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GREENWICH VILLAGE 1963

Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body

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In an era of much-touted suburban explosion and urban decay, a group of intellectuals and artists in the heterotopia of Greenwich Village blissfully lived as if the city were already recuperated. As they formed cooperatives and collectives to produce and distribute their work, they also lived as if the growing specter of American bureaucracy had been exorcised. The culture—including the arts—they made was intended for a small-scale community: integrated with daily life, incorporating both work and play, blurring distinctions between participant and observer. But since they had staked out their neighborhood in the Greenwich Village bohemia, with themselves as avant-gardists dedicated to overturning traditions, in making their communal art they had to reinvent community.

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The Reinvention of Community

The Breakdown of the Family

In Rosalyn Drexler's play *Home Movies* the father is missing and presumed dead, and the family receives its condolence callers.[1] Mother and daughter cheerfully sing of their hatred for one another; the imperious yet ribald mother, the beautiful black maid, and the homely virgin daughter all compete for the sexual favors of the male visitors, from the father's homosexual lover to an oversexed delivery man. A nun and a priest sit in the kitchen—flirting, catching cockroaches, and praising the domesticity that they do not seem to understand simply does not operate here. In the end, after the father returns, "normal" life resumes: everyone sends out for candy, and the mother and father go to bed—to wrestle. The priest's name is Father Shenanagan; the family's name is Verdun. In this absurdist burlesque, first

performed at the Judson Memorial Church in Greenwich Village, not only is the church a laughingstock; the family is a violent battlefield.

In David Starkweather's play *You May Go Home Again,* "a domestic Noh in one act," the family is a group of dazed automatons, mouthing greeting card platitudes.[2] The daughter dreams about her forthcoming marriage; the mother runs around on all fours like a dog and recounts how she once had another daughter who got married but was eaten alive by her children; the son's baby, who looks like Ben Franklin, pukes and squirms. "David," the prodigal gay son, returns in the guise of an executioner to kill his family, but he discovers that he loves them.

In Lanford Wilson's *Home Free!,* the family consists of an incestuous brother and sister who can neither grow up nor marry to legitimize their baby. They fear their landlady and their fishmonger; in crisis, they cannot even ask their neighbors for help.[3] And in Kenneth Brown's *The Brig,* sadistic marine officers create a twisted parody of home life, calling prisoners their "children" and the prison their "home."[4]

There is an epidemic rampant in the plays of Off-Off-Broadway and in the other avant-garde performances of the early 1960s. The family is breaking down, and with it, church and community. This breakdown of the family was historical fact, for despite the official ideology of "Mom-ism" in the 1950s, increasing numbers of older women and young people were leaving the household to live independently, and the divorce rate was rising. This was an era when more white middle-class American women were married, for more of their lives, than ever before or since, and yet the suburbanization and automation of the middle-class household, which had promised domestic bliss, seemed to backfire by turning women into isolated, unpaid, full-time domestic workers.[5] Sensing the disruption of domesticity brought on by changing gender roles during World War II, in the late Forties mainstream postwar America had blamed various symptoms—sexual "deviance," feminist politics, and even demands for child care—on a communist plot to undermine the American family.[6] But by 1963 it was clear that the breakdown of the family was a sociopolitical shift internal to American postwar economics and demographics. Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique,* published in 1963, unmistakably documented the increasing dissatisfaction that middle-class white women felt with their supposedly privileged role as housewives, a trend that had been quietly observed in the popular media for several years.[7]

There was a conflicting message in popular culture about the state of the family. While television purveyed wholesome images of the All-American suburban family in *The Donna Reed Show, Leave It to Beaver,* and other

prime-time favorites, other works of popular culture, like John Frankenheimer's 1962 film *The Manchurian Candidate* and Edward Albee's Broadway hit *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* leaked the news, among other American ills, of the dismal failure of "Mom-ism."

The avant-garde, however, not only documented the breakdown of the nuclear family in its critique of private life. Sometimes, as in *You May Go Home Again,* it accepted alienation from the family with bittersweet melancholy. Sometimes, as in Claes Oldenburg's *Nekropolis II,* it offered mock compensation for the modern splintering of family life. Al Hansen, himself a Happenings-maker, wrote about this Oldenburg Happening, where people ate in slow motion while a Victrola in the bathroom played Hawaiian music: "All was very still and quiet and the music was playing and this large group was sitting around the table like a family. In these modern times such a scene is sadly nostalgic because large families don't sit around tables any more. Each is in his own car driving all over the country."[8] There is a tongue-in-cheek tone in Hansen's statement that undercuts the lugubrious interpretation. "In these modern times" has an ironic, deprecating ring. And "driving all over the country" has a positive, upbeat tone that actually makes it sound far preferable to being part of the lamented large family sitting around a table.

Importantly, the avant-garde also supplied images of alternative communities that changed power relations, creating intimacy outside the family and valuing equality among members. In Yvonne Rainer's dance *We Shall Run,* a group of twelve adults—dancers and nondancers, in work clothes ranging from suits to sweatpants—runs steadily in shifting patterns that cause them to group and regroup for seven minutes to music by Berlioz.[9] There are no permanent leaders; every time someone seems to head the group for a time, the changing floor plan guarantees that a new facing will produce a new leader—from the back of the flock this time. And the temporary leaders are sometimes men, sometimes women; the large group is not factionalized, but harmoniously and with a purposeful mien constantly divides in random groups and then reunites. The image is one of a serious, even heroic, egalitarian collective.

Fluxus made collective work part of its definition. To join Fluxus was to be engaged constantly in group activities, from the concert by Fluxorchestra at Carnegie Hall to the Fluxus "boxes" containing objects made by different artists to the cooperatively produced newsletter *cc V TRE.* Indeed, when Fluxus members published the scores generating their "borderline art" performances, they created a community in which anyone could be a member.

A very different alternative is the eroticized antifamily in works as disparate as Ron Rice's films *Chumlum* and *The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man,* Jack Smith's film *Flaming Creatures,* and Carolee Schneemann's dance/performance *Meat Joy,* all of which feature, more or less literally, group sex. This not only flagrantly transgresses the sexual codes of the bourgeois family, but it suggests one way to open and extend the family—that most private of all social spheres—beyond the nuclear model of family-as-couple-cum-kids.

The rhetoric of community—the desire for community—is everywhere evident in the artworks and institutions of the Sixties avant-garde. This potentially nostalgic desire marks the group's affiliation with the modernist project of recuperating the loss of wholeness. But their resolutions were often subversive, proposing new social roles and institutions.

In common parlance, a community is usually understood as built out of families. But while community, and even a brand of domesticity, was often a desired value in the Sixties avant-garde, this notion was radically different from that of the bourgeois community, for here—foreshadowing the countercultural utopian communes of the later Sixties—"togetherness" was sought *outside of family life,* in groups coalescing around common work or common play. At times, even home life became collective—Ellen Stewart of La Mama, for instance, lived "with an assortment of people at any given time. . . . When visiting playwrights or acting troupes were in town, they also stayed at Stewart's apartment on East Fifth Street."[10] No matter how much Stewart—La Mama herself—mothered her playwrights and other theatrical colleagues, her communal domicile was not at all stamped in the pattern of middle-class American family life. This alternative communalism linked the assertion of community to the politics of egalitarianism and liberation.

Perhaps the epitome of the alternative communal site was Andy Warhol's Factory, a loft he began renting in November 1963 to use as a studio for painting and shooting films. The Factory became a place where some Village people actually lived (Billy Linich, Gerard Malanga) but where many more went simply to hang out—to do drugs, listen to music, have sex, talk, and meet people. By the late Sixties it was famous as a fashionable scene. The Factory was both site and symbol of the alternative culture's disdain for the bourgeois ethic, from work to sex to control of consciousness—a sanctified space where leisure and pleasure reigned.

Where there were spouses and children in this world of the alternative family, they often were brought directly into the artwork, defying modern

mainstream gender and age divisions of labor—restoring in a new key preindustrial, rural patterns of family work. In Steve Paxton's outdoor dance *Afternoon,* Barbara Lloyd's baby was one of the dancers; Elaine Summers used her two-year-old son's drawing as a score for a dance. Simone (Forti) Whitman and Pat Oldenburg were both featured performers in their husbands' Happenings. This community was not yet the tribal commune of the late Sixties, although it is clearly a precursor to those social changes, and, along with the Beat opposition to family life, it helped instigate them.

The "Breakdown" of Community

The myth of the Puritan model of community—small-scale, egalitarian, and tightly bound by common threads of religion, work, and family—is crucial to the American sense of self, despite the fact that most Americans' roots lie elsewhere. In fact, that same village model can serve the prelapsarian nostalgia of almost every group of American immigrants. The historian Thomas Bender has argued that cyclically mourning the loss of communitas has shaped the rhetoric of American thought almost since the Mayflower arrived. But just how many times, he asks, can community have really withered away? Bender prefers to reconceptualize community, suggesting that it is not a static social form that is disappearing, but rather that new, dynamic, overlapping forms of small-scale networks have arisen; that people's lives have increasingly become mosaics combining both communal and more impersonal associations (gemeinschaft and gesellschaft, in standard social science terms).[11]

Yet the image of a lost paradisiacal traditional community, only recently demised, has persisted in the popular imagination and in the work of historians and social scientists as well. In thinking about ideals of community in the early Sixties, it is striking that, while the artists in Greenwich Village were celebrating their own vital sense of alternative commonwealth, a new wave of social scientists once again ritually lamented the disintegration of American community among the general population in the face of escalating urbanization (and suburbanization), industrialization, and bureaucratization. That is, communitas lost and regained had become a national obsession that permeated every stratum of the culture. But while social scientists mourned and analyzed its alleged passing, the avant-garde set about constructing its renascence.

One of those Sixties sociologists, Maurice Stein, unites these two arenas of culture when he calls twentieth-century Greenwich Village an oasis of gemeinschaft in the city. Despite questions about Stein's methods, his

The Eclipse of Community is illuminating because, especially in the chapter on bohemia, it encapsulates a view of both mainstream and subcultural America in the early Sixties that many artists and intellectuals, whether they read him or not, seem to have shared.[12] He concentrates on Greenwich Village in an earlier heyday, in the Twenties (as described by Caroline Ware in *Greenwich Village, 1920–1930*),[13] but for Stein, bohemia still promises relief from the standardization of middle-class, middlebrow America. The hipster, especially, intrigues him, for here "on the borderland between the worlds of adolescence, jazz, homosexuality, and the slum" lies a potential source for protesting mainstream complacency.[14]

The internal workings of community—or what was perceived, proclaimed, imagined, and enjoyed as community—within the Village can be seen in the way that artists produced their works, that is, the lively, often informal and unstable production and distribution networks that yielded so much of early Sixties art. This chapter will concentrate on exploring the communitarian basis and rhetoric of those networks.

The Community Reimagined

Were these artists and other Villagers struggling to form a community—and the artworks appropriate to it—as a compensation for the impending loss of small-town America, as the rhetoric (including much art) of the period often seems to suggest? Or did they gravitate to New York City's famous bohemia (as their predecessors in the Twenties had) in order to *escape* their hometowns—in flight from the stultifying atmosphere of the conservative communities of mid-America and in pursuit of cosmopolitan modernity—thereby hastening the breakdown of traditional ties? In other words, were they trying to transplant gemeinschaft to the city (à la the Fifties musical *Wonderful Town*), or did they willingly forsake the intimate pleasures of hometown gemeinschaft for the anonymity, freedom, and diversity of urban gesellschaft?

I want to argue that there is a third possibility: that they came to live and work in Greenwich Village exactly because it was possible to found an *alternative* community there. That is why, for all their appropriation of communitarian rhetoric, the artists' commonwealth was no ordinary community nostalgically reconstituted. For they were prompted to leave home (often a home in an actual small southern or midwestern town) not because the small towns were fading, but because small towns offered an unsatisfying brand of community—because there was, in fact, regardless of sociologists, no gemeinschaft at home. Or rather, because that hometown gemeinschaft was not all that it was cracked up to be—as Lanford Wilson's plays set in the Midwest (for example, *This Is the Rill Speaking*) attest. Unlike the utopian back-to-the-land communitarians of the later Sixties, and equally unlike the generation of Abstract Expressionists of the Fifties (who had moved out to the country to escape the city), their visions for the most part were not pastoral, but urban. These artists reinvented the village, but squarely in the city. For them, to find a utopian feeling of communitas was perhaps only possible in the city, in the forest of gesellschaft—with its system of relationships built on choice—that in fact creates gemeinschaft by defining it as its own opposite. Thus, it is not surprising that the conservative aspects of family and small-town gemeinschaft dropped out of the progressive vision of the community of Greenwich Village life. Here are the roots of postmodernism: in the revaluation and reworking of tradition, and in the aspiration to make "new" traditions—not in Harold Rosenberg's sense that modernism is a series or "tradition" of constant innovation, but in the opposite sense that shared customs should form art, even if it means inventing the customs.

The Alternative Community: Cooperatives and Cafés—The Public Domain of Art

One of the most important aspects of the constructed community for Villagers was the intense level of engagement in public life, from politics to the arts. Perhaps it was this value placed on active participation that pushed an expanded notion of performance in general and theater in particular to the forefront of Village cultural life. To create community seemed to demand the presence of a body politic, not only in the metaphoric meaning of a consensual community, but literally in the sense of a political body—a person rendered political by physically taking part in the life of the collective enterprise.

The construction of participatory democracy took several forms in Village artistic life. One was the style of the works, which gave spectators a powerful sense of direct involvement. Another was the more or less explicit political content in the art itself. A third was the festival, anthology, or other collective structure for presentation and distribution. A fourth was the series of cooperative, alternative institutions that turned artmaking itself into a community-building process with shared responsibility and the promise of local autonomy. And yet a fifth emerged in the informal friendship networks that percolated through and across the more formal associations, creating both social and artistic bonds, leading to collaborations and interdisciplinary genres, and building audiences.

THEATER

The most visible cooperative artistic venture of the early Sixties was the Off-Off-Broadway movement. In the Fifties, Off-Broadway had sprung up as an alternative to commercial theater (tracing its inspiration back to the Washington Square Players and Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village in the Twenties), but eventually it was beset with financial and artistic problems similar to those of mainstream theater. By the late Fifties it was clear that most of the theaters were simply producing yet more bourgeois traditional drama—plays by Europeans and by a previous generation of American writers—O'Neill, Williams, Miller. This was not, in other words, an outlet for young new American playwrights, except perhaps Edward Albee. It also was no longer an outlet for new methods of staging. And by 1960 Off-Broadway finances were almost as prohibitive to experimentalists as Broadway itself; the cost of mounting a nonmusical production was $12,000 to $15,000.[15] Still Off-Broadway ventures, many of them located in Greenwich Village, had created a precedent not only for serious theater, but for a communal attitude, often a deliberately amateur attitude toward theater production, that by the early Sixties, it seemed, needed to be revived.

The Living Theater, which had a season at the Cherry Lane Theater in 1951–52 and then held performances at The Loft, uptown at 100th Street and Broadway, was one Off-Broadway theater group that struggled to maintain its artistic standards, always in the face of financial hardship and confrontation with municipal authorities.[16] A season planned in a basement on Wooster Street in 1948 never opened, since the police charged that the theater was a front for a brothel. The Cherry Lane Theater was closed for violating fire regulations. Then The Loft was closed by the buildings department for overcrowding. When the Living Theater, with its stated threefold commitment to poet's theater, actor's theater, and community theater, finally moved into its last "permanent" quarters on Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue in 1959 (this building too would be closed, by the IRS, late in 1963), it served as an inspiration and a mother lode for the new Off-Off-Broadway movement—an alternative to the alternative now grown stale.

Julian Beck, a painter, and Judith Malina, an actress, both grew up in New York City; they met as teenagers in 1943. Married in 1948, Beck and Malina put on the first program by the Living Theater in their apartment on West End Avenue in August 1951. Initially, they saw as their mission the forming of a theater for a community of artists—providing a stage for

poets, artists, and actors to join in making collaborative works of nonnaturalistic theater. Jean Cocteau, the French artist who worked in a variety of media, was an early inspiration to them in the late Forties when they began to plan; they corresponded with him and produced his *Orpheus* at The Loft in 1954.

But by the end of the decade their concern with community had shifted from forming a community of artists to organizing, through art, in the larger community—rousing both actors and audience to political consciousness and action, in particular against the Bomb (as nuclear and atomic bombs were known) and for world peace. Throughout the Sixties the Living Theater would be a model for political theater groups internationally. Even within the Movement they were controversial for their anarchism. But their political dramaturgy was as much in the vanguard in the Sixties as their earlier work in the poets' theater had been in the Fifties.

In his introduction to *The Brig,* the last play produced by the Living Theater at their Fourteenth Street home, Beck describes their goals in 1959 when they chose the first repertory program for the new theater—which included Luigi Pirandello's *Tonight We Improvise,* William Carlos Williams's *Many Loves,* and Jack Gelber's *The Connection.* "These play-within-a-play devices arose out of a crying need on the part of the authors, and of us, to reach the audience, to awaken them from their passive slumber, to provoke them into attention, shock them if necessary, and, this is also important, to involve the actors with what was happening in the audience." Beck goes on very pointedly to invoke his notion of the ancient Greek model in which the polis reached its genuine, fullest expression through the theater. This, for him, is the ideal model of what a truly political, democratic, communal theater can be. "To aid the audience to become once more what it was destined to be when the first dramas formed themselves on the threshing floor: a congregation led by priests, a choral ecstasy of reading and response. . . . By bringing the play into the theater and mixing together spectator and performer, the intention was to equalize, unify, and bring everyone closer to life. Joining as opposed to separation."[17]

The Becks were pacifist anarchists, allied both artistically and politically to other anarchists like Paul Goodman, John Cage, and Jackson Mac Low. Their political views as well as their increasingly open attitude about theater practice led them to adopt unconventionally antihierarchical methods of working with their actors. Most acting studios, and even the ensembles of Off-Broadway, subscribed to the cult of authority assumed by the director since his rise in the art theaters of the late nineteenth century. Beck

describes Malina's unusually "free style of staging," begun in 1959 with Jack Gelber's play *The Connection*.[18] This was, for Beck, a political choice, a step toward democratizing the rehearsal and production process.

> She began to let the actors design their movements, creating a remarkable rehearsal atmosphere in which the company became more and more free to bring in its own ideas. Less and less puppetry, more and more the creative actor. The careful directing books we had used at the beginning were by now quite gone. She began to suggest rather than tell, and the company began to find a style that was not superimposed but rose out of their own sensitivities. The director was resigning from his authoritarian position. No more dictation.[19]

The Living Theater's productions, from Brecht to Goodman to Brown's *The Brig*, constituted a politically oriented attempt to change the world rather than merely to entertain it—"to involve or touch or engage the audience, not just show them something," as Beck put it. *The Connection* shoved the junkie's condition down the spectator's throat and suggested that the audience might willy-nilly be more involved than they admitted to themselves in the problems of other people's addictions. Beck boasted that "Almost fifty men fainted during the run of *The Connection*. . . . Always around the same point. The overdose." In *The Brig* the point was to make the audience come to feel the violence that was actually taking place on stage: "Let them hear the noise, let it cause them pain, let them feel the blows to the stomach . . . until there are no prisons anywhere," Beck wrote.[20] Thus, the Living Theater challenged its spectators to meditate on their moral obligations as social beings.

The plays themselves raised questions of the body politic. But also the Living Theater was politically oriented to community in that it hosted all sorts of other events. These ranged from poetry readings to dance concerts to film screenings to political meetings, especially for peace organizations—of which one, the New York Strike for Peace, was run by the Becks themselves. The Living Theater served as a town hall, not just for the community of artists, but for the larger community of Villagers. And the Living Theater's influence in the theater community reached much further than their own plays, since two of the most influential Off-Off-Broadway groups, the Open Theater and the Judson Poets' Theater, had former Living Theater members at their helms. In addition to these two direct progeny, many more groups followed the examples that the Living Theater set for experimenting with both artistic and social forms.

The Open Theater extended even more radically the cooperative nature

of ensemble theater-making that the Becks had initiated. Its director, Joseph Chaikin, described an epiphany that several Off-Off-Broadway theater people echo in various accounts of political awakening in the Sixties when Chaikin recounted how, cast as Gayly Gay in Brecht's *Man Is Man*, after three years with the Living Theater he realized that this acting, in these political plays, no longer felt like just a stepping-stone to bigger and better roles on Broadway. Rather, it was something profoundly fulfilling on its own terms—not just a job or a skill or a chance to succeed, but a spiritual and socially conscious engagement that, in fact, made him question his previous ambitions and ideas about success.[21]

In early 1963 Chaikin, at that time still a member of the Living Theater, was asked by a group of Nola Chilton's acting students to work with them. The first meeting of the Open Theater in February 1963 included seventeen actors and four writers.[22] The group, which at times included other playwrights, directors, musicians, and even critics, slowly worked its way through internal political battles and various, at first desultory, experiments with improvisation and other non-naturalistic acting techniques. In December 1963 it presented its first public performance—more a demonstration of exercises and skits than a play—at the Sheridan Square Playhouse.

From the start, the dilemma for the group was two-pronged: how to find a new theatrical method, on the one hand, and how to function as a democratic ensemble in realizing that method, on the other. At first, some members went so far as to draft a constitution for the group to ensure that no single member become a dictatorial leader. Although Chaikin quickly emerged as an (at first) unofficial leader, his approach to acting and to performing preserved the sense of the collective and, further, of the collective-within-the-community. This is clear from the group "sound and movement" exercises that effectively bonded the ensemble through physical interaction and collective creation.

By the mid-twentieth century, ensemble acting was nothing new; it had been the core of Stanislavsky's enterprise at the Moscow Art Theater at the turn of the century. And in the Fifties it had been the watchword of the early Off-Broadway movement. But for Chaikin the utopian ideal of the ensemble forming the life of the group both in and out of the performance was still crucial—and still unrealized in the theater as he knew it in the early Sixties. "I believe," Chaikin wrote, "that we are on our own in trying to expand and develop ourselves, but it is all in vain unless we collaborate together and pool for an ensemble."[23]

Geraldine Lust, who had been a coproducer of Jean Genet's *The Blacks*

at St. Marks Playhouse, was another director who joined the early Open Theater group. She was concerned even more specifically with the social function of the theater as a possible place to stake out a vanguard political position and wanted theater people to serve as leaders who actually propose, rather than merely reflect, community values:

> Among the themes we explored [was] the conviction that theater should be functioning at a point beyond that which the community has reached, although this is a reversal of the traditional relationship in which theater reflects the events around it; it seemed to us that our times were moving so swiftly that we could not afford to let the most effective voice be the tardy one. This led to an examination of what is community in the 1960s and what is leadership for it, and we wondered how it might be possible to create, through theater, ideas for a community.[24]

And the critic and playwright Arthur Sainer remembers that the sense of community overflowed the acting workshops into more general talk sessions. "We met, for instance, one Sunday afternoon after John Kennedy's assassination because we wanted in some way to share our feelings about the murder that had just taken place."[25]

The desire to work collectively is also clear (at least, as the history of the Open Theater has been written) in the way that writers, actors, musicians, and directors were integrated into the making of a piece, all contributing texts, images, and research without respect to the boundaries of their official capacities. Further, the sense of community was expressed in the informality of the initial demonstrations—at the group's loft, open free of charge to any spectator who happened to learn about them through the grapevine.[26]

The public showing began with a group warmup, "A Ritual Hello." This was a sound-and-movement exercise in which the communion of the group is set in place. The "game" was to pass from one to another an abstract action composed of sound and movement. As in a game of "Telephone," the sound and movement would be transformed with each communication. Importantly, each giving-and-receiving pair shared for a moment a single action, which is considered a common, nonverbal language. The "ritual" consolidated the group as an ensemble.[27] The program also included a short play by Jean Claude van Itallie, *Variations on a Clifford Odets Theme,* in which a naturalistic scene of a banal family was transformed when the actors began, through sound and movement, to act out the characters' feelings and fantasies.[28] That is, actors dismantled the standard neurotic theater family of the realistic theater. Another of van Itallie's plays on the program was *The Murdered Woman,* inspired by the story of Kitty Genovese, the New York woman who recently had been assaulted and killed while people in surrounding apartments ignored her cries for help.[29] From the start of its public performances, then, the Open Theater made the issue of community—of family and neighborhood—a crucial topic.

In October 1963 the Living Theater was closed by the IRS, and early in 1964 the Becks left New York with some members of the troupe for a European tour (which became a four-year, self-imposed exile). But Chaikin (and Peter Feldman, Lee Worley, and several other Open Theater workshop members who had simultaneously remained part of the Living Theater) stayed in New York to concentrate on bringing the Open Theater into public life. They saw as their role now the continuation and expansion of the political and social engagement into which the Becks had initiated them. But theirs was an engagement articulated specifically in the theater (rather than, for instance, in the peace movement)—by experimenting with the theater-making process and creating performance through the nonhierarchical, collaborative work of the "community" of the new ensemble: writer, actor, and director.

The other Off-Off-Broadway theater with a direct filial link to the Living Theater was the Judson Poets' Theater, an outgrowth of the Judson Memorial Church's arts program. Al Carmines was hired as assistant minister in 1961, and quickly he organized the Judson Poets' Theater with the help of Robert Nichols, a poet, playwright, and architect who had already produced some plays at the church. The first play that Nichols chose was *The Great American Desert* by the poet Joel Oppenheimer (a student of Charles Olson's and a younger member of the Black Mountain group). It was a contemporary satiric Western, peopled with the ghosts of American mythical heroes. The play immediately posed problems regarding obscenity. But the church decided from the first on a policy of noninterference and freedom from censorship. Oppenheimer asked Lawrence Kornfeld, who had been assistant director and general manager of the Living Theater from 1957 to 1961, to direct his play. Despite his initial reservations about working in a church setting because he thought it would be too Establishment-oriented, Kornfeld agreed. He remained to become the theater's resident director. *The Great American Desert* opened on November 18, 1961, on a double bill with Guillaume Apollinaire's Surrealist play *The Breasts of Tiresias;* the program's total budget was $37.50.[30]

The repertory that developed at the Judson Poets' Theater ranged from experiments by young poets to medieval mystery plays. In 1962, when Al

Carmines began to compose original music based on popular forms for some of the plays, JPT inaugurated the Off-Off-Broadway musical, which flowered fully in the 1963–64 season with *Home Movies* and *What Happened.*

If the Open Theater was a group of professional theater people engaged in community building by making an alternative professional (though noncommercial) theater together, the Judson Poets' Theater was a community theater in the sense that it was an outlet for local writers, it sought a neighborhood audience, it charged no admission fees, and its casts were a mix of professionals and local amateurs. The actors for *The Great American Desert* were poets, journalists, and blue-collar workers recruited, according to Kornfeld, from the Cedar Tavern, where Oppenheimer had first proposed that the director get involved in the project. The result was "a very nice, warm, sweet-tough tone," a direct, unpolished folk quality, stemming partly from the actors' lack of training but also from Kornfeld's precise direction that appealed to both audiences and critics. Jerry Tallmer noted: "The nice thing . . . is that it is not slickly professional. It has all the loose edges of high vitality and low budget." Carmines went so far as to define the communal nature of the Judson Poets' Theater for participants—both actors and spectators—as a new kind of religious communion, a modern ritual celebration.[31]

Yet despite its increasingly conscious role as an avant-garde "folk" theater, the community that the Judson Poets' Theater expressed was, admittedly, a self-contained and esoteric one. When Rosalyn Drexler's *Home Movies,* one of the triumphs of the JPT's 1963–64 season and the winner of two Obie awards,[32] moved to the Provincetown Playhouse (that is, from Off-Off-Broadway to Off-Broadway), the mainstream critics and audiences were completely bewildered.[33] Michael Smith, reviewing the transferred production, attributed its failure directly to its leaving the communal arena: "The performances are more evenly professional now, and some of them have become surer and better, but 'Home Movies' has lost its direct contact with the audience and has become less fun. One no longer feels a complicity in its swipes at conventional values. The open directness of the production faded when it stepped into the show-business arena; audience and actors are friendly peers in the hominess of Judson Church, but in the 'professional' theatre they are employers and employees."[34] The goal for Off-Broadway actors and productions had been to move up to Broadway. But for Off-Off-Broadway, graduating to Off-Broadway—leaving the alternative home and the alternative community—was a fate to be avoided, for it altered the relations of production, turning artists into alienated labor.

Joseph Cino opened Caffe Cino on Cornelia Street, off Bleecker west of Sixth Avenue, in December 1958 with the intention of running it simply as a coffeehouse, that is, a "social place" for poetry readings, art exhibitions, folksinging, and "general geniality."[35] As some of readings outgrew themselves, becoming more extended and dramatic in form, a theater sprouted in the tiny café, with its eight-by-eight-foot stage (at first just a cleared-out space, and later a platform) and its walls encrusted with memorabilia. Soon it was a gathering place where aspiring actors and playwrights could try out new material in what they describe as an extraordinarily permissive atmosphere, presided over by the ever-supportive Cino. Joe Cino's personal history is shrouded in mystery. Perhaps a former actor or dancer, he made the Caffe Cino his life until he committed suicide in 1967. A center for the gay underground, Caffe Cino sowed the ground for the blossoming of the gay theater movement of the Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties.

The performances at the Caffe Cino ranged from readings to scenes to full-scale (if small-scale) productions. There was no admission charge. A basket was passed around for contributions, which the actors shared. By 1963 there were two shows a night, at 9 and 11 P.M., and an additional 1 A.M. show on weekends. Although Cino made no bones about his leadership role ("I decide on everything that comes into the room," he wrote. "I talk to playwrights, I talk to directors. I work with people"),[36] he is remembered as a generous host, solicitous to his friends and guests. That the space was called a "room," rather than a theater, underscores the aura of domesticity that Cino created.

Caffe Cino has been mythologized more as a family than as a collective. As Albert Poland and Bruce Mailman describe it, this first Off-Off-Broadway theater was a haven of offbeat domesticity, compensation for—actually, an improvement on—home for deracinated downtown theater people (here, after all, unlike at home, one's "family" was always supportive and loving). "Caffe Cino was a wonderful place to work; it was warm, friendly, and personal. . . . Someone said [Joe Cino] was like Santa Claus—always a little pick-me-up—a hug for everyone. . . . He did not believe in the isolation of the artist."[37] The playwright Robert Heide, referring to Joe Cino as "a big Papa," recalls that he took struggling playwrights "under his wing" and regularly fed starving actors. "[Cino] felt that playwrights were bad children, easily spoiled by money, fame or too much attention. . . . Joe's dream for his playwrights was to buy a hotel (if he ever got the money, which he did not) and give each one a room with a typewriter and paper. He said he would personally lock them in their prospective cubicles for so many hours a day so that they could just write."[38]

Doric Wilson remembers that the actors used the kitchen as a dressing room and shared Cino's butcher block, "they, to make up; he to make sandwiches. There was the night Joanna Vischer . . . applied a slice of pepperoni to her cheek at the very moment Scotty delivered to a customer a rouge pad on a roll."[39] Robert Patrick, like Julian Beck, invokes the great age of communal theater in ancient Greece when he remembers Caffe Cino as "tribal" and extravagantly claims that Caffe Cino "produced the most extensive and influential surge of theatrical experimentation since Euripides."[40]

The liberating privacy that its participants identified as feeling at home—even though this was a home whose peace was constantly threatened by police busts, since the theater was unlicensed, and even though domesticity in real life never guarantees privacy—was key to the creative ferment at Caffe Cino. People could try things out informally for a supportive audience that was practically at the actors' fingertips, and, most important (unlike at home), anything was allowed. This was a liberated home, a party with parents perennially out of town and a generous uncle, rather than a father, at the helm. (It was also a family where homosexuality, rather than heterosexuality, was the norm.) Even the fact that "the room," as Cino referred to it, was not a true theater, but a space handmade anew for each production, without any budget, added to the feeling of imaginative freedom and cooperative, domestic warmth. Larry Loonin remembers the room festooned one night with crepe paper and looking like a high school gym after a dance.[41] According to Heide: "Joe regarded 'the room' as a magical place just like the 'special' bedroom shared by the incestuous brother and sister of Jean Cocteau's *Les Enfants Terribles*. Things in 'the room,' as well as plays done there, were somehow designated as 'sacred.'"[42]

The budgets at Caffe Cino were small or nonexistent, and often aesthetic choices were motivated by the need to make the actors stand out from the audience. Generally, an open ladder served as scenery—actors would climb it to add emphasis to their lines—or else the cast would go out to scavenge in the Village and bring back a set. Johnny Dodd, who often did the lights, tapped into the subway lines for electrical power.[43] The actors wore wild and elaborate costumes, Loonin recalls, "in order to distinguish themselves from the audience (which itself was dressed up)," and both the lighting and the delivery were intense. "There were two styles of speaking: hysterical and very hysterical." The cramped space and minimal budgets led, as Patrick points out, to an emphasis on language over physical movement or production values. Loonin also remembers sitting in the café scribbling the last few lines of his play as someone else's play was just about to end. If the cast did not show up, as sometimes happened, people sat and read and talked as usual.

Remembered now as an early center for both gay plays and a "campy" gay theatrical style (although the crowd was not exclusively gay), the Caffe Cino early on began to produce plays by Oscar Wilde and Tennessee Williams. But it also produced a new generation of gay playwrights. Lanford Wilson's seminal *The Madness of Lady Bright* ran an unprecedented 168 performances. Robert Patrick had to play the lead role in his *Haunted Host* because the character, a playwright who lived on Christopher Street, was so outrageously "out." There also were early efforts by other gay playwrights, including Doric Wilson and William M. Hoffman. The Caffe Cino was a private world where, as Hoffman remembers, "most of us . . . were only barely aware that writing about gays was unusual. We lived in a fairly enclosed world, perhaps a theatrical Garden of Eden, and thought little about the outside."[44] But not only can the birth of American gay theater be traced to the Caffe Cino; despite Joe Cino's abhorrence of "The Bitch Goddess" success, the careers of many now-famous playwrights, directors, and actors, both straight and gay, gained important early impetus there—including Sam Shepard, John Guare, Lanford Wilson, Tom Eyen, Marshall Mason, Tom O'Horgan, Jean Claude van Itallie, Harvey Keitel, Neil Flanagan, and Bernadette Peters.

Ellen Stewart, the founder, guiding spirit, and eponymous "Mother Earth" of Cafe La Mama, was an African American from Louisiana. (Her history is somewhat difficult to sort out—indeed, it tends to take on a legendary quality—since on different occasions she gives different versions of the same stories.) Family members had been in vaudeville and burlesque, and her brother, who went to Yale Drama School, was an aspiring playwright. Stewart says she "fled" to the East Village from her fifth marriage, in the Long Island suburbs, and was a fledgling fashion designer when she met two theater people, Jim Moore and Paul Foster. "Ellen wanted a boutique; Paul wanted to do plays."[45] In the summer of 1962 they opened a theater-boutique in a basement on East Ninth Street that seated twenty-five people. Although they never sold any clothes there, a commission the following year for a fashion design job gave Stewart the money to open a new space, named Cafe La Mama, at 82 Second Avenue. The first productions in the old basement theater were plays by Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, and Harold Pinter, as well as some new American playwrights; but the new Cafe La Mama on Second Avenue was dedicated almost entirely to the work of young writers, some of whom were also Caffe Cino

regulars: Paul Foster, Lanford Wilson, Sam Shepard, Tom Eyen, David Starkweather, Ross Alexander, Tom O'Horgan, and others. If the emphasis of the Open Theater was on the acting ensemble, at La Mama it was definitely on the playwright. Although every participant in the theater process was important to Stewart, "the playwright is the inspiration, the beginning, the germ. All things must serve him in their particular way," she insisted.[46]

There were overlaps and connections between Cafe La Mama, Caffe Cino, and the Open Theater. Eventually, some of the Open Theater workshops showed pieces at the second Cafe La Mama, which opened in November 1964 at 122 Second Avenue. (La Mama E.T.C.—Experimental Theater Club—opened in its present location at 74 East Fourth Street in 1969. Of all the theaters discussed in this section, La Mama is the only one that has survived continuously in New York.)

Like Joe Cino, Ellen Stewart provided not only a space to work in, but a spiritual home that took care to nourish the body as well. Again, the rhetoric of alternative domesticity crops up in the different histories of Cafe La Mama. "Ellen Stewart cooked soup to feed her actors and playwrights. Her salary went into the communal kitty. She understood the importance of her playwrights. She rang a cowbell at the beginning of each performance and welcomed the audience to the theater with her now famous, 'Welcome to La Mama; dedicated to the playwrights and all aspects of the theater.' They were her life and she was their mother."[47]

Plays ran for one week. The point was not to make a polished production, but for the playwright to be able "to write, see, and learn." Stewart felt that long runs would corrupt her theater's values, "getting [La Mama] involved in the success-failure hang-up." After she chose a play and helped the playwright find a director, Stewart stayed away from the production process, which was entirely in the playwright's hands. Depending on who directed and who was cast, the styles of the productions varied.

Stewart described her theater as a pushcart of her own.[48] It was an offbeat version of a family business, run by an antifamily. In this Mom-and-Pop theater store without a Pop, the exotic Mom, dressed in a bandana, fringes, scarves, and colorful paisleys, introduced every performance, then sat on the steps during the play to prevent interruptions. There she held informal "office hours," answering correspondence and receiving actors and playwrights.[49] If new playwrights were the neglected children of the American theater, La Mama gave them a home.

Michael Smith, who wrote drama criticism for the *Village Voice* and also wrote and helped produce plays at Caffe Cino and with the Open Theater,

meditated in his introduction to *Eight Plays from Off-Off Broadway* about the nature of this community. Here, he thought (joining Beck and Patrick in an edenic nostalgia for an organic, holy theater), the mythic original nature and purpose of theater—"to join performers and spectators in a mutual experience"—was once again felt. It was a theater of paradoxes: "It is amateur theater done largely by professionals. It is theater with no resources but the most sophisticated audience in America. It is both casual community theater and dedicated experimental theater. It is proposing an alternative to an established theater which hardly knows it exists." Smith admitted: "Off-Off Broadway is decidedly clubby. To some extent it has a coterie audience; to some extent it is snobbish and self-glorifying; to some extent it is a playground. Sometimes it is despicable."

"But," he concluded, "all these weaknesses are inseparable from its strength, which is its human scale. . . . Off-Off Broadway there is neither pay nor negotiable publicity, and thus no way to evade the personal commitment of every choice."[50] Even Smith's rhetoric invokes the "other" family, for, he writes, "I was on hand for its birth and have seen its growing pains; I feel like a fond uncle. . . . It's a place to see my friends."[51]

The scale, the intimacy, and the lack of funds—sometimes even the common experience of harassment by city authorities—drew the actors and spectators of Off-Off-Broadway into what they saw as a collective leap of faith. Its playfulness invested the theater with energy. Its small scale and informality, as well as the passionate commitment of its volunteer participants, made them perceive it as community regained. Professionalism was seen as an alienating evil, amateurism as an incorporative good. For in their view, part of the problem with professionalism was that people came to specialize and work in separate, alienated, and bureaucratized spheres. But in the Off-Off-Broadway theater, it was felt, people achieved a state of social cohesion that allowed them to make a total, unified contribution. Joe Cino put it simply: "The best things happen when the entire company works together with concern for the entire production[,] . . . when the entire company is completely involved with the production, onstage and off."[52] In what was thought of as the community expression that Off-Off-Broadway allowed, art was meant to be made not for profit but for people, and community was felt to be remodeled and regained.

HAPPENINGS AND POP ART

Besides Off-Off-Broadway, a separate, parallel theater community—one made up of nontheater people—was firmly entrenched in the Village by 1963. This was the group of Happenings-makers whose new art form

had been christened in 1959 with Allan Kaprow's event *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Michael Kirby's 1965 book *Happenings* documents the work of five key Happenings-makers, all originally trained as painters: Kaprow, Red Grooms, Robert Whitman, Jim Dine, and Claes Oldenburg.[53] Others involved in making or performing in Happenings—whether they were given the new genre's often disputed label or called Events, Situations, Sound Theater, or even New Music—included Al Hansen, Simone Forti, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Lucas Samaras, Jackson Mac Low, La Monte Young, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Ray Johnson, and Yoko Ono. By 1963 Higgins, Brecht, and others had joined the group known as Fluxus. In a sense it is difficult to separate the two (or more) groups, since there were concerts and festivals that included people from each, as well as dancers and musicians. And, too, the Fluxus population constantly mutated. Still, it is worth looking at them separately where possible.

Both Happenings and Fluxus developed out of ideas from John Cage's class in "Composition of Experimental Music," which he taught at the New School for Social Research from 1956 to 1960 (see chapter 1). Various members of this class, in which students made performances and discussed them, attributed the beginnings of Happenings to their experiences there. Influenced by the Italian Futurists, Dadaists, Zen Buddhism, and the theater theories of Antonin Artaud, Cage's notion of music had expanded to become a nondramatic or (to use Michael Kirby's term) nonmatrixed form of theater.[54] By the Seventies this kind of theater would be branded performance art. Cage himself had organized a precursor to Happenings at Black Mountain College in 1952, but, for the most part, his own performances remained classified as music.[55]

Although visual art per se is not a primary area of analysis here, it is important to trace the gallery and interpersonal connections of the art world, especially the Pop Art world, since it was in these galleries and through these networks that so many performances were given. And most importantly, the very people who were making visual art were drawn to make live performances as an extension of, even an alternative to, that art. Therefore, the Pop Art and Happenings groups will be discussed together.

Kaprow grew up in Arizona. He trained in philosophy at New York University and art history at Columbia, as well as in studio art. He studied painting with Hans Hoffman and for several years attended Cage's new music class at the New School. In 1963 Kaprow had been teaching painting and art history at Rutgers University for ten years.[56] Along with Robert Watts and Roy Lichtenstein (his colleagues in the art department), Lucas Samaras and Robert Whitman (his former students), George Segal (who lived on a farm near Rutgers), and George Brecht (who worked in the area), Kaprow was known as a member of the "Rutgers group." In 1958, when Kaprow made his first Happening at Rutgers and had begun extending his visual art from painting into environment, the gallery that represented him—the artists' cooperative Hansa Gallery—was also showing Whitman and Segal. The Hansa Gallery had been founded in 1952 by students of Hans Hoffmann who departed from their teacher's Abstract Expressionism. Located at first in Greenwich Village, in 1954 it moved uptown to Central Park West, where Richard Bellamy was its director and Ivan Karp was for a time his assistant.[57]

Meanwhile, inspired by the Hansa Gallery, Red Grooms had opened the City Gallery in his own studio with Jay Milder, another painter. Born in Nashville, Tennessee, Grooms studied at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and the Hans Hoffman School of Fine Arts in Provincetown; he moved to New York in 1957. In 1958–59 Grooms and Milder showed their own work and that of other figurative artists such as Bob Thompson, Lester Johnson, and Mimi Gross. Grooms gave Oldenburg and Dine their first New York exhibitions. In 1959–60 he opened the Delancey Street Museum on the Lower East Side, where he sponsored paintings, environments, and Happenings.

The Hansa Gallery closed in 1959. That fall, Anita Reuben opened her Reuben Gallery specifically to carry on the Hansa's figurative, anti-Abstract Expressionist movement. The Reuben, located first at 61 Fourth Avenue and then at 44 East 3rd Street, was for three years a lively center for downtown art, especially as a crucible for Happenings. Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts,* which lent the nascent genre a name, took place there in October 1959. Subsequent seasons saw events by Grooms, Kaprow, Whitman, Dine, the electronic composer Richard Maxfield, George Brecht, dancer Simone (Forti) Morris, and Oldenburg. During the first season, exhibitions included work by Brecht, Samaras, Whitman, and, in a group show entitled "Below Zero," Brecht, Dine, Martha Edelheit, Grooms, Hansen, Ray Johnson, Kaprow, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Segal, James Waring, and Whitman.[58]

At the same time, many of these artists were showing at the Judson Gallery, which had opened in the basement of Judson Memorial Church in late 1958 and ran from 1959–60 under Kaprow's (unofficial) directorship. In 1959–60 Dine, Oldenburg, and Wesselmann showed work there several times, including Oldenburg's environment *The Street*. Kaprow showed his environment *The Apple Shrine* at the Judson Gallery in 1960. "Ray Gun Spex," a series of Happenings early in 1960, included works by Oldenburg,

Dine, Dick Higgins, Hansen, Kaprow, and Whitman. By 1961 the Judson group had merged with the Reuben group and also were being shown at the Martha Jackson Gallery.

In 1960 Richard Bellamy, the former director of the Hansa, opened the Green Gallery uptown, which soon came to specialize in Pop Art. Its roster included Segal, Samaras, and, by 1963, James Rosenquist, Claes Oldenburg, and Tom Wesselmann. The dealer Ivan Karp moved to the Leo Castelli gallery, where Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg were featured artists.

Claes Oldenburg was born in Stockholm in 1929. His early childhood was spent in New York and Oslo. He moved to Chicago with his family in 1937 and was naturalized as an American citizen in 1953. Oldenburg graduated from Yale University with degrees in literature and art. While attending the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, 1952–54, he worked as an apprentice reporter at the Chicago City News Bureau and then as an illustrator for *Chicago Magazine*. In 1956 he settled in New York, working part-time at the Cooper Union Museum School Library.

Oldenburg describes the gallery/social network alignments of the late Fifties and his own feeling that he was an outsider at first:

> I didn't live in New Jersey, and I wasn't part of the New Jersey school, of which Kaprow was the leader. I didn't study with Cage. I discovered this whole area when I was looking for a gallery in 1958 and came across Red Grooms, who had started the City Gallery, which was the prototype of the Judson and many other informal artist-run places which also housed performances. . . .
>
> At the same time, I found Jim Dine, who had also found Red. The City Gallery was a splinter from the Hansa Gallery, and we formed the younger generation. After having my first one-man show at the Judson, I went away for the summer; and when I came back I saw Kaprow open the Reuben Gallery with his *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. It wasn't until then that I gradually came to realize the existence of this New Jersey group. . . . Also through Kaprow, I met George Segal and Roy Lichtenstein. That year, of course, I had started the Judson Gallery with Jim Dine, Dick Tyler, and Phyllis Yampolsky. Although I had seen Kaprow at a Hansa picnic at George Segal's farm in 1958, the Reuben performance was my first meaningful contact with him.[59]

By 1963, the year that Grooms founded Ruckus Productions as a multimedia performance company and Andy Warhol began making films, the interdisciplinary nature of the visual art world had become clear. Warhol,

born near Pittsburgh, earned a B.F.A. from the Carnegie Institute of Technology and moved to New York in 1949, where he first worked as an illustrator for *Glamour* magazine and then as a free-lance commercial artist from 1950 to 1957, when he began to support himself as an independent artist. In 1952 he began to exhibit his drawings in fine arts galleries, but it was the 1962 exhibitions of his Campbell Soup cans in Los Angeles and New York that catapulted him to fame.

Warhol describes a slightly later set of completely different alignments from that of the Judson/Reuben group. Partly through artists' agent and filmmaker Emile de Antonio ("De"), this network put him in touch at first with the art world and by 1963 with the poetry, dance, and film worlds. The fashion industry had been open to him since his early days as a commercial artist. Warhol's was a world—or a series of overlapping worlds—in which art, work, and play intermingled, and professional and social networks were broadly woven: "I'd met the surrealist poet Charles Henri Ford at a party that his sister, Ruth Ford, the actress, who was married to Zachary Scott, gave at her apartment in the Dakota on Central Park West and 72nd Street, and Charles Henri and I began going around together to some of the underground movie screenings. He took me to a party that Marie Menken and her husband Willard Maas, underground filmmakers and poets, gave at their place in Brooklyn Heights. . . ."

Through Ford and the Maases, Warhol met Gerard Malanga, a young poet, whom he hired as an assistant.

> Sometimes when people came by to see my work, [Malanga would] give a reading to them. . . . Gerard kept up with every arty event and movement in the city—all the things that sent out fliers or advertised in the *Voice*. He took me to a lot of dank, musty basements where plays were put on, movies screened, poetry read. . . .
>
> We went out to Coney Island a few times that summer (my first time on a roller coaster), groups of whoever was around—people like Gerard; Jack Smith, the underground filmmaker-actor; Taylor Mead, the underground actor; Wynn Chamberlain, the Magic Realist painter; and Nicky Haslam, a new art director at *Vogue*. . . .
>
> The people who entertained were the ones who really made the sixties, and Wynn Chamberlain entertained a lot. . . . Everybody used to go to Wynn's parties [on the Bowery]—all the artists and dancers and underground filmmakers and poets.

When Chamberlain rented a house from Eleanor Ward (Warhol's dealer at the Stable Gallery) in Old Lyme, Connecticut, in the summer of 1963,

Warhol spent weekends there, along with up to forty other people. He watched Jack Smith filming *Normal Love* there and, watching poet John Giorno sleeping, decided to buy a camera and make his first film, *Sleep*.

> In the fall of '63 I started going around more and more to poetry readings with Gerard. I would go absolutely anywhere I heard there was something creative happening. We went down to the Monday night poetry readings organized by Paul Blackburn at the Cafe Le Metro on Second Avenue between 9th and 10th streets where each poet would read for five or ten minutes. On Wednesday nights there was a solo reading. Poets would just get up and read about their lives from stacks of papers that they had in front of them.

Warhol also started going with Ford and Malanga to dance concerts at the Judson Church. There he renewed his acquaintance with Stanley Amos, an art critic for an Italian newspaper. Amos lived around the corner from the Judson Church, on the same floor as Tom O'Horgan. Warhol describes the apartment as an extension of backstage for the Judson. "At Stanley's there were always playwrights scribbling in a corner and Judson dancers rehearsing and people sewing their costumes up."[60]

By 1964, when the young English artist Mark Lancaster came to see him at the factory, Warhol and friends had routinized their art-nightlife. "We usually worked till around midnight, and then we'd go down to the Village, to places like the Cafe Figaro, the Hip Bagel, the Kettle of Fish, the Gaslight, the Cafe Bizarre, or the Cino. I'd get home around four in the morning, make a few phone calls, usually talk to Henry Geldzahler[61] for an hour or so, and then when it started to get light I'd take a Seconal, sleep for a couple of hours, and be back at the factory by early afternoon." Warhol introduced Lancaster to the entire New York art circuit.

> I sent him to dinner at Henry Geldzahler's, and though Henry he met Jasper Johns and [Frank] Stella and [Roy] Lichtenstein and Ellsworth Kelly, and then once I sent him as a get-well present to Ray Johnson who was in Bellevue Hospital with hepatitis. We went down together to that art gallery near Washington Square that Ruth Kligman, who'd been Jackson Pollock's girl friend and was right in the car with him when he was killed, was running with her new husband, Mr. Sansegundo. They screened movies every night and Jonas [Mekas] would be there with underground filmmakers like Harry Smith and Gregory Markopoulos.[62]

Thus, Warhol was initiated into the film world that would shortly become his oyster. I have quoted Warhol at length here because his own gossipy, anecdotal style conveys so clearly the way the professional art world, for him, was a community, a social world.

In regard to issues of community, Happenings as a genre had erupted precisely as a way to make visual art more participatory for the spectator. In tracing his movement from making Environments to making the more audience-active form of the Happening, Kaprow stated his dissatisfaction with both the spectator's passivity and the limitations of the gallery space, which seemed to separate art from life too harshly.

> There was a sense of mystery [in the Environments] until your eye reached a wall. Then there was a dead end. . . . I thought how much better it would be if you could just go out of doors and float an Environment into the rest of life so that such a caesura would not be there. I tried camouflaging the walls one way or another. I tried destroying the sense of bounded space with more sound than ever, played continuously. . . . But this was no solution, it only increased the growing discord between my work and the art gallery's space and connotations. I immediately saw that every visitor to the Environment was part of it. I had not really thought of it before. And so I gave him occupations like moving something, turning switches on—just a few things. Increasingly during 1957 and 1958, this suggested a more "scored" responsibility for that visitor. I offered him more and more to do, until there developed the Happening.[63]

Community-building also had to do with the relation of the author-director to the participants. For Kaprow, total engagement involved the author's participation, for both moral and experiential reasons. "I find it practically necessary to appear in my own works because my presence amongst the other participants is extremely important as an example. If I stayed apart and watched, especially now [1965] when I insist on there being no spectators, they would say, 'What kind of a man is this?' Furthermore, I need to be part of it to find out what it is like myself. Imagining a Happening and being in one are two different things."[64]

Spectators were expected to change the direction of their seats and move from room to room, or to arrive at unusual locales and figure out how best to witness the events in the Happening. In such works as Kaprow's *A Spring Happening* and Robert Whitman's *The American Moon,* gallery spaces were transformed and the audience was asked to move through tun-

nels, and not all were willing to comply. In Oldenburg's *Autobodys,* the spectators sat in their cars in a parking lot, illuminating the action with their headlights. For Oldenburg, like Kaprow, the audience's activity was always understood as part of the total experience of the Happening. "The audience is considered an object and its behavior as events, along with the rest. The audience is taken to differ from the players in that its possibilities are not explored as far as that of the players (whose possibilities are not explored as far as my own). The place of the audience in the structure is determined by seating and by certain simple provocations."[65]

Even where the audience was not given instructions for specific tasks that would involve them in the performers' action, the cramped spaces of the Happenings' venues, just as in the café theaters of Off-Off-Broadway, often created a feeling of participation. There was no stage to separate actor and audience. Indeed, the spectators often were deliberately surrounded by the action. And the action was happening practically on top of them—in Whitman's *Water* and *The American Moon,* literally so. They might be bombarded with strong smells—the spray paint in Whitman's *Flower* and the paint and squeezed oranges of Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*—or loud noises—the crashes, clattering, buzzing, and screeching of innumerable Happenings—or objects—the lima beans and the final "curtain" of muslin, which fell to cover the audience, of Oldenburg's *Gayety.*

By 1963, both Happenings and Pop Art had become institutionalized. The cooperative movements that had given impetus to the City Gallery and the Judson Gallery, and that had joined Happenings-makers as diverse as Kaprow and Oldenburg in centers like the Reuben Gallery, had dispersed. On the one hand, competition and tensions had arisen among various participants (even within the subgroups that had merged, for instance, at the Reuben), and, on the other hand, increased visibility led to group and individual shows at larger galleries and museums in New York and farther afield, as well as commissions outside the alternative galleries for Happenings and other events. A wealthy New York couple, Robert and Ethel Scull, financed the Green Gallery and made collecting Pop Art a success symbol in the New York social world, drastically upgrading the economic status of the artists they favored. In the fall of 1962 the Sidney Janis Gallery uptown showed Dine, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rosenquist, Segal, Warhol, and Wesselmann in a group show entitled "The New Realists," and in 1963 the Guggenheim Museum's show "Six Painters and the Object" featured Dine, Johns, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist, and Warhol. The two exhibitions consolidated Pop Art's success. Meanwhile, Happenings-makers such as Oldenburg and Whitman produced their own works separately in nongallery spaces. Oldenburg opened his Ray Gun Mfg. Co. on East Second Street in 1962, where he put on a series of Happenings from February through May; and Whitman showed his 1963 theater events at 9 Great Jones Street.

Still, although the careers of the assemblagists, Pop artists, and Happenings-makers (and those who did both visual and performance work) were crystallizing in diverse, more individualized directions, some continued to participate in communal group events that were populated by artists from various networks: dancers, musicians, poets, and those working in less easily defined disciplines. At the month-long Yam Festival in 1963 (organized by George Brecht and Robert Watts and sponsored by the Smolin Gallery at various locations around the city and at George Segal's farm), for instance, the participants included Brecht, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Philip Corner, Red Grooms, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Ray Johnson, Allan Kaprow, Michael Kirby, Alison Knowles, George Maciunas, Jackson Mac Low, Robert Morris, Ben Patterson, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Watts, and La Monte Young.

The community that had been formed by the Happenings-makers, by junk, assemblage, and environment artists, and by Pop artists was partly a product of gallery programming. It was a temporary community built of overlapping social networks, but it also was rent by various personal conflicts, often cast in terms of aesthetic disagreements. Still, the community was seen by both participants and onlookers as a homey and informal network. Gallery openings were eagerly anticipated social events. Performances and other gatherings at George Segal's farm in New Jersey, notably in 1958 when Kaprow's first Happening was performed there, and in 1963 when the Smolin Gallery Yam Day events took place there, were likened to community picnics. The *Village Voice* critic Leonard Horowitz concluded his account of Yam Day: "It was a lovely day, Mrs. McDarrah made delicious pot roast sandwiches, there were lots of pretty girls, and as you can guess, it was just a picnic."[66] And Bud Wirtschafter's film of the event, *What's Happening,* has the feel of a home movie documenting a family picnic.[67]

But as some of the Pop artists and some of the Happenings-makers became individual "commodities," sought after by galleries and museums, given commissions for performances by universities, and commanding enormous fees and unprecedented publicity, the sense of community, always less important for the visual artists with their ready-made gallery networks, began to disintegrate. And Fluxus emerged out of some of the alternative festivals and groupings. With what was for some members an ex-

plicitly political understanding, Fluxus in their publications, performances, and objects reinstated the values of community.

FLUXUS

George Maciunas, a graphic designer, met composer La Monte Young in Richard Maxfield's class in electronic music, which superseded Cage's class at the New School. Young had studied music at the University of California, Berkeley, and he had become friendly with sculptor Robert Morris and dancer Simone Forti (who was then married to Morris), two other West Coast artists who settled in New York. Maciunas, a Lithuanian émigré who ran AG Gallery with a compatriot, met the Morrises and a number of other artists through Young. In March–July 1961 Maciunas and Young put on at AG gallery a series of interdisciplinary "Literary Evenings and Musica Antiqua et Nova" concerts (cosponsored with *Bread & magazine*). The group included dancers Trisha Brown, Simone (Forti) Morris, and Yvonne Rainer, composers Henry Flynt, Joseph Byrd, and Toshi Ichiyanagi (at the time, Yoko Ono's husband), poet Jackson Mac Low, and visual artists Walter De Maria, Dick Higgins, Ray Johnson, and Robert Morris. A number of the same artists—many of whom were connected through the John Cage and Richard Maxfield classes—participated in the series of performances that La Monte Young organized at Yoko Ono's loft on Chambers Street in January–June of that year.

In 1960 Young had been invited to guest-edit an issue on performance and poetry for *Beatitude East*. He invited Mac Low to coedit the volume. The journal cancelled the project, but Maciunas offered to design and produce the issue and helped put together what was finally published in 1963 as *An Anthology*, a collection of music and performance scores, poems, stories, and essays.[68] In September 1962, while still working on *An Anthology*, Maciunas went to Europe with a group of performers, partly, he says, to publicize the collection and future collective publications. Maciunas was already planning the next publication, which he intended to call *Fluxus*, so the fourteen concerts he organized were given that name.

As Jon Hendricks traces the beginnings of Fluxus, by the end of 1962 the prolific Maciunas had:

> written the 1st of several Fluxus Manifestos, conceived of a form of publishing inexpensive editions of an artist's work that could be added to when more work was written, made plans for a series of yearboxes of new work from many countries, designated a short lived collective leadership of the group, and started to confront audiences and artists with their own rotten eggs. By late 1963 Maciunas started to produce cheap open editions of artist's events, score, games and concepts. These . . . Fluxus Editions were entirely designed, assembled, edited and published by Maciunas and quite often were also his own free interpretations of an artist's idea.[69]

From the start, Maciunas was interested in a notion of mass production and circulation that was partly inspired by Soviet constructivist, functionalist experimentation in art and graphic design of the Twenties. But in his desire to make art accessible, he was partly inspired by Cage and his Zen-influenced use of everyday experiences in art. Maciunas's program was specifically framed as anti-art, in the sense that he railed against the professionalization of art and called instead for amateurization. He believed that art should be able to be made by everybody and should be accessible to everybody through the mass distribution of low-cost multiples. Of course, Maciunas was not producing his multiples in numbers great enough for a truly mass distribution. And further, he found, after he opened a store on Canal Street in 1964, that most people were not interested in buying the Fluxus works.[70] But the idea of accessibility to both the art experience and the products of art put his Fluxus activities in a very different arena from the increasingly expensive collector's items that Pop Art was turning out to be.

There is a satiric edge to the rhetoric Maciunas employed in his early Fluxus manifestos. For instance, in one that is a visual collage, alternating hand-printed slogans, with items photographed in reverse black and white from a dictionary definition of "flux," Maciunas states the goals of his art movement. On the medical meanings of flux ("a fluid discharge from the bowels or other part; the matter thus discharged; to cause a discharge from, as in purging"), Maciunas commented: "*Purge* the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual,' professional & commercialized culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art,—PURGE THE WORLD OF 'EUROPANISM' [*sic*]!" To the meanings having to do with flowing, including the tide setting in toward the shore and the state of being liquid through heat, Maciunas appended the biblical-sounding slogan: "PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART, Promote living art, anti-art, promote *NON ART REALITY* to be fully [fully is crossed out in the original] grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals." And prompted by the chemical and metallurgical meaning "any substance used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals," he wrote: "*FUSE*