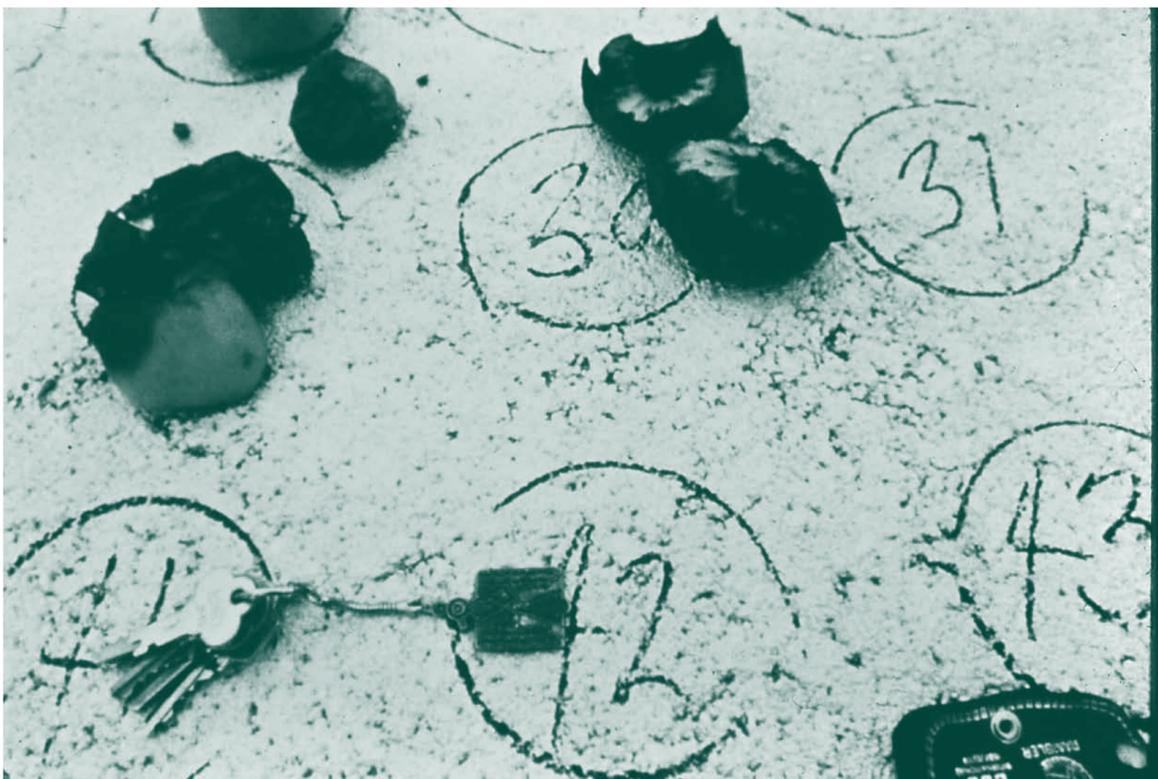
18. Peter Frank, "Fluxus and Happenings and list of Something Else Press publications," last modified June 30, 2009, http://members.chello.nl/j.seegers1/flux_files/something-else-press.html.
19. Woods, 7.
20. Ibid., 9.
21. Matthew G. Kirschenbaum. Mechanisms: *New Media and the Forensic Imagination*. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2008), 214.
22. For many good examples of these texts, see Zweig.

each of the four sets of words suggests a numerological aesthetic: seventeen, twenty-five, four, twenty-three. These decisions on Knowles' part, whether mystically guided or totally arbitrary, vanish any imperative toward self-expression in favor of the emergence of other messages, and ultimately, other minds.

HOUSE

I find the impossibility of the "houses" imagined in *The House of Dust* to be a very pleasurable aspect of the text. Each fictive house finds its elements relating to each other in a way that appears to be both random and inevitable. One way to read this poem is to sit and consider how each house might potentially "work." This consideration becomes a kind of delightful spiritual exercise, an ongoing entrance into unknown spaces.

A HOUSE OF ROOTS
IN A PLACE WITH BOTH HEAVY RAIN AND BRIGHT SUN
USING ALL AVAILABLE LIGHTING
INHABITED BY LOVERS

For this house, I imagine the warm sun and rainwater fostering the growth of the roots that nurture the house. The available lighting might be "natural"—sun, fire, stars—and the lovers might be non-human: worms, insects, reptiles, amphibians. As Knowles' chosen elements cohere within each house's quatrain, they exert a certain pressure on all of the other quatrains in which those same elements appear, setting up a network of sensual, palpable images.

This brings to mind Gilles Deleuze's essay on Beckett, "The Exhausted," in which he writes, "If it is the ambition of the combinatorial to exhaust the possible with words, it must constitute a metalanguage, a very special language in which the relations of objects are identical with the relations of words, and words then would no longer offer realization to the possible, but would themselves give to the possible its own (precisely exhaustible) reality."[23] *The House of Dust*, with its inseparable vertices of materials, historical conditions, language, and generative means, "gives the possible its own reality" in exactly this way, forging a metalanguage open to relating in any direction imaginable. Its visual palette of the domestic, the spatial, the bodily, and the animal ground it uniquely to Planet Earth, at a moment when the US-Soviet Space Race was propelling cultural imaginations further afield than ever before. Indeed, Knowles' text was made in the same year as Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey,* a film whose Hal 9000 character canonized the idea of artificial intelligence. The film indicates the degree to which computers could be perceived as sentient, moral, and oracular. Knowles' radical move was to initiate a conversation about the material world with this oracle, and in doing so, to discover possibility itself unfolding along an infinite ontological horizon.

THE HOUSE OF PEDAGOGY

Hallie Scott

In 1970 Alison Knowles was offered a teaching position at the newly established California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) Drawn to the school's open, experimental ethos, she agreed to the position under the condition that CalArts fund the transportation of her architectural sculpture *The House of Dust* (1968) from New York City to the Southern California campus. Once installed, the two biomorphic structures became alternative classrooms, performance sites, and meditation spaces. (Fig. 1) As architectural forms, these undulating, irregular structures stood in sharp contrast to CalArts' monolithic academic complex, whose homogenous, institutional design earned it the nickname "the Dow Chemical Center."[24] Analyzing these structures not only as architectural forms, but also as ideological apparatuses, I argue that while Ladd & Kelsey Architects' academic complex ultimately reinforced the codified, standardized learning environment that CalArts initially positioned itself against, *The House of Dust* symbolized and was indeed a venue for open-ended, experimental pedagogy.[25]

Financed by conservative backers led by Walt Disney, CalArts formed as a merging of the financially bereft Chouinard Art Institute and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music. Although originally conceived as an art- and education-themed incarnation of a Disney venture, by CalArts' opening in 1970, it described itself as a utopian art academy in the model of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College.[26] Like these precedents, CalArts sought to foster a bohemian community and to create a new, interdisciplinary program for training professionalized artists. The administration promoted the school as a contemporary alternative to "compartmentalized," traditional East Coast art schools.[27] CalArts' geographic remoteness reinforced this sense of new beginnings; the school was built in Valencia, a 1960s planned residential town, situated thirty miles north of Los Angeles. This location both provided freedom from the pressures and influence Los Angeles's emerging art market and was doubly removed from that of New York. It also gave participants a sense that they were part of "a clearing or demolition ritual which might prepare the ground for fresh creativity."[28] The newly-designed campus, a $15,000,000 megastructure that combined all disciplines under one roof, was intended to exemplify this approach.[29]

The school held that "education should be completely noncoercive and responsive to the unique needs and developmental rhythm of each student."[30] This stance was predicated on the notion that students should be treated as artists, rather than underlings. Students and teachers would relate to each other as peers, eradicating any trace of a master-student dynamic. The faculty would provide guidance and share their own work with students, rather than teach preconceived lessons on standardized topics. In addition, CalArts would have neither a grading system, nor standardized time-table for graduation, nor course requirements, nor enforced course sequences. The school's initial publicity also described abundant access to new technology, implying endless financial resources.[31] According to sociologist Judith Adler, participants viewed this dehierarchized, unregulated learning structure as a panacea to industrial society's instrumental divisions between work and play as well as a catalyst for a truly utopian learning community.[32]

The inaugural deans and faculty members were innovators in their fields. For example, within the School of Art, Allan Kaprow, originator of the Happening, taught a course dedicated specifically to that art form. The Feminist Art Program, led by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, was a continuation of the first art education program directed towards empowering female artists. Conceptual artist John Baldessari rejected the traditional site of art education in his "Post-Studio" class, which largely took place outdoors. Knowles was one of several artists associated with Fluxus recruited by Kaprow, who also served as Associate Dean of the School of Art.[33] Like many of these appointees, she did not have extensive prior teaching experience, but was drawn to the "vision of a school based on what artists wanted to do rather than what the school wanted them to do."[34]

However, the utopian ethos that drew Knowles and others belied financial strain and tensions between the conservative trustees and the more radically-minded faculty. The limited existing funds

were tightly controlled by the trustees, who were disturbed by the school's countercultural ethos.[35] Even before CalArts opened, the construction of the new campus had to be postponed due to budgetary constraints—during the first year, the school was housed at a temporary campus, the Villa Cabrini, a former Catholic school for girls in Burbank. Once in session, faculty found themselves jockeying for access to limited technological equipment.[36] Budgets decreased as the school matured, resulting in heightened competition among faculty members, who suddenly had to vie for contracts and funds. This undermined the community-minded ethos fostered during the recruitment period and initial years. The decrease in funds also led to an administrative push for more formalized curricula, the establishment of course requirements, and standardized matriculation.[37] By 1975, the first president, provost, three deans, and many faculty members had either been fired or chose to resign, and the trustees cut the schools of critical studies and design.[38]

In 1971, CalArts moved to its newly completed Valencia campus, which in many ways encapsulated the school's' shortcomings. Designed by Ladd & Kelsey Architects, the brutalist building contained all five schools within a seemingly endless configuration of hallways and windowless rooms.[39] The architects designed multi-use classrooms intended for faculty to tailor to their individual purposes, but the facilities failed to sufficiently account for practices that need specific spatial arrangements, technology hookups, and light access.[40] The resulting structure was so impersonal and monotonous that rumors circulated that the architects had recycled a design originally created for a hospital.[41] The building illustrates Dick Hebdige's assertion that, most modern institutes of education, despite the apparent neutrality of the materials from which they are constructed (red brick, white tile, etc.) carry within themselves implicit ideological assumptions which are literally structured into the architecture itself…Here the buildings literally reproduce in concrete terms prevailing (ideological) notions about what education is, and it is through this process that the educational structure, which can, of course, be altered, is placed beyond question and appears to us as a 'given' (i.e. as immutable).[42]

In other words, rather than inviting creativity and experimentation, the building fosters adherence to institutional regulations and norms. Indeed, Thierry de Duve argues that CalArts fostered a homogenizing pedagogical paradigm from the mid-1970s on. In contrast to the earlier Bauhaus and Academic models, this "attitude-practice-deconstruction" paradigm teaches students how to position themselves as artists, instead of how to produce art objects. Students learn to critique and deconstruct, rather than invent or imitate.[43]

The shortcomings of this paradigm and the architecture that shaped it become evident in a comparison between the CalArts building and *The House of Dust.* Knowles created the sculpture in 1968, when she received a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship to build one of the quatrains of her eponymous computerized poem from 1967:

A HOUSE OF PLASTIC
IN A METROPOLIS
USING NATURAL LIGHT
INHABITED BY PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

Knowles translated the quatrain into designs for two undulating, mound-like structures, which were cast in fiberglass.[44] Wide, circular openings pierced the structures, welcoming natural light and creating a sense of permeability. The curved walls supplied a multitude of inlets for interaction, inviting exploration and open-ended play.[45] (Fig. 2) The smaller of the two structures also included a solar-activated sound piece by composer Max Neuhaus, which translated the sun's movement into sound. The piece operated through thermal circuits installed on the skin of *The House of Dust*; when hit with sunlight the circuits emitted a soft grass-inspired sound.[46] Knowles did not intend the *House* to be permanent, but to move location and change forms every ten years, remaining in a state of constant flux. Thus, it was logical to transport the structure from its original New York location to CalArts, where it was first installed on a broken tennis court at the Villa Cabrini. The larger structure was destroyed by an earthquake, but the smaller model was moved to a grassy hill at the Valencia campus when CalArts moved there for the subsequent 1971-72 school year. The biomorphic structures contrasted sharply with the Villa Cabrini, whose architecture combined Mission revival and Classical influences, and with the neighboring Dow Chemical plant. While the latter is massive, homogenous, permanent, and impenetrable by natural forces, *The House of Dust* was intimate in scale, temporary, and open to its surroundings.

Both the form of the *House* and the process through which it was created invited response and interaction. Knowles held classes, meetings, and events there, and invited her students to do the same.[47] During the spring 1970 semester, for example,

23. Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted," trans. Anthony Ulmann, *SubStance* 24.3, no. 78 (1995), 3–28.
24. Alison Knowles, interview with Janet Sarbanes, «A School Based on What Artists Wanted to Do: Alison Knowles on CalArts,» *East of Borneo*, August 7, 2012, http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/a-school-based-on-what-artists-wanted-to-do-alison-knowles-on-calarts.
25. This conception of educational architecture as an ideological apparatus derives

from Dick Hebdige. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
26. In its most ambitious conception, CalArts was conceived as "a nucleus of music, art, dance, theater, and television schools surrounded by a commercial complex of galleries, theaters, open-air museums, restaurants and motels. The arts and the artists were to be the main attraction in a new combination of the recreation and culture industries, later described by one of its designers as 'a kind of farmer's market of the soul which would spin off cash flows to the school." Judith Adler, *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979), 54.
27. CalArts Admissions Bulletin, in Herbert Gold, "Walt Disney Presents: Adventures in Collegeland!" *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1972, 50.
28. Adler, 96.
29. The campus combined Schools of Art, Critical Studies, Design, Film, Music, and Theater and Dance under one institutional umbrella and under one physical roof.
30. Adler, 102.
31. Ibid., 108.
32. Ibid., 104. Adler traces this attitude to the influence Frankfurt school theorist Herbert Marcuse had on many of the faculty members at CalArts. The Dean of Critical Studies, Maurice Stein, tried to hire Marcuse but was blocked by the University's board because of the theorist's radical reputation. Marcuse argued that in the contemporary economy, society enforces a false notion of economic scarcity in order to divert energies towards work and away from "libidinous pleasure." Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 16.
33. Between 1970 and 1972, Kaprow also recruited Knowles' husband Dick Higgins, Nam June Paik, Emmett Williams, and James Tenney. Tenney, who was appointed to the School of Music, was the only one to remain on the faculty in a long-term capacity. Knowles, Higgins, and Paik had all participated in Tenney's 1967 workshop on the computer programming language FORTRAN, which was the impetus for *The House of Dust* poem.
34. Paik and Knowles, in particular, had very little teaching experience prior to joining the faculty. Alison Knowles, interview with Janet Sarbanes.

35. For more details on the trustee's relationship to the more radical factions at the school see Janet Sarbanes, "A Community of Artists: Radical Pedagogy at CalArts, 1969–72," *East of Borneo*, June 5, 2014, http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/a-community-of-artists-radical-pedagogy-at-calarts-1969-72.
36. Adler, 102.
37. Between the 1972–73 school year and the 1973–4 school year, the teaching budget was cut nearly in half, from $2, 322, 440 to $1,375,000. Ibid., 146–7.
38. Among those who resigned or were fired were Allan Kaprow, Dean of the School of Critical Studies Maurice Stein, Provost Herbert Blau, Graphic Design faculty member Sheila de Bretteville, and Judy Chicago.
39. Until 2009, this complex remained the sole academic building on campus.
40. This criticism is made specifically in relation to the Graphics facilities. Dick Higgins, "Teaching at CalArts —Part Yoni," *Los Angeles Free Press*, April 9, 1971: 11.
41. John Miller, *Mike Kelley: Educational Complex* (London: Afterall, 2015), 50.
42. Hebdige, 12–13. In using Hebdige to analyze CalArts' campus, I am drawing from John Miller. Miller, 26.
43. Thierry de Duve, "When Form Has Become Attitude – And Beyond," in *The Artist and the Academy: Issues in Fine Art Education and The Wider Cultural Context*, eds. Stephen Foster and Nicholas deVille, (Southampton, U.K.: John Hansard Gallery, 1994), 27.
44. A Philadelphia-based foundry did the casting.
45. *The House of Dust* was initially installed at the Penn South Housing Coop in Chelsea. According to Hannah Higgins, other residents see it aflame because they viewed it as an imposition. Higgins, "An Introduction to Alison Knowles's *The House of Dust*," in *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts*, eds. Hannah Higgins and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 197.
46. This description of Neuhaus's piece is based on that of Hannah Higgins. Ibid.
47. Knowles' events at the *House* include *Gift Event II*, in which participants brought food and did informal presentations.

student Michael Bell organized sunrise meditations, which centered around the light coming through the holes in the structure. Another student, Andrew Schloss, created a computer program using FORTRAN to automate Knowles' *Proposition IV (Squid)*, which provided randomized instructions for the use of the space around the *House* based on color, numbers, materials, and cardinal directions. In a related work from the same year, *99 Red North*, ninety-nine apples were arranged in a grid oriented to the north and invited participants to exchange objects for the apples.[48] The following year, Norman Kaplan and Knowles created *Poem Drop*, in which a helicopter dropped a printout of *The House of Dust* poem onto the sculpture. (Fig. 3) The *House* also served as a site for screenings and other informal gatherings. (Fig. 4) In conjunction with these activities, Knowles set up a silkscreen lab in the CalArts building, where students could learn the process and then produce prints to advertise *The House of Dust* events.[49]

The House of Dust enhanced and perhaps influenced Knowles' pedagogy, which she describes as shaped by her desire to "listen to what the students would like to do with me."[50] Rather than following a preestablished curriculum, Knowles and her students generated plans and ideas through dialogue. This approach to teaching mirrors Knowles' encouragement of open-ended participation in her artistic practice. In blurring the boundary between her artistic work and her teaching, Knowles put the founding CalArts tenet that students should be treated as artists into practice. Hannah Higgins has analyzed the emphasis on "experiential learning,…interdisciplinary exploration, self-directed study, collective work, and the nonhierarchical exchange of ideas" inherent to Fluxus practices like that of Knowles as models for education that fosters freedom and avoids "the homogenizing influence of formal institutions."[51]

This emancipatory process parallels what bell hooks describes as "engaged pedagogy" in which teachers seek to dismantle rather than "reinforce systems of domination."[52] In engaged teaching and learning situations, teachers transgress the traditional boundaries between themselves and their students by bringing their own personal and intellectual experiences into the classroom and encouraging students to do the same. Engaged pedagogues frame the class as "a community of learners together…equally committed to creating a learning context."[53] By making the classroom a site of exchange, rather than a one-directional flow of information, engaged pedagogy embraces fluidity—the content and dynamic of the class constantly shifts in response to the interests and needs of all of the participants.[54] This pedagogy gives students the agency to actively participate in their own learning experiences, offering what Paulo Freire describes as a process of "conscientization," or an awakened critical awareness and sense of empowerment.[55] Although hooks does not extend this discourse to architecture, one can imagine a space that destabilizes the hierarchies of a conventional classroom would best serve the process of engaged pedagogy, a space that exists apart from overdetermined institutional architecture, that disavows the rigid hierarchies created in a rectangular room, and that invites multiple entryways and modes of participation. While Knowles did not originally intend *The House of Dust* to function this way, at CalArts it served both symbolically and physically as a space for the engaged pedagogy that hooks advocates.

Yet the engaged experience was fleeting. While the school had initially encouraged experimental teaching practices, or at least rhetorically embraced them, the institutional pressures of the early 1970s soon influenced the administration to prioritize codified curriculum over open-ended learning processes. In response, Knowles, along with many of her peers, left CalArts after her second year.[56] While the *House* has long been absented from CalArts' campus, Ladd & Kelsey Architects' "concrete sarcophagus" endures. The contrast between *The House of Dust* and CalArts' official architecture remains potent. Today, as artistic education becomes ever more exorbitant and institutions are increasingly fixated on measurable learning outcomes, *The House of Dust* represents a powerful model for open-ended, collaborative learning that can occur adjacent to institutions.

48. As recounted by Knowles, one man traded his car keys for an apple in order to better explore the Burbank surroundings. Alison Knowles, Interview with Hannah Higgins, July 13, 2008, as cited in Higgins, 197.
49. The department funded the purchase of a large-scale graphic arts camera for the lab. Alison Knowles, interview with Janet Sarbanes.
50. Ibid.
51. Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 189.
52. bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 21.

53. Ibid., 153.
54. According to hooks, "When the classroom is truly engaged, its dynamic. It's fluid. It's *always* changing." Ibid., 158.
55. hooks draws upon Freire's term in describing the impact of engaged pedagogy. Ibid., 14.
56. Alison Knowles, interview with Janet Sarbanes. Knowles' stated reasons for departure were to be closer to her family in New York and to have more time to focus on her own artwork. Implicit within this second reason, I posit, is the increasing burden placed on faculty to codify curriculum and reign in experimental teaching practices that more closely align with artistic practices.

Poem Drop
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

1968

Intel Corporation markets the first chip to be used as the computer's memory.

1969

On September 2, the first ARPANET node is installed at the UCLA Network Measurement Center. ARPANET, sponsored by the U.S. Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) will eventually link computers across the country and around the world, forming a direct precursor to today's Internet.

1969

During the summer, while resident at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, poet and performance artist Jackson Mac Low creates his first computer poems ("PFR-3 Poems") using a DEC PDP-9 computer in the context of the Museum's Art and Technology Program (1967–1971), which paired artists with technology companies across Southern California.

1971

Dutch essayist and computer programmer Gerrit Krol publishes his survey essay, *APPI: Automatic Poetry by Pointed Information.*

1973

Linguist and author Richard W. Bailey publishes one of the earliest anthologies of computer poetry, *Computer Poems*, featuring the work of sixteen authors. In his preface, Bailey highlights tendencies that he understands to have influenced the works in the collection: "concrete poetry," "poetry of sound in verbal orchestrations," "imagistic poetry in the juxtaposition of the unfamiliar," and "haiku."

1974

There are now two-dozen computer manufacturers in operation across the United States.

1974

Robert J. Sigmund publishes his *Energy Crisis Poems* under the pseudonym "rjs" in an addition of 500 copies, accompanied by the subtitle "poetry by program / program by rjs." The title page states: "Anyone with access to an IBM 8360 or 8370 running under OS or OS/VS can use the program exactly as it exists."

1976

In April, computer programmers William Crowther and Don Woods release the role-playing game *Adventure* on the U.S. research network ARPANET. *Adventure* was the first in a short-lived, but influential, textual computer game genre, which ended its commercial life when graphic adventure games took over in the late 1980s.

1980

Mystery House, by Roberta Williams and Ken Williams, is the next recorded computer game to have been created by a woman, after Knowles's *House of Dust*.

1982

French writers Paul Braffort (a member of OuLiPo) and Jacques Roubaud create the literary group ALAMO: "Atelier de Littérature assistée par la Mathématique et les Ordinateurs" (Literature Workshop aided by Mathematics and Computers). ALAMO members "brought together around the project of using, in all possible ways, the computer in the service of literature."

1983–84

Programmer William Chamberlain orchestrates the publication of *The Policeman's Beard is Half Constructed: Computer prose and poetry by Racter*. The book's cover bills it as "the first book ever written by a computer." Chamberlain programmed Racter (short for "raconteur") to randomly generate prose and poetry, using compiled BASIC on a Z80 micro.

1984

In November, Modernist critic Hugh Kenner and computer scientist Joseph O'Rourke of Johns Hopkins University co-author an article for *Byte* magazine titled "A Travesty Generator for Micros," proposing a program that would generate "travesty" texts from other texts so as to examine the relation between the original and its transformation.

1994

The Electronic Poetry Center is founded at State University of New York, Buffalo, with the aim of making available a wide range of resources centered on digital and contemporary formally innovative poetries, new media writing, and literary programming.

1995

Computer scientist Bill Seaman coins the term "Recombinant Poetics" to denote an approach to computer-based works enabling the exploration of media elements in different orders and combinations.
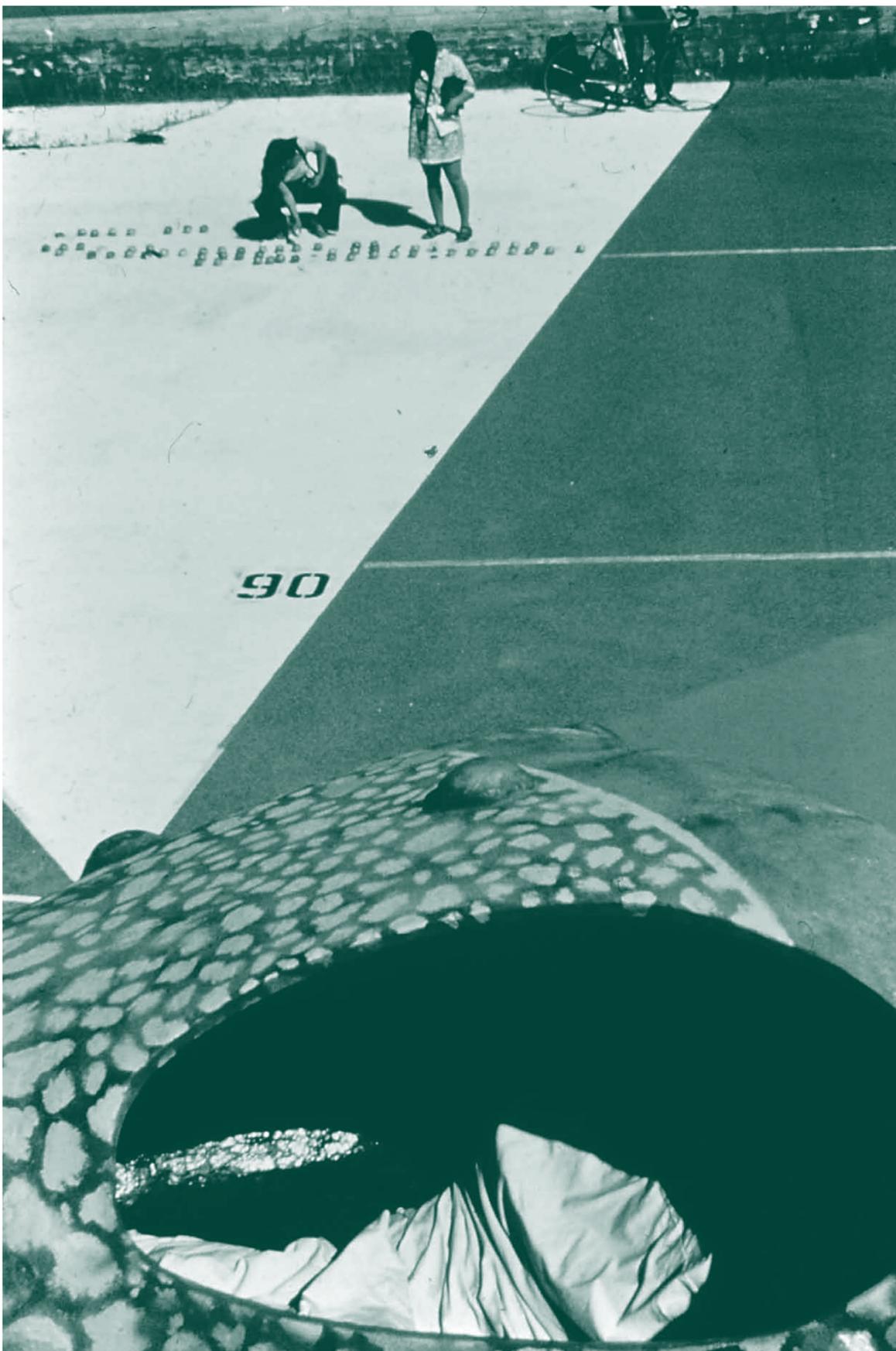
A HOUSE OF DUST... INHABITED BY AMERICAN INDIANS · FIG. 1

Alison Knowles, *The House of Dust*, 1970.
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

A HOUSE OF DUST... INHABITED BY AMERICAN INDIANS

Christopher Green

When Alison Knowles taught at the temporary CalArts campus in Burbank, California, from 1970 to 1972, she brought *The House of Dust* with her. It acted as the site for many activities, including the work *99 Red North* (1970), an event based on the principles of exchange. Using a sequence of numbers, materials, and colors developed in collaboration with a student, *99 Red North* consisted of a grid of apples, ninety-nine total arranged in three straight lines oriented north. Knowles invited the audience to exchange each apple for a personal object for at least a week. The social possibilities of exchange had long been explored in Knowles's work, beginning with her 1963 event score *Giveaway Construction*, which read "Find something you like in the street & give it away. Or find a variety of things, make something of them, & give it away..." *99 Red North* was another entry into the social nature of art as exchange of objects and experiences, entering participants into a gift economy, at least temporarily. One man went so far as to leave his car keys on the broken tennis court that was the site of this event, apparently "because he'd always wanted to walk to work."[57]

This particular exchange is captured on a slide that Knowles kept of the event. (Fig. 1) In addition to rows of numbered circles and a few apples looking the worse for wear, the set of keys and its metal keychain are stretched between the numbers 41 and 42. The keychain, otherwise perhaps unremarkable, is a pewter thunderbird, the legendary bird present in Native American myth across the continent, often associated with lightning and the heavens. If its reverse were visible, one would see the imprinted words, "With thanks from the American Indian Children." Such a trinket was mailed to homes throughout the 1960s in order to elicit donations to American Indian schools, better known today as residential schools. This one was likely made by children at the Chilocco Indian School near Ponca City, Oklahoma, as part of their fundraising efforts. The school would be closed in 1980, following years of allegations of abuse from American Indian organizations and eventually the removal of Congressional funding.

Simultaneous with *The House of Dust* project and Knowles's arrival at CalArts was the prominent rise of the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.) in the western United States. Founded in 1968, the A.I.M. advocated for indigenous civil and legal rights, particularly for autonomy over and restoration of tribal lands which the organization believed had been illegally seized and continued to be encroached upon. The presence of the movement in California was particularly publicized; from 1969 to 1971 a group of eighty-nine American Indians calling themselves "Indians of All Tribes" occupied Alcatraz Island for nineteen months until their forced removal by government officers, earning international attention for the plight of indigenous peoples in the United States. The occupation was followed by others throughout the country, including the seizure of the replica of the *Mayflower* in Boston in 1970, and in the fall of 1972, the movement gained further international coverage when it organized a cross-country protest called the "Trail of Broken Treaties." Activists caravanned from the west coast, departing from San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other local communities, to Washington, D.C., arriving the week before the presidential election. After being refused an audience with the Nixon Administration, the protesters occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in the Department of Interior for a week until finally being met with concessions by the federal government, including the official end of Indian termination policy.

With such publicized actions taking place in California just as Knowles had begun teaching there, she likely would have been able to make the connection between the appearance of a thunderbird keychain asking for help for the American Indian Children, prominent in her recollections of the project, the American Indian Movement, and the source of her own interests in such gift exchange events.[58] Indeed there is a consistent fascination with indigenous and Native American cultures in Knowles's work throughout her career, one which belies the importance of the single entry, "American Indians," to her list of twenty-three potential inhabitants for *The House of Dust*'s computerized and randomized quatrains. (Fig. 2)

The connection between her exploration of the gift economy through exchange events such as *Giveaway Construction* (1963)

and *99 Red Event North* and the tradition of the potlatch, the gift-giving feast practiced by the indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast, is apparent in her event score *Take a New Name (from the Kwakiutl Indians)*. The Kwakiutl, a misnomer for the Kwakwą ką 'wakw, as the Kwak'wala-speaking peoples of the Pacific Northwest prefer, are prominent potlatch givers, well documented in the early research of Franz Boas in particular, which would have been one of Knowles's primary sources at this time.[59] Knowles's event score tells the audience "to choose a new name and wear it for the evening"; some of the suggestions include "Prairee cactus," "Great Mother Thunder," "Don't take my money," and "Jimmy." The names, clearly, are not at all Kwak'wala names (indeed some are in French and German), so it is rather the act or process of taking a new name that Knowles interprets from the Kwakwą ką 'wakw. Thus Knowles's take on the naming processes of Northwest Coast indigenous cultures foregrounds creative license over cultural accuracy, and her options range from stereotypically Indian constructions to the comical to the everyday.

Another source for *Take a New Name* was an event score by Jerome Rothenberg, *GIFT EVENT* (1968, 1972), subtitled *Kwakiutl*. The score consists of instructions to give away various objects "glass bowls, handkerchiefs, pigs & geese" and towards the end tells participants to "Give everyone a new name." Knowles was inspired by this line and Rothenberg's Kwakiutl reference for her own naming piece. Both artists use the naming process to pit the destiny of one's name as an ancestral or spiritual gift against the liberating power of chance in Fluxus practice. Rothenberg, in a later commentary on *GIFT EVENT*, noted the influence of Knowles's *Giveaway Construction* on his piece, explicitly connecting the gift events, naming practices, and Kwakiutl sources for both amongst their work.[60] Likewise Knowles has acknowledged the influence of Rothenberg on her work, in particular the importance of his ethnopoetics books *Technicians of the Sacred* (1968) and *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas* (1972), both of which she owned. The latter is replete with Native American ritual and poetic source material, including several naming events and picture making events.[61]

In a later interview, Knowles discussed having studied Native American rituals as a kind of indigenous happening: "I love the Indian Kwakiutl events, and I've studied them a lot I did a piece called *Gift Event* [*Giveaway Construction*], which is directly based on Kwakiutl events. It's a piece with no audience necessarily. One finds things in the street and makes an object that then one attempts to give away to some passerby. The piece has nothing to do with usual gift giving because usually gifts are beautiful... All these aspects of gift giving are shattered by the piece."[62] (Fig.3)

In the same interview, Knowles described Dick Higgins's work as having a wonderful, crazy, and magical quality, causing her to think of him when she read about "Kwakiutl Indian events."[63] To Knowles, the magical is what makes a "good event piece," and she associates this with indigenous peoples.

The interest in the "magical" verges on primitivist tendencies, and Knowles made use of a variety of ancient and non-Western sources in her work. For example, her 1982 *A Finger Book* translates into braille ancient languages like Sumerian and Shang, as well as the living language like Incan Quipu. However, no source was as present for her as Native American references. This tendency reached a peak in her 1990 exhibition, *Seven Indian Moons* at the Emily Harvey Gallery in New York. For the show, Knowles developed paintings that depicted seven of the thirteen moons in what she called the "ancient Indian calendar year."[64] The exhibition catalogue presents information she gathered on those moons and the tribes who named them, and the paintings incorporated a photo taken by Jimmy DeSana of an installation Knowles had created several years prior in Amsterdam. The photo is a t-shirt in a spotlight which Knowles notes "works well with the Indians," is silk-screened along with word collages from her researched texts and notes on the seven moons. The Kwakiutl make an appearance once again for the *Salmon Moon (September)*, and the accompanying catalogue text reproduces three lines from Rothenberg's *GIFT EVENT*, as well as her notes on "collecting the lore surrounding the names given by the Indians to the various moons," and references the printing process. The other moons include the Creek, Oglala Sioux, Dakota, Natchez, Cree, and Pikuni Blackfeet, and the text is rife with further reference to Knowles's expansive research. She quotes the 1932 book *Black Elk Speaks*, the story of a Oglala Lakota medicine man, and names all of the American Indian tribes in Oklahoma. Furthermore, she translates indigenous languages and advises readers that they should go visit the Museum of the American Indian in the Bronx.

Knowles described her Indian Moon pieces as being "quite literary," but they were very physical as well.[65] The panels and exhibition space included various attached artifacts and even sound-making instruments, which could be played by the viewer. The depth of her research is apparent in the exhibition text, but there is little acknowledgement of the contemporaneity of Native people. Her goal was not to make a political statement; Knowles did her research in the museum library, she tells us, not by engaging indigenous collaborators or informants. The lessons of postcolonial and indigenous studies that were rapidly emerging at this moment in academia do not seem to have entered into Knowles's work, which exposes if not a primitivizing tendency then a naiveté

57. Alison Knowles, interview with Janet Sarbanes, «A School Based on What Artists Wanted to Do: Alison Knowles on CalArts,» *East of Borneo*, August 7, 2012, http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/a-school-based-on-what-artists-wanted-to-do-alison-knowles-on-calarts.

58. Knowles frequently mentions the car keys in her recollections of *99 Red North Event* in interviews. See Alison Knowles, interview with Hannah B. Higgins, July 13, 2008, reprinted in Higgins, "An Introduction to Alison Knowles's *The House of Dust*," in *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts*, eds. Hannah Higgins and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

59. Jerome Rothenberg also explicitly cited the Native accounts in Helen Codere, "The Amiable Side of Kwakiutl Life: The Potlatch and the Play Potlatch," *American Anthropologist* 28 (1956), 334–351. Jerome Rothenberg, "Gift Event, after the Kwakiutl, newly rededicated for the 44th Presidential, in celebration," *Poems and Poetics*, January 20, 2009, http://poemsandpoetics.blogspot.com/2009/01/gift-event-after-kwakiutl-newly.html.

60. Jerome Rothenberg, *Pre-faces & Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1981), 197. Rothenberg's events include many Native American references, including *THE GHOST DANCE* (1968).

61. Such as "Picture Event, for Doctor & Patient (*Navajo*)" and "Naming Events (*Papago*)." Jerome Rothenberg, *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 192–193.

62. Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Streets Events, and Fluxus People: A Conversation with Alison Knowles," *Visible Language* 26.1 (Winter 1992), 106.

63. Ibid, 105.

64. Alison Knowles and Bryan McHugh, *Seven Indian Moons* (New York: Emily Harvey Gallery, 1990).

65. Oral history interview with Alison Knowles, 2010 June 1–2, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-alison-knowles-15822.

towards her indigenous sources and the lived truth of the histories of colonization and dispossession, which A.I.M. rallied against while she was teaching in California.

How, then, are we to consider the role of Native American influences in a project like *The House of Dust* and update it with a consideration of the postcolonial? What does *House of Dust* look like if we question Benjamin Buchloh's premise that the work creates a universally decentered subject experience as a positive outcome?[66] It was, after all, in the name of the reduction of identity, an indigenous identity to be precise, that the abuses and horrors of residential school assimilation policies took place. When Buchloh notes that *The House of Dust* undoes the fixities of language, we must remember that behind the thunderbird keychain present in the photo of *99 Red North Event* was a school system dedicated to the annihilation of language and culture. A house is not necessarily neutral, and the land on which *The House of Dust* was located is not desubjectivized from a colonial relation. When Knowles moved her project from its origin in New York to Burbank, she did so in a Westward journey that traced the path of American militaristic colonial conquest, land which the AIM reoccupied as stolen territory. Buchloh's position that the project creates a de-centered universal subject or desubjectivized position benefits solely the settler hegemony by negating difference and preexisting claims to the very ground which *The House of Dust* traversed and settled on temporarily.

Gathering outside the house at CalArts.
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

The inclusion of Mohawk artist Alan Michelson's series *Prophetstown* in conversation with *The House of Dust* at the James Gallery serves as a post-colonial rejoinder to Knowles's project. These literal houses of paper, constructed with archival ink and archival documents, are paper model sculptures based on buildings found in paintings and on historic structures. In the context of the current exhibition they ask on whose place the poem's houses are built? Who were the former inhabitants, and what is the history of the displacement of those peoples? *Home in the Wilderness* (2012) is based on a frontier family's log cabin in the 1847 Thomas Cole painting *Home in the Woods*. Printed on the sculpture are facsimiles of the 1809 Treaty of Fort Wayne, which, despite objections from the Native American nations involved, ceded some three million acres of Indian land to the U.S. The treaty document provides a critical commentary on the Hudson River School's imbrication in colonial efforts. The genre of American nineteenth-century landscape paintings now recognized as the means by which artists collaborated in presenting the American West as untouched land, ripe for the taking, emptied of its real indigenous inhabitants.

In contrast, the *Cherokee Phoenix Print Shop* (2012) is a monument to Native sovereignty and language. The Cherokee Nation was an autonomous, Southern Appalachian tribal nation who modernized as one of the "Civilized Tribes," adopting farming techniques, a written constitution, a judiciary, and printed their own bilingual (Cherokee/English) newspaper, *The Cherokee Phoenix*. Michelson's sculpture is based on the print shop that housed the newspaper's press, and its walls are covered by newsprint from 1831 protesting against the unauthorized Treaty of New Echota which is printed on the roof. Despite attempts by the Cherokee to remain in their homelands, the treaty engineered their forced removal from the Southeastern Woodlands to Indian Territory in modern-day Oklahoma. This removal, known as the Trail of Tears, was a brutal march in the winter of 1838 that witnessed the deaths of as many as 4,000 people. It was this event which the American Indian Movement referenced in their Trail of Broken Treaties caravan in 1972, which travelled Eastward across America in a reversal of the Westward march of the Cherokee and the expansion of the United States across North America. The bilingual language of *The Cherokee Phoenix* survives today, as does the Cherokee connection to their place, their homeland. Their sense of home is an experiential knowledge that is carried and embodied such that they are "of their home" despite being dispossessed of it—an experience shared by the many dislocated indigenous peoples of North America. Considering *The House of Dust* in light of colonial history proposes that home can be mobile without the complete unfixing of one's subject position.

PLAY SCULPTURES AND PUBLIC ART: ALISON KNOWLES' THE HOUSE OF DUST AND THE FAILURE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GILLIAN SNEED

In 1968 Fluxus artist Alison Knowles attempted to secure a site in New York City for a proposed public artwork that she described alternately as a "changing environment park," a "chance house," a "temporary play structure," and a "play sculpture."[67] The structure was a materialized interpretation of Knowles' digital poem *The House of Dust*, programmed by composer James Tenney in the FORTRAN IV computer system, and intended as an interactive

structure to "house" activities and performances that actively engaged the public.[68] While this early socially-engaged public art project would go on to enjoy a successful decade-long tenure on the campus of CalArts in Valencia, California, the structure's earliest iteration in New York was fraught with conflict and ostensible failure.[69] Even so, it represents an important precedent for the kinds of socially-engaged public art projects that have proliferated since the 1990s, and for this reason deserves close examination. An analysis of its material presence in New York also reveals several critical issues related to other socially-engaged public art projects, which I will outline through a comparison with a project that shares much in common, Thomas Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument* (2013).

Having received a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship for $7,000 in September 1968 to fund her proposed "Chance House," Knowles wanted to locate the project near her own home on West 22nd Street in Manhattan's Chelsea district.[70] In July of that year she had contacted the New York City Parks Department to propose placing the structure on an abandoned lot on the corner of 10th Avenue and West 22nd Street.[71] However the city was planning to repurpose the lot as a public playground, which it did the following November.[72] After it became clear that the favored site was not available, Knowles was able to secure another site for the work. She established contact with Henry Margulies, the General Manager of the nearby Penn South Housing Co-op, who, according to Knowles, "wanted to have an artwork on the land."[73] After several site visits, Knowles and Margulies agreed to place two *House* structures on a lawn on the co-op's premises located at 315 8th Avenue, facing 26th Street.[74]

Knowles was also helped in her endeavor by architect William N. Breger, the Chairman of the School of Architectural Design at Pratt Institute from 1946-1969, who was most well-known for his award-winning design for the undulating metallic façade of the TriBeCa Synagogue, which was completed in 1967.[75] Breger had trained at Harvard with former Bauhaus architect, Walter Gropius, and applied modernist sensibilities to his organic and curvilinear designs.[76] Around the time that Breger collaborated with Knowles, he was at the height of his career and reputation as an innovative New York architect. Breger helped Knowles to materialize

the smaller of the two proposed *House* structures with a wooden curved armature into which concrete was poured to serve as the outer shell.[77] He spent eight months assisting her in the development stages and was successful in getting the blueprints accepted by the New York City Department of Buildings to secure a permit to locate the work on Penn South's property.[78] On January 21, 1969, the "abstract rock-type play sculpture" was approved by the Penn South Board.[79]

In her Guggenheim grant application, Knowles explained that the structure would "be constantly in a state of flux" with "teams of people and individuals [working] … during the duration of the performance."[80] An article in the March 1969 issue of the Co-op's paper, *The Penn South News*, even proclaimed: "This promises to be a true Penn South happening!"[81] However, the actual structure that was eventually placed on the Penn South lawn turned out to be different from what was initially planned. While Knowles had originally intended to place two structures at Penn South, in the end, only one was realized.[82] She designed plaster models by hand, and the George Krier Company of Philadelphia cast the smaller of the two in fiberglass.[83] When it was finally installed in early October 1969, the oblong, "amoeba-shaped house" with a grayish color and a rough limestone texture, was poised like a mound on the grass, with a circular entrance at one end and a circular skylight on the roof at the other end.[84]

Knowles commissioned experimental composer and artist Max Neuhaus to create a sound piece for the interior of the structure, which turned on automatically when one entered the space and operated using thermal circuits sensitive to sunlight to transform heat into sound for those sitting inside.[85] The sound equipment was installed in the structure's interior within pink bubble "electric eyes" set into the wall, but at some point during the sculpture's first month at Penn South, a vandal gouged them out, rendering them non-functional.[86] Once the object was placed on the lawn, Knowles set about collecting objects made by children in local public school art classes and adhering them to its fiberglass surface. Their placement was predetermined by a computer program designed by Jef Raskin.[87] Describing this interactive element of the work, a March 1969 issue of the *Penn South News* announced: [The] finishing touches will be a joint effort for cooperators of all ages. […] All will be invited to place their special objects on the sculpture as a permanent decoration and thus actually take part in the making of this art object.[88]

In the end, only a few objects were added, and this process was never completed. Even so, Knowles' concept of a "play sculpture" was aligned with a broader interest in experimental playground designs (or "playscapes") in the 1960s and 1970s, influenced by new pedagogical models that were aimed at fostering children's creativity.[89] As early as the 1950s, artists began to create "play sculptures," objects that renounced traditional play equipment in favor of sculpture for creative use by children.[90] According to curator and city planner Gabriela Burkhalter, the 1960s was a period of "autonomy and do-it-yourself parents, [in which] children and neighborhood groups began to take charge of playgrounds

66. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Book of the Future: Alison Knowles's *The House of Dust*," in *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts*, eds. Hannah Higgins and Douglas Kahn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
67. Alison Knowles, "The Changing Environment Park or the Chance House Performance," undated (ca. 1968), Alison Knowles Archives.

68. "The House of Dust" was a digital poem composed by Knowles and programmed in FORTRAN by Tenney, processed by a mainframe computer at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. FORTRAN was the acronym (for "FORmula TRANslating" system) for an IBM computer program invented in 1957, which had been used previously for numerical weather prediction, finite element analysis, and fluid dynamics. The repeated refrain of Knowles' poem read: "A house of…" followed by the materials, locations, lighting, and inhabitants of the imagined house in a series of repeatable quatrains. In 1968, Knowles won a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship to transform one quatrain of the original electronic poem into a large outdoor sculpture, which eventually became the structure that was situated at Penn South. It read: "A House of Plastic / In a Metropolis / Using Natural Light / Inhabited by People from all Walks of Life." Nicole L. Woods, "Object/Poems: Alison Knowles's Feminist Archite(x)ture," *X-TRA* 15, no. 1 (2012), 15–16. Available via http://x-traonline.org/article/objectpoems-alison-knowless-feminist-architexure/.
69. Alison Knowles referred to the *House of Dust* project as "performance and intermedia" with "participation as an element." Alison Knowles, in conversation with Charles Morrow, "A Dialogue: The House of Dust," *New Wilderness Letter* 2, no. 8 (Spring 1980), 22.
70. After New York, two *House of Dust* structures were transported to the campus of CalArts, in Valencia, C.A., where they remained throughout the 1970s, and where "they had a very fine existence … [on] an acre of green meadow and a host of events centered there." Alison Knowles, in conversation with Charles Morrow, 24.
71. Alison Knowles, letter to Doris Freedman, July 8, 1968, Alison Knowles Archives.
72. The city acquired the neglected property on the corner of 10th Avenue and West 22nd Street in 1965 for the purposes of constructing a public park. The playground opened on November 22, 1968, and was named the Clement Clarke Moore Park in 1969. "Clement Clarke Moore Park," NYC Parks Website. https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/clement-clarke-moore-park/history.
73. Located in Chelsea between 8th and 9th Avenues and West 23rd and 29th Streets, and funded by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), Penn South (also known as ILGWU Cooperative Houses or the Mutual Redevelopment Houses) was constructed between 1957 and 1962 as a limited-equity cooperative intended to provide affordable housing for garment workers and other low-to-moderate income New Yorkers. Construction began in 1957, and the 1962 dedication ceremony was attended by Eleanor Roosevelt, Nelson A. Rockefeller, ILGWU President David Dubinsky, Robert Moses, and John F. Kennedy. To this day, Penn South survives as an affordable housing option with prices at well below market rate. See Sarah Rodriguez, "Penn South: 50 Years of Affordable Housing," *Highlights*, ILGWU Cooperative Housing, The Kheel Center ILGWU Collection, Cornell University ILR School, http://ilgwu.ilr.cornell.edu/announcements/oneLongAnnouncementFromDB.html?announcementID=16.
74. Margulies confirms Block 749, lot #1, and states that is at 315 8th Avenue, facing 26th Street. Henry Margulies, letter to John T. O'Neill, Commissioner of the Buildings Department of New York, April 23, 1969. This address conflicts with the address given in some of the documents in Knowles' archives, but is the address I adopt as it appears in the official application forms dated May 6, 1969.
75. Prior to his death in 1967, Knowles' father, Edwin B. Knowles, former professor of English and Dean of the School of General Studies at Pratt Institute, had introduced his daughter to Breger. See "William N. Breger, Architect, Educator" *Prabook*, http://prabook.org/web/person-view.html?profileId=605510; and "Dr. E. B. Knowles," *The East Hampton Star*, Obituaries, May 25, 1967: 2.
76. Breger was a specialist in designing healthcare facilities, as well as the unrealized, helix-shaped Daitch-Shopwell Supermarket, that he was commissioned to build in 1959. David W. Dunlap, "Architect Once Envisioned a Guggenheim of Groceries," *New York Times*, March 11, 2015, http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/architect-once-envisioned-a-guggenheim-of-groceries/?_r=0.

77. On the architectural plans, Breger is credited as "architect" and Knowles as "designer." Plans, Alison Knowles Archives.
78. Part of the problem was that it lacked a clear designation. Knowles states: "The whole previous year I'd been struggling with the Building Department. They gave it a terrible time because it lacked a category. […] It wasn't open enough to be a sculpture. They arrived at a new category." Alison Knowles, in conversation with Charles Morrow, 16.
79. "Bldg. 4 Petitions Against Sculpture," *Penn South News* 2, no. 6 (May 1969).
80. Alison Knowles, "The Changing Environment Park or the Chance House Performance," undated (ca. 1968). Alison Knowles Archives.
81. Ibid.
82. Two structures were eventually placed on the CalArts campus.
83. Alison Knowles, "The House of Dust: A Chronicle," *New Wilderness Letter* 2, no. 8 (Spring 1980), 17.
84. Oral history interview with Alison Knowles, 2010 June 1–2, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-alison-knowles-15822. Knowles also describes the skylight: "There was an area in the back under the skylight (one can view the moon) where conceivably one could hide." Knowles, "The House of Dust: A Chronicle," 21.
85. Knowles, "The House of Dust: A Chronicle," 17. Although Knowles does not state this, resident Gladys Washburn explains that the sound turned on when one entered the space and sounded like "soft music." Gladys Washburn, interview with the author, New York City, May 20, 2016.
86. *Chelsea Clinton News*, October 23, 1969: 3.
87. Knowles, "The House of Dust: A Chronicle," 18. Resident Gladys Washburn states that the piece was "unfinished." Gladys Washburn, interview with the author, New York City, May 20, 2016. See also description of the piece from *Chelsea Clinton News*, Ibid.
88. "Play Sculpture Approved; Other Recreation Plans Set," *Penn South News* 2, no. 5 (March 1969).
89. Allison Meier, "The Forgotten Artistic Playgrounds of the 20th Century," *Hyperallergic*, May 6, 2016, http://hyperallergic.com/295172/the-forgotten-artistic-playgrounds-of-the-20th-century.
90. Marie Warsh, email correspondence with the author, June 1, 2016.

A HOUSE OF WOOD
AMONG SMALL HILLS
USING ELECTRICITY
INHABITED BY LITTLE BOYS
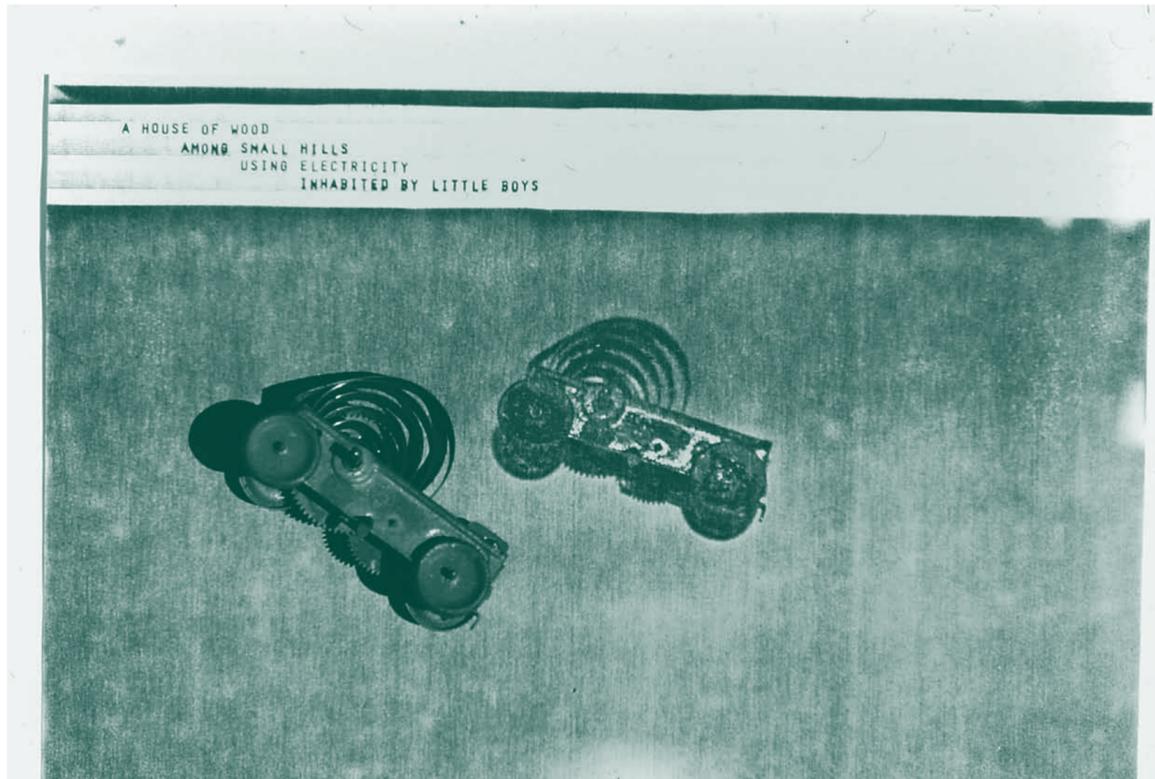
Alison Knowles, *The House of Dust* (poem with gift objects).
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

themselves."[91] The result was an increased interest in interactive abstract structures and playground designs in New York City; some of these were actually realized on public playgrounds and the grounds of housing projects.[92] Hence, "abstract playground sculptures fit the mood of the age,"[93] and Knowles' interest in placing a play sculpture on the grounds of a housing complex can be considered part of the wider zeitgeist of interest in experimental playscapes and sculptures of the time.[94]

Despite the seeming benevolence of these types of experimental play structures, a faction of Penn South residents did not embrace Knowles' piece. *The Penn South News* charted the logistics of the work's placement on the property and the growing resistance to it by a group of cooperators in Building 4 overlooking the lawn where it was to be placed in the spring and summer leading up to its installation in early October 1969.[95] (Fig. 1) In March, the publication announced that a "free-form molded play sculpture will shortly be erected;" "play sculpture" was "thoroughly discussed by the Board of Directors and the Recreation Committee" and was approved, although some members of the Board voted against the plan "perhaps reflecting opposition by some Building 4 cooperators who are concerned that they might be disturbed by the noise."[96] In May, another *Penn South News* article informed readers that a petition signed by 125 cooperators from Building 4 opposed the construction of the play sculpture and the Board thus agreed that the Recreation Sub-Committee would meet with the House Committee members of Building 4. That meeting was held on May 20th, and Margulies and Knowles were also present to try to persuade Building 4 cooperators of their position. However, according to Knowles, they were intractable.[97]

The cooperators' petition against the piece underscored noise concerns, weakened security (that it "might lend itself to hooliganism during the late evening hours"), and that the play structure would not be used by children because of its remote location.[98] At the May 20th meeting, the Recreation Sub-Committee was asked to consider possible alternate sites for the sculpture to be placed, however it appears that no suitable alternate site was determined, and the sculpture was slated for installation. Henry Margulies, the Co-op Manager and Knowles' ally, died unexpectedly of a heart attack on September 10, 1969, and the sculpture was installed a few weeks later in early October.[99] On October 2, Knowles had a

personal letter delivered to residents in Building 4, stating:

It is my pleasure to announce the arrival of *The House of Dust* sculpture project in the COOP… This plot on 26th street is ideal and was my first choice. For those of you who are not pleased to have the sculptures on this plot I'm happy to say they can be moved without much trouble. We will find a new location within the COOP, and move them. Eventually they will be moved out altogether… It is you people in House 4 who have the greatest opportunity to enjoy this work. And I hope you will.[100]

Following its installation, the October issue of the *Penn South News* stated, "There is a new landmark on West 26th Street. A play sculpture was placed there this month, as originally planned, pending final action on a site by the Board of Directors."[101] While the Board had tasked the Recreation Sub-Committee to survey the grounds for a more appropriate site, the "first part of the play sculpture was ready for delivery before the survey was completed" and according to the article was "already being used by many children."[102] While Knowles has suggested that opposition followed directly after Margulies' death, the records indicate that the opposition had been strong from the start and that Margulies had passed away well in advance of the sculpture's arrival.[103]

On October 7, one resident in particular, the apparent leader of the Building 4 opposition group, a Mrs. Sidney M. Levey of Apt. 5-J in Building 4 wrote a letter to the management stating: "May I suggest for <u>SAFETY REASONS</u> this be removed… It is a refuge and hiding place for muggers and other unsavory characters who are using it as a springboard for molesting tenants of our building who have occasion to come home after dark."[104] On October 14, the Board of Directors met again and rescinded their support of the work, asking Knowles to remove it from Penn South's grounds since they could not find any other location for it without opposition.[105] Two days later, on the evening of Thursday, October 16, the object was torched.[106] A *Chelsea Clinton News* article dated October 23 stated that firemen found evidence of arson.[107] Knowles was called by police on the night of the fire, and was anonymously sent color photographs of the blaze, presumably taken by someone in Building 4, a few days later. On October 22, she had the burnt object collected and transported to Philadelphia for repairs.[108]

According to art historian Nicole Woods, Knowles's intention to promote interactivity and participation was not achieved until the structures arrived on the CalArts campus, where they were shipped after the fire and enjoyed a relatively successful tenure as interactive artworks. However, according to first-hand testimony, despite its limited run, *The House of Dust* structure did engender participation at Penn South, which is ironically what

may have contributed to its unpopularity among residents.[109] During its brief two weeks at Penn South, one resident, a photographer and filmmaker named Gladys Washburn of Building 3, was curious enough about the project to film the work and interview Knowles about it for a documentary film that she never finished.[110]

Washburn states that she witnessed several young people and children engaging with the work. On one occasion she came across a young man lounging inside listening to Neuhaus' sound piece. "He was nesting; it was so beautiful," she explains.[111] According to Washburn, the object attracted local youths from the nearby housing projects, many of them people of color, which she suggests may have been the real reason that some Penn South residents were so concerned about "muggers."[112] Washburn also points out that the cooperators at Penn South expect to be consulted on all decisions made regarding the property, and the fact that the decision to accept the piece had been approved by the Board without involving residents from the beginning probably led to resentment on the part of the cooperators of Building 4.[113] From the way the situation was handled, Washburn believes Knowles "should have known it was going to be destroyed."[114]

In fact, public art projects have a history of provoking tensions with the members of the local communities where they are located, as confirmed by Harriet Senie and Miwon Kwon in their discussions of the controversy and eventual removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981-1989).[115] The complaints that were lodged against *Tilted Arc* were similar to those directed at *The House of Dust* at Penn South: namely that it was imposed on the community without prior consultation, that it invited vandalism, and that it provided a haven for criminals.[116] Both works were also criticized aesthetically.[117] The type of public art that Knowles attempted to realize in the 1960s with *The House of Dust* was rather unusual. According to Senie and Kwon, what was more common during that period was what has been referred to as "plop art"—large abstract sculptures in urban plazas in front of corporate buildings.[118] Notably, Knowles seems to have anticipated a kind of public art that Kwon refers to as "community collaborations," which Kwon argues did not even emerge until the late 1980s and 1990s.[119] She also points out that there is a demand on public art to demonstrate the artist's capacity to "become one with the community" and to "empower" audiences.[120] However, these requirements are specious, she argues. She suggests that while complex, difficult, and even alienating, the potency of public art projects like *Tilted Arc*—and I would argue, of *The House of Dust* at Penn South—lies in their ability to "critically question rather than promote the fantasies of public space as a unified totality without conflicts or difference."[121]

91. Gabriela Burkhalter, *The Playground Project* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2016), in Meier.
92. Largely influenced by Isamu Noguchi's playground designs of the 1930s and 1940s (especially in his organic, modeled forms), designer Richard Dattner and landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg designed experimental playgrounds in New York City, for instance at the Jacob Riis Houses in the East Village and Carver Houses in Harlem. Meier, "The Forgotten Artistic Playgrounds of the 20th Century." See also the forthcoming book by Marie Warsh, *The Adventure-style Playgrounds in Central Park: History, Play, and Preservation* (Baton Rouge, L.A.: Louisiana State University Press, Fall 2017).
93. Gabriela Burkhalter, *The Playground Project,* quoted in Meier.
94. Marie Warsh, email correspondence with the author, June 1, 2016. Perhaps Knowles' interest in creating a play structure came about in part from having two children, twins Jessica and Hannah, who were five years old in 1969.
95. According to Knowles, the main opposition came from a group of Greek-American immigrants living in Building 4, who began to picket the structure on the lot where it was located. See Oral history interview with Alison Knowles.
96. "Play Sculpture Approved; Other Recreation Plans Set," *Penn South News* 2, no. 5 (March 1969).
97. Knowles states: "I tried once to go over there and talk to this group at the COOP. It was impossible, such rage! I decided to just go on with my work imbedding objects that I'd been collecting." Alison Knowles, in conversation with Charles Morrow, 21.
98. "Play Sculpture Site May be Changed" *Penn South News* 2, no. 7 (June 1969).
99. Margulies' *New York Times* obituary confirms the date of his death as September 10, 1969. See "Henry Margulies Housing Manager," Obituaries, *New York Times* (Sept. 11, 1969): 47. http://nyti.ms/29d8bTq.
It is important to highlight the date of Margulies' death because Knowles has consistently stated that he died after the sculpture was installed in October, when in actuality he died several weeks prior. See for instance her comments in *The New Wilderness Letter* (1980): "Henry Margulies died a week after its arrival, which triggered the attempted destruction of the house by fire." Alison Knowles, in conversation with Charles Morrow, 24. On one occasion, she implied that he died the day after the fire: "… I got a call that the House had been arsened [sic] … The following day Henry Margolies [sic] was seized with a heart attack and died." Alison Knowles, "adventures

of the house of dust," unpublished text, Alison Knowles archives.
100. Alison Knowles, letter to House 4, October 2, 1969. Alison Knowles Archives.
101. "Bldg. 4 Opposes Play Sculpture," *Penn South News* (October 1969).
102. Ibid.
103. See handwritten note by Alison Knowles on press clippings: "Oct. Penn South article, open opposition followed directly after Margulies death," Alison Knowles Archives.
104. Leah Levey, letter to Penn South Management, October 7, 1969. Alison Knowles Archives.
105. "Sculpture is Burned on Penn South Lawn," *Chelsea Clinton News*, October 23, 1969: 3.
106. Ominously, Knowles stated "there is no fire hazard" in her 1968 grant application. Alison Knowles, "the Changing Environment Park or the Chance House performance," undated (ca. 1968), Alison Knowles Archives.
107. According to Knowles and resident Gladys Washburn, who had filmed the object out of personal interest, the culprit was probably Penn South's Head Gardener. According to Knowles, residents of Building 4 bribed him to torch it but according to Washburn, he may have taken action on his own, as he "hated anything on his lawn." Gladys Washburn, interview with the author, New York City, May 20, 2016. Washburn notes that someone in Building 4 had given her their film recording of the fire, but she has since lost it. Knowles also notes that an anonymous source mailed color photographs of the fire to her. See Nicole Woods, "Objects / Poems: Alison Knowles' Feminist Archite(x)ture" *X-TRA* 15, no. 1 (2012): 37.
108. "Fire Damages Play Sculpture" *Penn South News* (November 1969).

109. Woods, 18.
110. According to Washburn, Knowles was not friendly to her throughout the filming process. At one point, Knowles informed her that "her husband" did not like how Washburn was making the film. Feeling that the artist was not interested in her film, she believes she probably discarded of it as well as the photographs of the fire another resident had given her. Author interview with Washburn, New York City, May 20, 2016.
111. Ibid.
112. Gladys Washburn, telephone conversation with the author, May 24, 2016.
113. Ibid.
114. Gladys Washburn, interview with the author, New York City, May 20, 2016.
115. See Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002); and Harriet Senie, *The Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).
116. Kwon, 81, 91; and Senie, 14, 30, 47–48.
117. Knowles has suggested that it was the *House of Dust*'s visual appearance that may have perturbed the residents of Building 4. "Alison Knowles, in conversation with Charles Morrow: 21; see also Senie, 45.
118. Kwon, 60; Senie, 5.
119. Kwon, 60.
120. Kwon, 95, 97.
121. Ibid., 79-80.
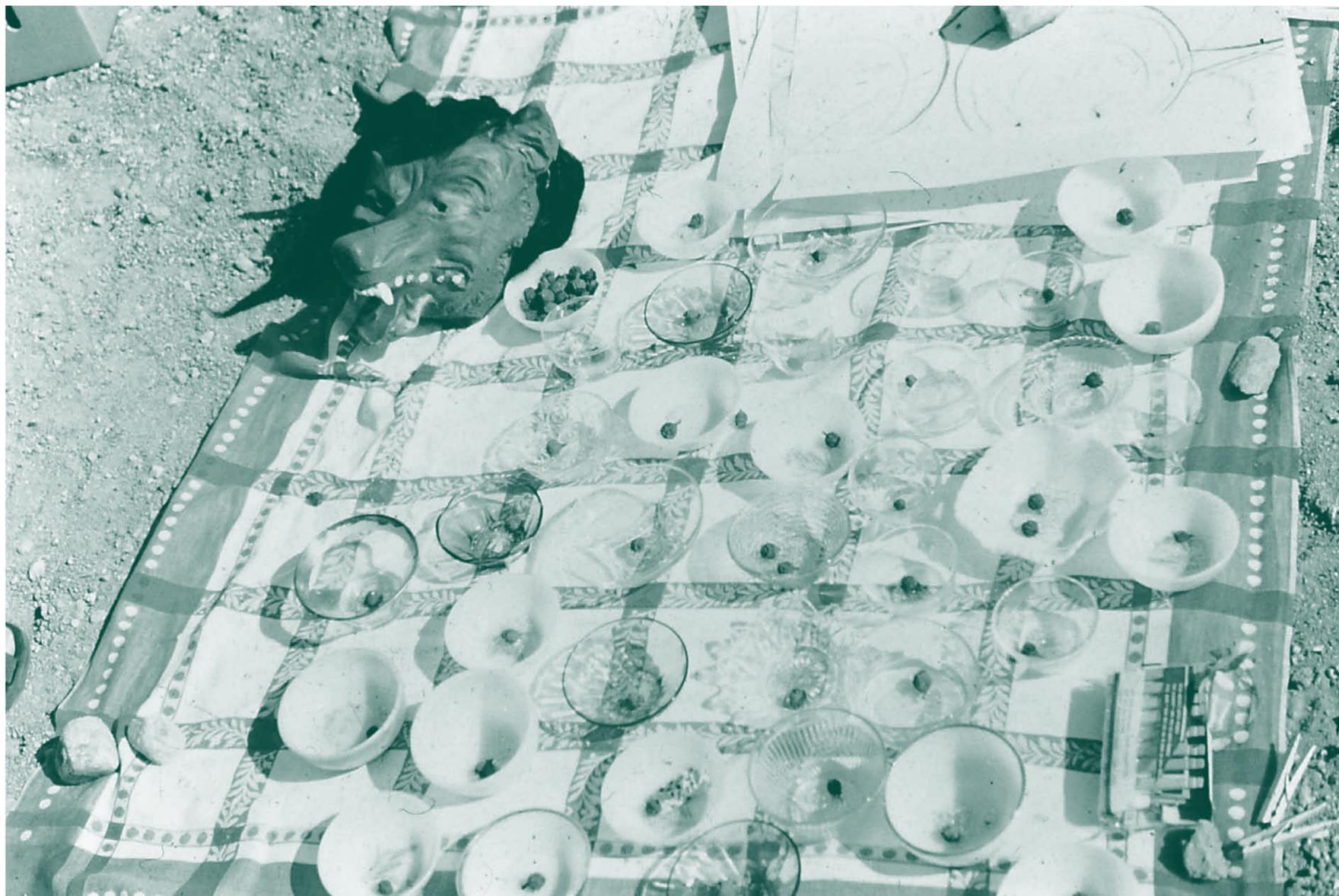
Alison Knowles, event at *The House of Dust*, CalArts. Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

The artistic antagonism Kwon alludes to here is paralleled in Claire Bishop's championing of participatory and socially-engaged art of the 1990s and 2000s that causes "discomfort and frustration … [as] crucial elements of the work's aesthetic impact."[122] In particular, she praises contemporary Swiss artist, Thomas Hirschhorn's *Monuments* series, rambling make-shift structure/monuments dedicated to different European philosophers (including Spinoza, Bataille, Delueze, and Gramsci) and intended to provide platforms for community involvement and engagement, often in low-income or immigrant communities.[123] In many ways, Knowles' *The House of Dust* at Penn South could be seen as a precedent of Hirschhorn's *Monuments* series, the most recent of which, *Gramsci Monument,* was installed in the summer of 2013 at the Forest Housing Project in the Bronx.[124] While the *Monuments* series—particularly its earlier iterations in Avignon, France (*Deleuze Monument*, 2000), and Kassel, Germany (*Bataille Monument*, 2002)—has been denounced

residents in this way.[129] Lastly, both artists made a commitment to being on-site throughout the duration of the work's tenure to engage with visitors, though it is unclear if Knowles actually did this.[130]

Ultimately, the outcome of these two similar projects was very different. Despite some opposition, Hirschhorn's project was largely seen as a success, especially in comparison with previous iterations in Europe that had resulted in violence and vandalism, while Knowles' was viewed as a failure.[131] Yet, I would like to suggest an alternate reading of the work. Today, in light of the history of socially-engaged public art that has arisen in the forty-plus years since Knowles' pioneering work, perhaps the *House of Dust* at Penn South was not a complete flop, despite some residents' resistance to it. For example, by all accounts, local children and youths did engage with the object, though to what extent is unknown.
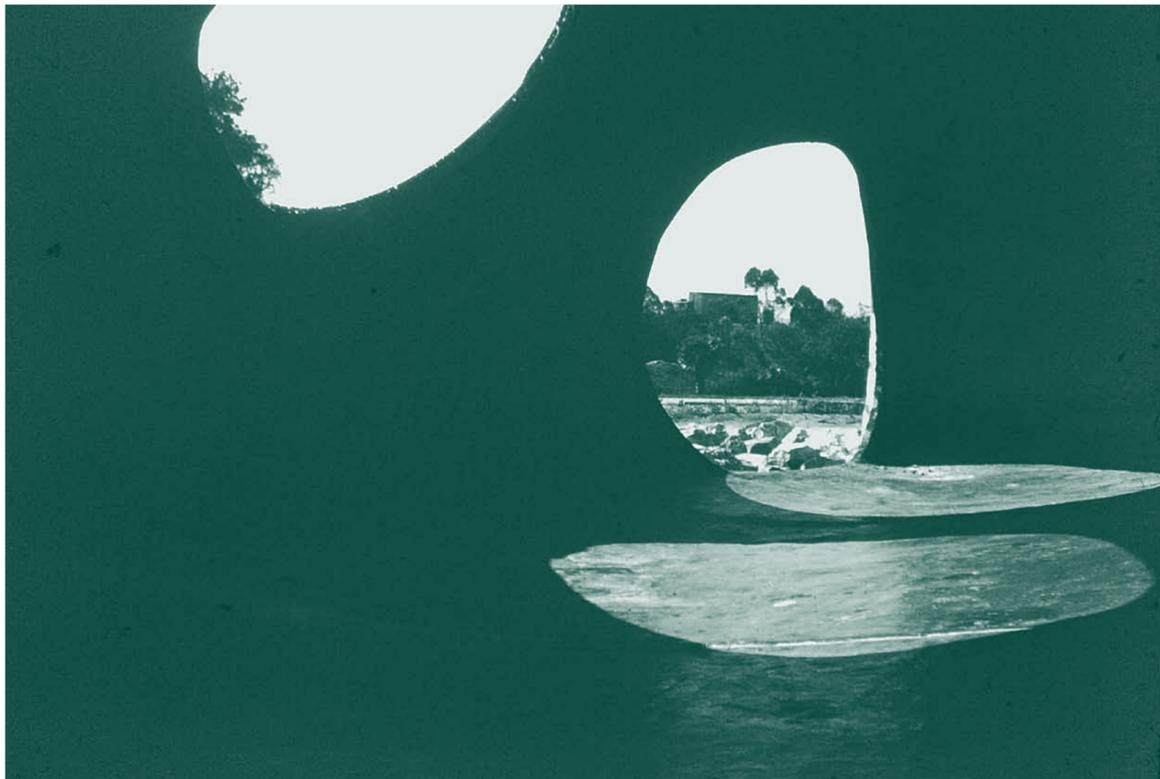
Alison Knowles, *The House of Dust*, 1970.
Image courtesy of Alison Knowles and James Fuentes, NY.

as "inappropriate and patronizing," Bishop defends Hirschhorn's "rougher, more disruptive approach" and refusal to embrace the "feel good" social harmony of relational aesthetics, in order to expose the relational antagonism present in the social sphere.[125]

In any case, there are some very strong parallels between Knowles's *The House of Dust* at Penn South and Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument*. First, both were socially-engaged public art structures situated on the grounds of large housing complexes, though inhabited by different communities. Penn South is a middle-class cooperative populated by largely white and Jewish residents, and the Forest Houses is a low-income housing project with a largely Black and Hispanic population. Next, both projects shared in the fraught dynamics of an elitist and privileged outsider (an artist!) swooping in to make work in communities that were not their own, though the gender, class, and race issues they raised varied in the two cases. Both artists attempted community outreach, and both also spent a long time laying the groundwork for the installation of their respective pieces.[126] Knowles and Hirschhorn also collaborated with architects to realize their plans and relied on an on-site point person to liaise with the community. In Knowles' case, this was Henry Margulies, while in Hirschhorn's case it was Erik Farmer, President of the Forest Houses Resident Association.[127]

However, the projects diverge in their relationships to the residents of their respective sites. While Hirschhorn was able to create close relationships with locals in his project by hiring them to construct and staff the structure throughout its three-month run, Knowles, despite her intentions, had largely failed to engage residents in the planning and constructing phases of hers. After "plopping" the object in their backyard, residents of Penn South were expected to "engage with it"[128] without having any involvement in the process along the way.[128] In fact, while both artists received institutional support for their projects—Knowles was awarded the aforementioned Guggenheim grant, while Hirschhorn received a commission from Dia Art Foundation—the latter was able to temporarily employ almost fifty residents of the Forest Houses to construct, operate, and later dismantle the monument, while the former lacked the financial resources that would have engaged

As Kwon argues, public art should not "reassure the viewer with an easily shared idea," but rather should "unsettle perceptions."[132] While the members of the Forest Houses community very likely felt "affirmatively pictured and validated" by the *Gramsci Monument*, Hirschhorn seemed to avoid trying to "empower" them in favor of simply engaging them in discourse.[133] Knowles' project lacked the on-the-ground organization, cooperation, and integration of the local community that Hirschhorn achieved with the *Gramsci Monument,* after having honed his operation over many years. Yet, while Knowles may have been aiming to engender "identificatory unity" that "affirm[s] rather than disturb[s] the viewer's sense of self," in the end she achieved something much more akin to the antagonism that Hirschhorn's project achieved: an artwork that resisted any monolithic sense of unity in favor of varied experiences that could lead to friction and expression of opinions about shared outdoor space.[134] Perhaps, in the end, it wasn't the friction that was the un-doing of Knowles' *The House of Dust* at Penn South, but rather the need for the artist to engage with the residents in a sustained conversation begun well before the art object is placed at the site.

122. Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents," *Artforum* 44, no. 6 (February 2006): 181. Similarly, in discussing *Tilted Arc,* Kwon writes that Serra imagined the site of his public artwork as a social and political construct, and he created an "antagonistic [relationship between art work and its site] … in which art work performs a proactive interrogation." Kwon, 74.
123. See Luisa Valle, "Object Lesson: Thomas Hirschhorn's *Gramsci Monument* Negotiating Monumentality with Instability and Everyday Life," *Buildings and Landscapes* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2015), 18–35; and *Thomas Hirschhorn: Gramsci Monument* (London: Dia Art Foundation, 2015).
124. Composed of precarious materials like plywood and duct tape, the makeshift structure contained a newspaper office, a library, a radio station, a computer room, a "museum," a snack bar, a pool, an arts and crafts classroom, and a stage, all intended for use by and for local residents and "outsiders" alike, especially for discourse related to Gramsci's ideas. The Forest Houses is a federally-funded, low-income housing project, a "tower-in-the-park" Corbusier-inspired complex, completed in 1956 (one year before construction was started on Penn South). It is located in the Morrisania section of the Bronx, considered one of the poorest areas of the city. See Valle, 18–19, 22–23.
125. Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 77, 79.
126. Knowles spent one year getting the correct permissions from the New York City Department of Buildings and coordinating with architect William N. Breger and Building Manager Henry Margulies. Hirschhorn spent two years doing fieldwork study and visiting 46 different public housing sites and meeting with their residents. Valle, 20.
127. Knowles collaborated with Breger, and Hirschhorn worked with Spivak Architects. Ibid.
128. Hirschhorn is well known for the long planning process involved in all of his *Monuments* series. He has lengthy periods of community engagement at all levels "Discussions with the community not only helped to determine the location for the *Gramsci Monument* but also helped to develop its structure." Hirschhorn claims "unshared authorship" of his monuments (rather than collective authorship), but also acknowledges that he is not the only author. Ibid., 20, 26.

129. Knowles also often refers to "free labor" in her applications and descriptions. Ibid., 20.
130. Hirschhorn maintained a daily presence at the *Gramsci Monument* and was constantly engaged with locals and visitors. Ibid., 26. It is unclear how often Knowles was on-site during the two week run of her sculpture at Penn South, though it was clearly a part of her original intentions. In her grant application, she wrote: "I will attend the site daily during the duration of the performance…." Alison Knowles, "the Changing Environment Park or the Chance House performance," undated (ca. 1968), Alison Knowles Archives.
131. For instance, at the *Deleuze Monument* (2000) in Avignon, computers were stolen and a visitor was violently attacked. See Anna Dezeuze, *Thomas Hirschhorn: Deleuze Monument* (London: Afterall Books, 2014), 18–19. The only major controversy to arise at the *Gramsci Monument* was that some Latino residents felt that the construction jobs were given disproportionately to African Americans. Valle, 28–29.
132. Kwon, 96.
133. Ibid., 95.
134. Ibid., 97.

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ALEXANDER ALBERRO, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY; EMILY APTER, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY; DAVID JOSELIT, THE GRADUATE CENTER, CUNY; JULIA ROBINSON, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY; PETER TRACEY CONNOR, BARNARD COLLEGE; SÉBASTIEN PLUOT, ART BY TRANSLATION ESBA TALM; BRIAN O'KEEFFE, BARNARD COLLEGE.

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5PM > BOOK LAUNCH
ART BY TELEPHONE RECALLED, ED. MIX.
A TRANSLATION FROM ONE LANGUAGE TO ANOTHER,
ED. LES PRESSES DU RÉEL .
COMMAND -X / INSTRUMENTALIZED,
THE VINYL LP BY NICHOLAS KNIGHT.

6PM > MARK GEFFRIAUD, *TOAST*

7PM > A CONSTRUCTED WORLD, *HOW TO EXPLAIN CONTEMPORARY ART TO LIVE EELS*

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