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Earth Art - CT notes

Heizer

- ① "saw art here as really dead"
- ③ art a commodity; painting + sculpture dead

De Maria

- ⑩ Time as factor in earth art
- ⑪ keeping gallery taut
- ⑭ photos no good
- ⑮ "quantum leap"
- ⑯ "meaningless work" sig. art form today

Smultron

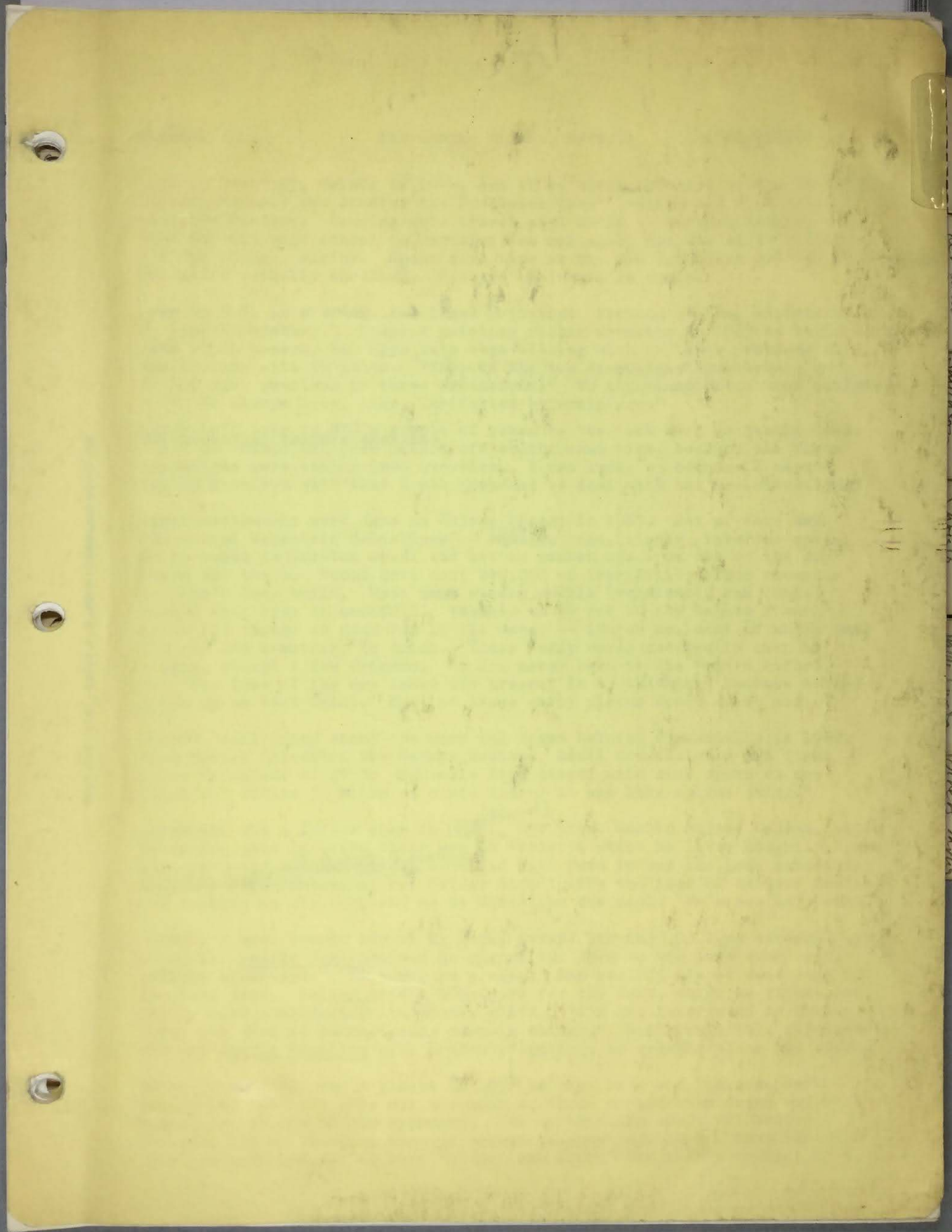
- ⑰ Spiral Jetty
- ⑱ photos
- ⑲-over "I'm just a geologic agent."
- ⑳ earth art vs. ecology movement
- ㉑ art as commodity
- ㉒ art as "total engagement" - sig. finished, "but the art habit continues."

Chunty

- ⑳ photos
- ㉓-6 Heizer + de Maria's scorn for contemp. society, art etc
- ㉔ Jennie Lichtman

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Handwritten labels on the right edge of the page, including:
Hester
De Maria
Smithson
Snyder
Hester
Dibets

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①

Michael Heizer - 119 Spring Street, 4/27/71 (966-5662)

Born in Berkeley, Calif. in 1944, son of an anthropologist at the University (Robert Heizer) who studied the Northwest Coast Indians and also Latin American history. Considerable travel as a child -- Europe, Mexico, etc. Went through high school in Berkeley, no college. Has one older brother and one younger sister. Spent some time at the San Francisco Art Institute (1963-4) but never formally enrolled. "Always" painted, as child.

Came to N.Y. in sixties, continued painting. Various styles, experimenting - "a typical history." Stopped painting rather abruptly in 1967 to begin work with earth masses, but says he's been dealing with the same problems he was dealing with in paint. "Through the two dimensional problems I got to the same problems in three dimensions." No experimentation with sculpture -- "I've always been, like, unaffected by sculpture."

After he'd been in NYC a couple of years he "saw art here as really dead. ~~xxxxxx~~ A lot of things had been killed off at the same time, because the forms themselves were coming into question. I was lucky -- because I wasn't really involved with that I was prepared to deal with the new situation."

First earthworks were done in Mojave Desert in 1967. Set of four ~~xxx~~ "Essential Geometric Variations" - ~~xxxx~~ ^{cube}, cone, circle, inverted cone. To be built in Cor-Ten steel and set in sunken space in one of the dry lakes out there. Would have cost \$40,000 as feasibility study showed, so hasn't been built. Made ~~xxxx~~ wooden models (versions), and fooled around with them in snowfall. ~~zzz~~ Used to go out to the Mojave from NY and build things in wood for little money -- \$30 or so, most of which went for gas and something to drink. These early works not really seen by anyone, except a few friends. He had never been to the Mojave before, but "the idea of the dry lakes was present in my thinking" because he had grown up on West Coast. Most of these early pieces don't exist now.

Robert Scull heard about the work and began helping financially in 1968. Also Heiner Friedrich the German dealer. Scull commissioned his first piece in summer of 1968: 570-mile long piece, with nine spots on dry lakes all within 30 miles of state line "it was like a line thing."

Friedrich did a Heizer show in 1968 ^(Munich). One piece was in Mojave Desert, which Friedrich paid for, the other was in Germany, which he later bought. Recently Friedrich and another ^{A Swiss, Gerd Gonen} German arranged with Dwan to buy the land containing ~~Double Negative~~ ^{Double Negative} work in Nevada, but Heizer didn't like the idea of dealers dealing and fucking up his work and so he cancelled the deal. He's now left Dwan.

"Nobody's ever bought any of my work, except drawings." Dwan advanced him money for Double Negative, and he signed the deed to the land over to the gallery afterwards - 60 acres on a mesa. The certificate of ownership is the land deed. Heizer paid \$75 an acre for the land, which he thinks was pretty high considering its mostly cliff. "I'm not interested in owning land, but just in guaranteeing certain things." Won't call this permanence, though. Double Negative will probably continue to crumble along its edges.

After doing first earth pieces in 1967 he came back and did some more paintings, but they were not the same as those he had been doing before - a decisive change in his approach. "As my thinking about art became clearer, all my thoughts sort of seemed to come together." Says that his previous work had really been "about" New York, but didn't reflect that.

D. Maria
 Smith
 Christo
 John
 Diker

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~~Heizer's father~~

Heizer's father is a world authority on the moving of great weights by primitive cultures - Olmec heads, etc.

Heizer is slim, rather nondescript looking, and fairly inarticulate. Soft, hesitant voice. Conversation thick in negations -- what his work is not. "I just can't explain that," etc. Seems to have a degree of hostility toward attempts to understand him.

Weber says Heizer is likely to burn himself out within five years, or kill himself. Tremendous burner of energy. Death wish shows up in motorcycle cultism -- he and his friend Hank have super-high-powered racing bikes, ride them flat out; had planned to do a show for several European galleries that would consist of "motorcycle drawings", but Hank had accident on bike just before, broke leg badly, so never came off.

Both Heizer and de Maria very much into gambling. Title "Double Negative" partly from double zero on roulette wheel.

Bob Diero - Vegas character, now wealthy, flies plane for Heizer + de Maria

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Heizer -- 2

Definitely feels that his work ~~is~~ exists within art history as a logical development. "I think about the continuum (of art history). You can't really be an artist without being a traditional artist. There's never been an art like what I'm doing, but there are plenty of allusions to it" -- he mentioned the stele, and says he's even going to call a vertical sheet he sandblasts Wstele." Says his work also relates to a lot of things that are not art, like architecture.

"I've been thinking very much in terms of size, not scale." Pollock's big paintings in forties explored the problem of scale thoroughly - you couldn't take that any further. "I really don't think about my things in terms of size because they're not really that big. But they're big enough to give the idea..." (This not clear to me; get more on size/scale).

Displacement idea? (No clear statement)

The idea of making an object is not what interests him. "Every piece I build is a different response to the problem." (And the main problem seems to be the 20th cent chestnut of deciding what is or is not art). "I'm interested in using what's where it is in such a way that I can use it." (!)

New Piece (Vertical)

Heizer tried to do a vertical piece in Switzerland but ran into problems. Now he wants to do it in the West, has found and bought acreage in granite range in Nevada. Actually, since piece is vertical, he needs only a small surface area. "All it's about really is how to move a very big block in a very complicated way, ~~using~~ using no machinery." Heizer used heavy machinery for several of his pieces but now wants to get away from that. "I like the machines, but they cost a lot of money..." Feels he has to figure out way to do these works on his own without dependence on others. Making use of gravity rather than machines now. "Just like the Egyptians thousands of years ago." Does use a rock drill, but considers that his "paintbrush." "You can't get away from some kind of device."

Nature

"Nature is more apparent in my work than ~~is~~ in the Mona Lisa, for example." But the interplay of nature and art is no different in his work.

"I think very simply. If you look at the pieces, you'll see they're quite simple."

Lack of spectators doesn't bother him. ~~There~~ "A number of the people who are really involved in new art have seen the work. If I could do it right outside here (NYC) I would, but that's impossible."

Feels that to see Double Negative one should really take a full day, or better still "two sunrises and two sunsets." Light and shadows change, etc. Part of his thing is to get away from the "art-at-a-glance" of New York galleries, etc. Can't see it right from helicopter, and photos give no real sense of it.

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Heizer quotes (published)

"I think the only important limitations on art are the ones imposed or accepted by the artist himself." ~~Artforum~~ (Avalanche, Fall 1970, No.1)

"I work outside because it's the only place where I can displace mass. I like the scale -- that's certainly one difference between working in a gallery and working outdoors. I'm not trying to compete in size with any natural phenomena, because it's technically impossible."

"Art usually becomes another commodity. One of the implications of earth art might be to remove completely the commodity-status of a work of art and allow a return to the idea of art as...more of a religion." (ibid)

"The reason I go there (to nature) is because it satisfies my feeling for space. I like that space." (ibid)

"My work is closely tied up with my own experiences; for instance, my personal associations with dirt are very real. I really like it, I ~~really~~ really like to lie in the dirt. I don't feel close to it in the farmer's sense...the work I'm doing with earth satisfies some very basic desires." (ibid)

"I'm mainly concerned with physical properties, with density, volume, mass and space. For instance, I find an 18 foot square granite boulder. That's mass. It's already a piece of sculpture. But as an artist it's not enough for me to say that, so I mess with it. I defile it...if you're a naturalist you'd say I defiled it, otherwise you'd say I responded in my own manner. And that was by putting some space ~~under~~ under the boulder. My work is in opposition to the kind of sculpture which involves rigidly forming, welding, sealing, perfecting the surface of a piece of material. I also want my work to complete its life-span ~~and~~ during my lifetime." (ibid)

"Everything is beautiful, but not everything is art." (Q. What makes it art?) "I guess when you insist on it long enough, when you can convince someone else that it is. I think that the look of art is broadening. The idea of sculpture has been destroyed, subverted, ~~put~~ put down. And the idea of painting has also been subverted. This has happened in a very strange way, through a process of logical questioning by artists. It hasn't been like these various looks which appear every twenty years or so; they're just minor phenomena within the larger one that will be remembered" (ibid).

"It looks as though the whole spirit of painting and sculpture could be shrugged off in two years' time perhaps. It's almost totally inconsequential. Of course it'll never happen, but it's conceivable, it could happen." (ibid).

"In the desert, I can find that kind of unraped, peaceful, religious space artists have always tried to put into their work. I don't want any indication I've been here at all. My holes should have no history, they should be indeterminate in time and inaccessible in locale." (Satevepost, Nov.2, 1968).

"Man will never create anything really large in relation to the world -- only in relation to himself and his size. The most formidable objects that man has touched are the earth and the moon. The greatest scale he understands is the distance between them, and this is nothing compared to what he suspects to exist." (Artforum, Dec. 1969).

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Heizer - works

Dissipate - (wood) 50' x 50' area, Black Rock Desert, Nevada, 1968
(grouping taken from random drop of five matches). Dissipate
is #8 of Nine Nevada Depressions, commissioned by Scull. The
others are called Displaced - Replaced Mass.

Two-Stage - wood in snow, 48' by 48' by 48', Sierra Mountains, Nevada, 1967.

Isolated Mass ^{Circumflex} (loop) - 120' x 1' x 1', Massacre Dry Lake, Calif Nevada,
1968. Commissioned by Scull.

Line Drawing - crayon on printed material, 35 x 2½" - drawing was only
object in exhibition at Heiner Friedrich Gall, Munich, 1969.

Munich Depression - 1000 ton displacement, 100' diameter, 15' deep. Munich,
April, 1969 (coincident with Heiner Friedrich exhib).

Five Conic Displacements - Coyote Dry Lake, Calif., Jan. 1969.

Ground Incision/Loop Drawing - Coyote Dry Lake, Calif., Nov. 1968. Eight
50' wheel-cut loops and tracks on surface 800' long, 50' wide.

Hydrate - Blue Diamond, Nevada, July 1968. Eight wooden boards, 16' by
1' by 1' each, placed inside a dry wash (later washed away).

El Mirage Project, Mojave Desert, Calif. -- "Windows," "Compression Line," etc.

Double Negative - 1500' x 50' x 38', 240,000 ton displacement. Mormon Mesa,
Nevada, 1969.

~~Dragged Mass~~

Dragged Mass - orig. planned 1969, in NYC with block of indigenous
granite. Planned again with 100-ton block selected in Sierra Nevada
for placement in northern Nevada; block was under 10' of snow at
time planned and could not be moved. ~~Revised~~ Detroit version (March,
1971) used block given by Rock of Ages corp., weighing 35 tons, and
measuring 26' x 4½'.

De Maria
Smithson
Christo
Judy Chicago
Other works

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⑤
LOG

June 15 - Vegas

Flew in over Grand Canyon, Lake Mead. Bright sunlight and 105 degrees. Slots at airport going strong. Vegas ~~xxx~~ baking in plain ringed with mountains, shimmering in blue haze. Stardust Hotel had no record of my reservation, or of several others arriving - Medical Technologists Convention in progress. Lobby entirely filled with slots, at which women predominate. Some with stools to sit on. Paper cups for winnings. Different groups - poker tables staked out by older men, bald and fat and glum; Keno's older women; roulette and blackjack attract the younger crowd, honeymooners, young marrieds. No photos allowed anywhere. At the other hotels on the strip, 1950s entertainers making last stand -- Liberace at Caesar's Palace, Durante and Jessel and Miss Peggy Lee. Atmosphere is totally middle class vulgar, not evil, not even carnival.

Met Virginia Dwan at hotel, and left town abt 4 PM to see Heizer's "Double Negative." Freeway north for abt 45 minutes, to Logandale/Overton exit. Asked directions in Overton. Headed back toward Mormon Mesa (which Heizer calls Virgin Mesa), a very long, flat prominence north of Overton, with large white "M" emblazoned on its side. ^{Dirt} ~~Street~~ road up to the top, becoming very steep and winding, with patches of soft sand in which we nearly foundered. Once on top, we drove straight across the top of the mesa to the other side. Dwan thought we'd found it, but proved wrong. We turned right and drove along the mesa, heading east, stopping at each canyon to get out and look for Double Neg. Car in danger of overheating - temp. still blastingly hot. Low scrub growth in sandy soil, mesquite, sage; ground full of holes for small animals. Dwan warned about snakes and scorpions - walk around scrub, not through it, and listen.

After about an hour she grew discouraged, and decided it might be back the other way. First indication that Dwan had very little recollection of how to get to the piece, not having paid much attention when others drove.

↑ [Heizer was not available to take us out because he had left town, presumably to go north to Wyoming or Montana to look for site for his vertical piece. Dwan called the Kona Kai Motel, found he'd checked out, left no message. Hank, his friend and helper, had gone off to ride in motorcycle circuit races. Dwan says Heizer is in a mood of being fed up with the art world and that this is typical behavior. He's very negative now. Impatient at interruptions in NY -- "He's just not a studio artist" -- couldn't stand people coming to visit, interview him, see work. All he wants to do is work, and he feels he hasn't worked for a year because ^{he's} ~~he's~~ been that long looking for a site for the vertical piece. He looked around in Switzerland but every place seemed too dangerous - rock slides might hurt someone below. Has to have pure granite to work with, otherwise the blasting would split and shatter the rock. (Piece will involve cutting out a large rock section, moving it either down or across cliff to another place blasted out to receive it. This will involve great peril to the artist, who must become something of a rock climber in process, especially because Heizer doesn't want to use heavy equipment, would be happy to do it as close as possible to methods used by ancient Egyptians etc. Part of his death wish, likely). Dwan says "a private individual" is helping him now. Now Scull (she doesn't think). Hd was under retainer from gallery until recently, but no longer.

Heizer and Hank were working here with a film-maker, making film on him. Recutting the line piece with bikes. Dwan surprised not to find him.

De Maria
Smithson
Christo
John Coates
Other notes

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Vegas notes (from Ralph H. Peck "Getaway Guide to Las Vegas")

Beginnings during gold and silver rush in 1870s. Nothing but a tent town until 1905, when Union Pacific RR built a division point depot there. Land speculation ensued. Real boom didn't start until 1940s, when military bases grew up nearby. Nevada grew faster in 1960s than any other state - 72.6%. More than half the pop. lives in Clark County (Vegas).

Nevada ranks second to Alaska in amt of land owned by Fed Govt - 47,000,000 acres administered by Bureau of Land Management, or roughly two-thirds of state.

Gambling legalized 1931. Now Vegas has 15 million visitors per year. Gambling operations carefully controlled and mostly honest. Plastic chips used as money in stores and restaurants. Visitors leave more than half a billion dollars yearly. (First legalized 1867, banned in 1900, re-legalized 1931).

Vegas has 19 marrying chapels along The Strip alone.

Gross gambling winnings in 1969 totalled \$522 million.

Each slot machine earns its owner something like \$4000 per year.

Downtown Fremont Street's electrical signs comprise maybe 2 million light bulbs and 42 miles of neon tubing.

Current military bases: Nevada Test Site; Nuclear Rocket Development Station; Nellis Air Force Base (8 miles northeast of Vegas). Not far from Mucca Flat, Jackson Flat, and Frenchman Flat, shown on map as Danger Zones (where nuclear bombs are tested).

De Maria
Smithson
Christo
Walter Gropius
Others in view

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LOG - ⑥

Heizer's recent drag piece in Detroit was something of a bust. After all the preliminary difficulties in getting a block of granite (Heizer talked Rock of Ages into donating one himself), the piece didn't really work as planned. The ground was too hard, and it didn't dig up much earth. The rock itself began to buckle and bend under the pressure, so they had to give up. It was then offered to the Detroit Institute as a donation, but the trustees refused - quite an insult. Rock now in storage somewhere, "until it becomes a piece again."

Another factor in Heizer's grim mood is his recent divorce. He was married to very pretty girl, ex-model, who got as much attention from Detroit press as he did. No one would have noticed his show much if it hadn't been for the drag piece - small space in back reaches of museum. But the dragpiece excited a good deal of highly unfavorable attention.

Re Double Negative: Bischofsberger, the German dealer, was the person who wanted to buy it, for re-sale. Still thinks he's going to, but Heizer considers the whole thing off. Rather sticky situation.

We drove all the way back to the place where we came across the mesa from the south, and drove on the other way. Tried a few places, no success. Finally, at about 7 PM, we saw it. An unmissable, clean, hard edge cut. "God Damn, it's really big!" - Dwan. "Michael has surprised me again." We'd been looking for 1 1/2 hours since arriving on top of mesa.

There are two cuts, facing each other across a canyon, about fifty feet apart. The back end slopes down sharply, so you have to pick your way from foothold to foothold, or else slide on your rump, getting shoes full of sand either way. At the bottom, you look up fifty feet to the rim. The sides are sliced away cleanly, obviously by some great blade. But erosion has already changed the surface. Striations and veins, yellowish streaks in the dull ochre earth, and near the bottom shelves where the ~~XXXXX~~ earth has broken loose in large chunks. The sand very soft. Quite a number of graffiti, including several renditions of the name "Willie Weed," peace signs, the ubiquitous "Fuck," other names, and an oddly lifelike drawing of a shark. Dwan says motorcyclists come up on mesa to ride. A beer can or two around. Dwan says down at this level one may be thousands of years back in geological time. Looking up, at walls, it almost looks as though there are carvings all along, gargoyles and saints.

We walked out to the edge of the cut, looked across at facing cut and down into the canyon where the earth and stone was pushed over by bulldozer. In the valley, marvellous natural sculptures - turrets and towers. To the north, a pleasant valley stretches between the mesa and the high mountains further on. My impression that the scale and effort of the Heizer piece is rather puny by comparison -- Heizer must have felt that too, hence his statements on scale as opposed to natural scale. But the piece is impressive. Dwan says the bulldozer had to be lifted out of the cut by a crane.

Land was privately owned. Heizer bought it, gave deed to gallery. Dwan says Sam Wagstaff exclaimed "The earth is a different place because Double Negative is there, by God!" I'm not convinced. Heizer thinks it may last a century, feels it will be interesting to see how it changes through erosion.

De Maria

Smithson

Christo

William Costantini

Other names

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LOG - 7

We went across and descended into the opposite cut. This is the same depth, but it is longer. Actually, after he'd made the piece and it had been on cover of Artforum Heizer decided he wanted it bigger, went back and extended depth of this cut to 100 feet. Willie Weed again.

Stillness of the mesa. Not another sound. Light golden before sunset. Georgia O'Keefe colors - ochre, russet, sand. Decided we'd better leave so as not to have to navigate road down mesa in dark.

On the way back, Dwan told ⁽¹⁹⁶⁹⁾ the editor of Avalanche, ^{Willoughby Sharp} had put on an earthworks show at Cornell, and antagonized all the artists involved. By mistake, Heizer received a bill for the labor involved in digging his hole. He returned it angrily, saying he hadn't wanted to be in the show anyway and demanding that the piece be pulled in now. But by this time, loose dirt being scarce in Ithaca in winter, Heizer's dirt had been used by DeMaria and Bob Morris to make their pieces. Heizer's hole was covered over with a tarpaulin.

Also told about her trip to Yucatan with the Smithsons. Went to Palenque, Bonampak, with guide, very primitive conditions. Smithson had 20 mirrors along, was always working, looking for site to set them up (displaced images), photograph the result, then pick them up and move on. The Smithsons always find places nobody else would think of going. Nancy is an ideal wife, unflappable. "Bob is difficult for some people to understand. He always takes the long way around things, and the more he drinks the more he talks, and the more difficult to follow." Interesting that Smithson is nearly always involved with displaced images, while Heizer is into physical displacement of objects. Also, earth and water. Each artist seems to have staked out a particular element. This has contributed to the bad feeling between Smithson and DeMaria, which goes back several years and relates basically to something Smithson said or didn't say about DeMaria in a magazine article; DeMaria was annoyed that Smithson had a road leading to his Spiral Jetty, because he felt ~~xxx~~ that roads were his thing.

Conceptual art @ Dwan says she's always irritated when her friends say earthworks are conceptual. "200,000 tons of dirt moved is not a concept, it's very real!"

Coming into Vegas at night, the great neon monster. Fremont Street like a thousand Osakas. Golden Nugget, Four Queens, Binion's Horseshoe, etc. Dwan says the boys really dig this, because "this is where we are right now. This is what the country is really like." Materialism and display and vulgarity, and death and desolation just outside (the desert, the missile bases, the nuclear tests - in fact, the following morning, at 7AM, a new test shot is scheduled, the first since Dec. 18, 1970 at Nevada Test Site (that shot resulted in a radiation leak that was measured in 18 western states, when the earth cracked near ground zero; tests suspended since. Tomorrow's to go off in a 1000-foot shaft at Yucca Flat)).

De Maria
Smithson
Christo
Willie Weed
Other names

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(8)

Donald Droll (by telephone, 6/28/71) - Knoedlers.

Droll wouldn't go so far as to say he "represents" Heizer, only that he is working with him for the time being. He was very curious to know whether I had seen him, because he's been trying to get in touch with him for a week and can't get an answer at any of the three numbers he has.

"Everything is sort of up in the air at the moment." Hopes Heizer will call in one of these days, as he sometimes does,

Droll has known him for several years, liked his paintings when he first came to NY. Interested in helping him now, "but it would have to be some new kind of gallery relationship." What sort would that be? "I wish you could tell me."

De Maria

Smithson

Christo

Wally Carter

Others in view

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De Maria
Smithson
Christo
Wally Pfister
Robert Rauschenberg

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(9)

Walter De Maria - first invu 5/6/71 at 27 Howard St. (925-6061)

De Maria was recently returned from the West, where he bought 280 acres of land in Nevada, the largest site yet acquired for earth work or, as he prefers, "land works." His lofty the usual barren expanse. On floor in front room were his five sculptural pieces made of stainless steel spikes honed to razor sharp edge. He showed them at Dwan earlier in season, had release forms for viewers to fill out absolving gallery of blame in case of injury. A museum ~~is~~ somewhere wanted to show them but planned to rope them off, so de Maria refused -- the element of danger, provocation, is part of the piece. *They were covered by plywood slabs. He said there had been several offers to buy them individually, but he wants to keep the set of five together. **Also summarized some of my feelings abt New York at the time*

De Maria is 35, delicately built, with curly hair cut fairly short, no beard etc. Very pleasant and outgoing, talks easily. Clearly feels he has not received proper recognition (as compared with Smithson, e.g.), and considers that important now. He said the Dwan Gallery is closing in June, folding up. Weber wants to open a new gallery downtown, and is taking Heizer, but De Maria won't go with him -- says Weber still wants to sell drawings, photos, etc., not commit himself wholly to the land pieces. De Maria said that within next couple of weeks he was going to make basic decision, whether to commit himself totally to land works; if so he will never have another gallery or museum show (he says), or at least he won't work with that in mind as a goal.

Big project looming as possibility is in connection with next Olympics in Munich - a deep shaft in hill overlooking stadium, with bronze plate on top (raised off ground) on which fifty or sixty people could stand. The hole would be invisible. Olympic committee considering project now. If they accept, it will be a tremendous step for the whole movement. (Aug. 1972)

This summer, in Nevada, he has sketches for three pieces he's starting to work out. "I don't know exactly what I'll do with this particular piece of land. That's still vague -- I don't know whether I'll be working that or not."

Bought land at ^{tax} auction, with his own savings. He and Heizer have hired an all-around field manager - can fly a plane, expert mechanic, very good at construction. He found the land. Worthless land, in between some silver, mercury and other mines. "I went there and bid on it, on the steps of the county courthouse."

"It's just about three years since I really got going -- three and a half."

Munich piece: "It's the most important thing happening in my life right now." Olympic site outside city with hills made of rubble from WWII. DeM plans to drill a hole 12' diameter down through ~~mountain~~ mountain, which is 60 meters deep (200 feet), then continue into natural earth another 60 meters. Hole lined with cement, to keep from collapsing. Capped on bottom. Space shaft through mountain. If accepted, would become sort of primary symbol of whole Olympic games - the mountain is central focus. "On the top of the hole, we would build a solid bronze disk, 18 feet in diameter, giving you a yard on either side of the hole. This would be a foot to 18 inches high, off the ground. The whole piece would probably cost somewhere between three hundred, three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. People would

Smithson
Christo
Walter De Maria
Other invu

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* Telephone conversation June 10 - DeMaria said his German dealer tells him that the chief architect for the Olympics really likes the piece and wants to commission it, but that there has been a lot of difficulty persuading the finance and political committees. Several long discussions on the subject have ended inconclusively -- they are frightened of public opinion. De Maria now working to round up letters and statements from museum people, critics, etc in support of idea. The mountain itself is made of war rubble, he says - why not turn the artificiality of the mountain into sculpture? Make a statement about the earth... He plans to go to Munich first week in July to fight for it in person. Very touch and go right now.

Smithson
Christo
Johns, Gunter
Others in view

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be able to step up on the disk and walk around -- up to fifty or a hundred people. I wrote up a statement about the project that went into minimal and conceptual art -- the disk being a sort of minimal piece, and the hole being conceptual in that you can't see it -- and also the whole being an activating force for the whole mountain, because by placing such a core in the mountain you've created such an area of activity that basically the whole mountain becomes the piece...

"The Germans have a way of being peculiarly interested in advanced theory. The amazing thing is that I can propose a piece that would cost more than 300,000 dollars, of which 90 per cent would be invisible, and the architects are taking it extremely seriously. Should this piece be accepted, the whole land art idea would be terrifically advanced. If they don't, well then it becomes one of these theoretical pieces that goes into art books. Anyway, within another couple of months my whole life would jump into another dimension, where I would construct what would turn out to be the most photographed piece in the world - or, I continue in this kind of independent, underground, renegade, np-gallery, stealing-government-land position." *

Theoretically, at least, deMaria's involvement with land art goes back to 1961-2, when he made drawings for what he called "Walks in the Desert". This was to consist of two mile-long ^{parallel} walls, somewhere between 14-20 feet tall, 4-5 feet thick, of cement, 8-10 feet wide. "As you walked through them, you could look up at the sky; as you continued to walk through them, as you get about to the half-mile point, the perspective closes; and as you come near the end, of course, the perspective opens up. The walls would be constructed so that when you came out, you'd be facing an enormous expanse, and you'd really feel what space is. Now I feel I'm within five years of having the reputation and the means to actually build these walls." DeM. thinks that if an individual doesn't want to buy it, maybe small groups could get together and do so -- his new idea; or, as with Olympics, a public situation; or combination of private and public.

DeMaria now feels he's obliged to come out of being a recluse and involve himself in "a strange form of politics" - get involved with social situation, etc.

"I keep wanting to say five things at once. That's the real reason you make art, I ~~think~~ ^{think} to say five or ten things at once, just like that!"

"Time is a major factor in this work (land art), and it will be the main ~~factor~~ reason why I think this work survives. A new time awareness is happening. I think you can talk about style in art in terms of their time span. Like, a fourteenth century painting, or an early thirteenth century painting, had a kind of stillness, whereas Baroque got into a kind of very jumpy time sense. The earth works have a very extended sense of time. The time is actual, too, not figurative. If you go to see a piece like the one I did with three different mile-long cuts in the desert, it takes you five hours to see it. Actually it takes all day, because you need about three hours to drive to the piece, a minimum of four hours to see it, and three hours to drive back. So you've spent ten hours involved in the piece. There's no other piece of sculpture that demands that of you. If you take a piece ~~by~~ of sculpture by David Smith or Brancusi or Giacometti -- I'm naming only major names, and there aren't many in sculpture, it's amazing how few major names there are in sculpture compared to painting -- anyway, you come into the gallery and maybe spend one minute, two minutes, three minutes, rarely any more than five minutes. With an

Smithson
Christo
William Costello
Other issues

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De Maura piece 1969 (Feb) Cornell
 earthworks show: A rectangular dirt
 bed 12' wide x 20' long by 6" high.
 Perfect rectangle, in room, with space
 to walk around. Room had two doors
 and bay window. DeM wrote in
 the dirt, in one corner, the words "good
 fuck," in letters 10" high. The director
 was offended, and closed off the room (day after opening)
 DeM withdrew from the exhibit, and
 the dirt was removed next day.

Smithson

Christo

John Cage

Other names

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Walter De Maria - bio

Born "right next to Berkeley, California, in 1936, in a town called Albany." Grew up in East Bay area of San Francisco. I was very influenced by the San Francisco mystique, and looking at the Pacific Ocean, and thinking about the Pacific, and China, and Japan and everything that lay beyond. All of California is quite influenced by Japan and Zen and that type of thing. We were quite taken by poetry all through the fifties."

"Then I went to the University at Berkeley, and I studied history -- not art, just history. Then I took a whole lot of art history as a sort of minor, and then I realized I couldn't write and was very poor at languages, I was a very bad scholar, so I started to paint and draw a lot. When I graduated I stayed on for two more years painting, and I got my MA in painting. Immediately after I graduated in 1959, I stopped painting for good. Because I realized that we had been taught what was basically a closed-end system. The system of painting that was taught was to start with plaster casts, to go on to Cezanne, and then to paint like Picasso, to break them up a little more and get a little wilder, and then to go on to Hans Hoffman, who at one time had taught at Berkeley, and start to get a little more loose, but still keeping basically some kind of a balanced picture -- a little green here, a little red there. And then they led you up to de Kooning, which was at that time to bring you right up to date. Having gone through those stages, they considered you a bona fide painter, and threw you out into the world to become another teacher like them. I realized that that system was doomed. I could have some rapport with Rothko, and Newman, who were not taught at that school at all, but I was so disgusted basically that I just stopped painting, and started making these little boxes. Which at that time was also a rejection of sculpture -- which was dominated then by people like Stankiewicz, Lippold, Ferber and these sort of welding people. I totally rejected Cubism in any form, including that kind of Cubist expressionism in de Kooning.

"Anyway, as a background I would just say that it was California for my first 25 years, and always northern California."

Father small businessman - stores. First generation American, both sets of grandparents came over about turn of century, from northern Italy. "Luckily they came all the way to the West Coast. I'm sure if they'd only come to New York I would never have been an artist, and I would hardly have become a human being. People in the East are more intellectual, and I like that, that was probably one of the main reasons I came here, but on the whole California is the leading cultural factor of The States. I couldn't live there, though!"

Came to NY winter of 1960. No real contact with art scene. Had met La Monte Young at Berkeley, who introduced him to drugs, advanced ideas (shared). They put on first happenings in Berkeley, at School of Fine Art, in 1959 -- artists, dancers abstract theater. La Monte influenced by Cage. When deM got to NY, "all I needed to know was La Monte and his ideas." Got to know Judson dancers.

First NY period -- 1960, 61, 62 - had very small loft on Bowery, \$55 month. Married a San Francisco girl. "I couldn't believe the coldness of New York that first winter." Built first boxes. Twenty-six in all. "That was sort of the beginning of minimal art. Bob Morris and I were very close friends at

Smithson

Christo

John Cage

Other notes

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* with Bob Whitman, who showed parts of the body in vinyl.

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DeMaria - bio (2)

that time. We saw each other nearly every night. Morris had started doing these boxes, mostly painted a kind of Jasper Johns gray, and I was doing my ~~xxxxx~~ plywood boxes, and it was a very interesting inte change. Morris was five years older than I was; being a little more politically aware, he was able to get an uptown show, earlier than I was.

First show in January 1963, in a storefront loft on Great Jones Street (No. 9) Box pieces. "Move the Ball Slowly Down the Row" ~~xxx~~ with partitions - when he met Scull in 1965, he commissioned having it done in stainless steel. Shows "my interest in parallel lines and in time." "The interesting word is 'Slowly.'" Also a sort of proto-Pop comic strip piece "The Adventures of Mr Ball" -- much too Pop for his taste, never did any more. Spectator places ball in one hole and it rolls in planned course through box. Pinball game piece. Participation pieces, but "much too Pop, too lively for my taste." Interesting thing was sound. Pieces called "Boxes for Meaningless Work." Also included "Cage" for John Cage, which Scull also commissioned in metal; deM. says it's "one of the best minimal pieces of ~~1961 or 1965~~" (When he made it first in wood, he called it "Statue of John Cage", but when Scull commissioned it in 1965 he changed name to "Cage"). Made up of eight, one-inch rods with end pieces, whole seven feet tall - was in Primary Structures show, 1966.

"It was interesting that the work of Morris and myself, and I guess Carl Andre too, was going on in 1961 and 1962. Most people think Minimal Art began about 1966 or 1967 because of Kynaston's show. A few things had been shown in 1963 and 1964, but it wasn't until 1966 that people became ~~xxxxxx~~ conscious of it. A lot of Morris' early work was so influenced by Duchamp and by Johns that it was just slavish. People were so much in love with Duchamp ~~that~~ anyone that did anything that looked like it -- like Jim Dine putting a shovel next to a canvas -- became the dominant mode." DeM very impressed by Duchamp, but wanted to get away from puns, back to simpler concepts. *(Box shape became principal image of Minimal Art)*

"In my own mind, I was responding to ~~things~~ ^{Duchamp} the same way that Cage and the rest of them were." But wanted to be more involved in what he was doing. Also at the time he didn't understand what he was doing the way he does now. "The piece that stands without a title is superior to the piece that depends on the title, the literary title. If you go out to the desert and see my piece, I don't have to title it. It's just there. I think that's where we can get beyond French logic. You get hit by the sun, and you've lost your logic."

Second show at Paula Johnson (now Cooper) Gallery in 1965. Very small gallery at 109 E. 69th. Had "Surprise Box" -- involved two people, each puts in something, takes something out, thus use of time.

Third show at Ekstrom in Dec. 1966. Steel pieces, mainly elaborations of wood pieces. Early numerical, systemic pieces. Also "invisible drawings" →

Nick Wilder show came next, ~~xxxxxxx~~ After break with Ekstrom (lasted 6 months), marriage breaking up too. Next show was at Nicholas Wilder Gallery in LA. Had all of 1967 to prepare for it, - show went on in April 1968. "I drove across the country -- which is one of the best experiences a person can have, I would say it's the greatest sculptural experience of my life."

Smithson
Christo
John Cooper
Other notes

Tony Smith et al

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~~High energy bar?~~

"Invisible Drawings" - six framed sheets of paper, each containing one word, in block letters, in the exact center: TREES SKY RIVER
FIELD MOUNTAIN SUN

High Energy Bars - ~~chrome~~ ^{stainless} steel bars, 14" long, ^{1 1/2" square} inscribed with that title and accompanied by a certificate affirming that it is a "High Energy Bar." No bar is "operative" without certificate.

15 of his pieces incorporate sound as an element.

Influence of Cornell. Memorless.

"Carbo" - has 27 films, in order

Dwan says that DeMaria has no intrinsic objection to photos. But feels that he doesn't want people to get a photographic image of his big Nevada piece (untitled), because it is important not to know what it looks like when you get there. You come into a deserted plain, don't know where the track leads, experience a sense of mystery - this is an important aspect of the work, which would be spoiled by photos.

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DeMario (bio -3)

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Land Works

Three Continent Piece ^{conceived} ~~sketched~~ in January 1967 (conceptual piece at first). "It was to have its first realization in January of 1969, two years later. The three continents involved were North America, India, and North Africa. In Africa, there was to be a one-mile line in the Sahara extending from north to south - a line cut with a bulldozer. In the western United States, there would be a one-mile square cut in the desert. In India there was to be a one mile line cut from east to west. When complete, all three works would be photographed from the air, and the photographs would be superimposed to create a cross within a square. I did the Algerian piece, in 1968. * But we were asked to leave the country before it was finished, so I'll have to go back sometime. The authorities there got sort of suspicious about a little group of Americans spending so much time in this tiny village. It was partly a matter of our poor French, I guess. Anyway, I'll have to return to the Sahara. I hope to do the Nevada one this year, and go to India next year. And of course the whole thing should be documented. It's gotten so you have to put a patent on your pieces now..." * line was 12' across, 3' deep.

Mojave Desert piece - April 1968. While the Nick Wilder show was on, DeM. put down two parallel lines with chalk marker in the desert, ~~one~~ each a half mile ~~each~~ in length, twelve feet apart. This was his first completed land work. Done in a "dry lake", fantastic place * "so abstract." It blew away within a month. Some land works will be very short-lived, he says, while others will last as long as New York City.

Karl Shroher, the German collector, actually went out to the desert to see some of these works. German interest quickened by Heiner Friedrich and Stroher.

~~Sketches~~

Manich piece done in October 1968 - DeM filled Heiner Friedrich's gallery with dirt. Quite a sensation (but foreshadowed by Yves Klein?)

Desert Cross in white chalk, Nevada, late 1970. 1,000' long

DeM says he's going to move back to the west soon now. "The land movement is really best in the desert. The woods and mountains are too picturesque..."

Major land piece was done in November 1969, "slightly before Heizer's Double Negative." Three miles of lines cut by bulldozer in desert (Nevada) * "in a certain configuration" -- won't describe it in words. "Basically this piece is experienced by walking." Expects it to erode within 8-10 years, then the question will be whether to re-cut it or not. Can't really be shown by photos at all. "A lot of people got the idea that land art was something you experienced by photos in magazines. There were a lot of articles." DeM took a stand at this point, said no photos would be released. "Any single photograph is invalid." Feels this stand was "probably to my detriment," considering the fame Smithsonian got out of Spiral Jetty. "But I felt that the turnaround had to happen -- we had to go back toward personal experience, no matter what the difficulties were. Maybe only twenty or thirty people would see my work in a year, but that was better than a lot of people partially seeing it through photos." * on your land - no permit - put dirt in.

"Whether we have made a jump that is in a way a jump beyond style -- that's the real question. Everybody talks about the art world as a succession of

Smithson

Stroher

Heiner Friedrich

Dietrich

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DeMaria (bio - 4)

styles-- Cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Abstraction, Kinetic Art, and so forth. Hopefully, this is something beyond that, a quantum leap. I think the experience of this art will make you feel different than you've ever felt before in the presence of art.

* | "Invisibility may be the main/ common denominator of art. Science says matter is composed of invisible particles called electrons. The notion that things exist that you can't see -- it's not really accepted, but it's there.

Cross in Desert - done late last year, 1970. Disappeared by now, blown away.

Want release pix - Weber says he has excellent photos (aerial) of major Nevada piece, but de M. won't allow them to be shown. Mystery.

David Bourdon, in Art International (Dec 1968) said de Maria wants to produce what he calls "the single experience." Adds: "But de Maria is endlessly intrigued by the conflict of idea and form. (No matter how pure I try to be,' he says, 'something always enters in, a streak of non-purity. It's at that point, where warm meets cold, action meets inaction, that's what interests me. And what goes on in people's minds.'"

| Also quotes de M. that "the great appreciation for slow time is the contribution of the drug sensibility of the sixties."

* *Irony. His Munich Olympics piece would be mostly invisible. His major desert piece turned out to be invisible, to us, at least.*

Smithson
Christo
Yellow Curator
Other issues

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De Maria - quotes

"Meaningless work is obviously the most important and significant art form today...Meaningless work cannot be sold in art galleries or win prizes in museums...By meaningless work I simply mean work which does not make you money or accomplish a conventional purpose." (e.g., "digging a hole, then covering it". (from "An Anthology," 1960)

"Whether the meaningless work, as an art form, is meaningless, in the ordinary sense of that term, is of course up to the individual. Meaningless work is the new way to tell who is square." (ibid)

"I don't think art can stand up to nature. Put the best object you know next to the grand canyon, niagra falls, the red woods. The big things always win." ("On The Importance of Natural Disasters", 1960)

(Also note Nam June Paik, in "An Anthology," on art vs. nature):

"If nature is more beautiful than art is, it is not so because of its intensity or complexity but because of its variability, abundant abundance, endless ~~and~~ quantity." (Tab 4)

Smithson

Christo

John Cage

Duke Ellington

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LOG - 4

June 16 - Vegas

Nuclear shot apparently went off. Temp. 108 again.

Left town abt 1:45 PM, for deMaria's piece. Drove north ^{past} again on Freeway, further out this time, past Glendale exit, nearly to Arizona border, getting off at "Carp-Elgin" exit and onto dirt road into the desert. Walter had drawn a rough map, showing turnoff, dirt road through hills, green trailer and corrals, dirt landing strip, and right after that a road going off sharply to the left which we were to take for one mile, park, and set off on foot.

DeMaria sometimes refers to the piece as "Rip-off," because it's on govt land. Dwan said he was a very mysterious person, the only one of the three likely to ponder over something for a long time before doing it. (As we grew more and more frustrated looking for the piece, Dwan even admitted that it was possible he had deliberately misled us).

Took one wrong road not shown on map, taking us to opposite end of valley. (Jule V.) Dwan thought she did recognize the valley, a wide expanse ringed with high, spectacular mts, some with snowcapped peaks. Full of desert flowers and birds, but not another human soul. We retraced our course back to the other road and took it, going past green trailer and corrals as indicated. Kept on that road until we left the valley again, passing abandoned mining site not mentioned on map. Had missed landing strip. Went back, took a washed out road to the left (map left) on which we nearly got stuck several times in deep sand, kept hitting bottom of the Hertz. Got out, walked quarter mile, saw nothing. Went back down the road. ~~This~~ Took a better dirt road off to left, one mile; walked half a mile, saw nothing. Back down road again, and suddenly we did see what seemed like an overgrown landing strip, which meant that road we were just on must have been the one on map. Went back there and tried again, I did anyway. Walked a mile at least. Found white skullbone of cow. Saw jackrabbit. Lizards darting underfoot. Slight breeze springing up. Felt like I was in a Hitchcock movie (yesterday, on the mesa, it seemed more like Antonioni). Returned hot and tired. No Rip-off. Had someone stolen it? Had it disappeared? Did Walter intend for us not to find it?

Spiky desert plants, many in bloom. Brutal looking mountains. At seven PM we called it quits and headed home. "He might at least have put out one little marker," Dwan said glumly. Reminded that when deMaria was still with Ekstrom, she had tried to see his work but he wouldn't let her. For a whole year she was unable to see his work.

Going back, she talked a little about her gallery. Started in LA, where she showed New York artists. Liked especially Reinhardt and hard-edge people, but interested more in sculpture. So when minimal came along she liked it immediately. Closed LA gallery 1966.

DeMaria was divorced a couple of years ago. Very secretive.

Back at the hotel, Dwan locked out of her room because she had only prepaid one day. No credit card. Went over to Causar's Palace, where the waitresses wear one-shoulder togas and Liberace packs them in onstage. Joe Louis watching the Baccarat ("Open 24 Hours").

Smithson

Christo

William C. C. C.

Others notes

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* Coming back to Vegas, Dwan described the de Maria piece. It is a hollow square, one mile in each direction. You enter about the half way point in one side, walk to end, turn corner. Each cut is about six inches deep, and ten or eleven feet wide. The turns are at right angles, and you can't see them until you're there, nor can you see any other parts of the square. About half way around, you realize it is a square. At the far corner, there is a small square within the square, which is an optional walk. One must walk it alone, and Dwan says that's a sort of scary feeling out in the middle of the desert.

The problem I wonder about is that by the time one ~~finis~~ gets to the piece, assuming one does, one may be too tired to walk it with any proper reverence.

Smithson

Christo

William Costantini

Others notes

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Smithson

Artists

William C. C. C.

Others

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Robert Smithson - 799 Greenwich St. 5/4/71 (WA 9-1947)

Quiet and soft spoken, but more articulate than Heizer. Husky. Long black hair, no beard no moustache. Lives in roomy apartment with wife. Lots of navigational charts on walls, lots of books. Hanging on wall is tumbleweed with salt crystals from Great Salt Lake; opposite wall has huge poster photo of Spiral Jetty, his major work to date. We started talking about that.

Spiral Jetty

Smithson said he started thinking about salt lakes a couple of years ago, partly as result of reading book called "Lost Lakes of Bolivia." An excess of salt in water gives it a red color and promotes the growth of algae. He asked around, geologists and so on, and learned that the northern end of the Great Salt Lake in Utah was quite red - one geologist said it was "the color of tomato soup." He went out and spent about two months scouting for a good location. One problem was that most parts of the lake had mud flats extending out quite a way into the water; he had to find a place where the water came right to the edge. Driving through the valley to the location he eventually chose, he was excited by the topography -- lots of broken boulders, which meant he wouldn't have to quarry any. The site itself more or less suggested the shape of the piece, although S. says he's always been interested in spirals, and had had them in mind for the airport ~~project~~ ^{project} he worked on in 1966 (never came off). With financial support of the Dwan Gallery and the Ace Gallery in LA he took a 20-year lease on 10 acres of the lake and shoreline. ~~There was considerable red tape to go through, some problem finding contractor.~~

"The actual building took two weeks." Found contractor in Ogden, Utah - Parsons Asphalt Company. He agreed to take his equipment out there -- two dump trucks, bulldozer, front-loader. "Actually he got quite excited about doing the piece." Other contractors approached afraid of losing their machines - there was a slight question, because heavy concentration of gumbo mud on site, but it turned out reef he'd chosen was solid enough. Smithson staked it out, they started working just about a year ago (April 1970). This is time of year when crystals grow best, because of water temperature. "The water evaporates - there's no tide in the lake - and at this time of year there's about two feet of water around the jetty. In the winter there's more water, but it's too cold for the crystals to grow." Also a kind of sulphur content in crystals, which takes form of yellow striations. In late August and early autumn, you get a sort of white slush around jetty as water evaporates and leaves very heavy concentrations of salt. Remains like this until midwinter, when rain and snow causes water to rush in from mountains, lake rises (but never under water). Very little wave action. Rocks are vesicular, catch crystals as they form.

"The site really influenced the form. I didn't want to impose a rectangular shape on that site, where everything was ~~in a straight line~~ full of curves, and sort of swirling effect. There are like three ways of looking at the jetty. When you're on it, the rocks ~~echo~~ echo the horizon, so there's this back and forth kind of scale change and it's all concentrated in this area of the spiral. I took it way out as far as I could get (into the water). If you walk up in the hills, the whole shape emerges. Then, if you fly over it, there's actually the possibility of working with the sun, getting the sun ~~right~~ ^{right} into it, so you get this kind of burn-off. So it kind of has a sort of generating ~~xxx~~ scale, it's not just one object - typical gestalt type

Christo
Wally, Currier
Others in 70s

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sculpture single-shot view. It has a kind of multiplicity of scale." ~~xxxx~~

Contractor: Bob Phillips, of Parsons Asphalt, had done mostly asphaltting of roads, some dikeing. "But he just responded on a very gut level to what we were doing. At first the workmen were a little doubtful, but as soon as they got into it the whole problem of moving those trucks -- backing them out there -- they really got into it. The man at the Golden Spike Motel got interested too. I just liked Utah very much. I think it's going through a change, becoming like a very attractive place to go. Everything is ~~xx~~ ^{kind of} accessible.

Spirals: First came up in Smithsonian's "Gyro-stations," which were triangulations of spirals, geometric versions of spirals, which he used in his abstract work. "I was never too happy with the kind of Reinhartian symmetries, I was always involved in a kind of irregular mode of abstraction." Airport project was going to be geometric spirals out on the fringes of the airport. "It just sort of hit that that was the place to do the spiral." One of nature's basic shapes. "You can take it from the nebula down to the salt crystal itself, which grows in a spiral. All crystals grow in a spiral, the DNA and the double helix and ~~xxx~~ that, hurricanes, etc. I collected some information on them from various writers. Fabubert was going to write a novel about a spiral, but he never got around to it. Also there's a strange little sketch that Brencusi made, it's called "Portrait of James Joyce," a tiny sketch of James Joyce's ear in the shape of a spiral -- and of course people say the structure of Finnegen's Wake is a spiral.

How do you think of Spiral Jetty, as sculpture? "I just think of it as art." Categories of art breaking down, can't really define self as painter, sculptor. "There's a certain serenity in knowing it's out there. You don't have to ~~xxxx~~ install sculpture in a sculpture garden."

"There's a great sensitivity in my work to the properties of the site. A painting can't really exist anywhere -- it can't exist out on the street. The site determines the ambiance of a piece, you can't avoid that problem."

Jetty has been on TV in Utah. It gets quite a few visitors, and one never knows what may happen. Yellowstone Park gets hundreds of thousands.

Photographs of work: "I have to consider photographs as material of a different order. The camera actually aids perception in some sense, it gives a kind of objectivity, suspends and freezes your experience, that's one of the good things about it. I think the use of film or photos is not to be run away from, but you still have to confront the problem of the natural world. Photography is like a world unto itself."

Scale: "Scale to me is not so much a matter of measurement. You never can quite locate it finally. Big and large can reverse themselves..."

Christo
Wally, Curator
Others in 1975

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Dwan's "10 x 10" show in 1966 included minimal work by Andre, Jo Baer, Flavin, Judd, LeWitt, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris, Oel Reinhardt, Smittson, Michael Steiner.

Christo

Wally, Curson

Others 1970s

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Father a banker - mortgage loans.

Smithson bio

Born Passaic, NJ. ^{Jan} (1938) Moved to Rutherford, where William Carlos Williams was his baby doctor. Then moved to Clifton, went high school there. Came to NY right after graduation. ^{had} studied at Art Students League while in high school. Wanted to get right into painting. Met the artists at Cedar Bar. First show at the Artists' Gallery (cooperative) in 1959 -- kind of combination of deKooning, Dubuffet, Pollock, Rauschenberg, sort of collage. Took about three years working through various styles. Had jobs -- RAL., bookstores. Six months in Army, then six months hitchhiking. Married 1963.

Started working with plastics about 1964. Instead of paint. Pre-cut panels. "And got more into a sort of crystalline frame of reference, that was moving toward the area of abstraction." Developed work with three-dimensional plastic pieces (colored), crystalline forms. Got into working with these crystalline permutations.

First show at Dwan in 1966. "I had sort of reached a level of abstraction. But abstraction in a funny way seems to ~~draw~~ ^{draw} you very far from any kind of natural problem. In a way I've always been drawn to natural problems, there's been that kind of element ~~coming into~~ ^{coming into} my work. There's a certain truth to the idea that the urge toward abstraction involves a ~~certain~~ ~~of~~ fear of the natural ~~work~~ problem. There are, like, a hundred different views of nature, ~~and the urge toward abstraction~~ which presents a kind of epochal situation, and the urge toward abstraction is a kind of renunciation of that problem." This line of thought brought on the site-non-sites, which came out of the abstract works. "There seems to be a kind of dialogue taking place between the organic world and the mental-personal world."

Yucatan piece, involving twelve squares of mirror glass stuck into various sites in Yucatan. Led right to Spiral Jetty, where the lake becomes the mirror for the rocks and sediment.

"Then I did a lot of writing, too, which helped me to formulate the ideas." (Artforum, etc).

Maps - "Arrived at that while I was working with my crystalline structures. I realized that the way crystal structure operated essentially, was to take a crystal and then map it, or abstract it from the natural property, so that you'd have a sort of mental grid version of ~~it~~ a crystal. It seemed to me that within this area of crystal structure, mapping procedures were involved. In an article I wrote for the airport project I even toyed ~~with~~ with the idea of taking the crystal structure and just stepping it up to the geographic ~~and~~ grids -- they both operate ~~in~~ the same way, with verticals and horizontals. I gradually got into that, I started seeing it everywhere -- most abstractions were predicated on verticals and horizontals ~~and~~ ~~xx~~ grids, and the six basic geometric shapes. So the geometricizing of the raw material -- you can take that right up to a global map.

"So I began cutting these grids up, and making abstract versions. ^{(That led to the} non-sites, ^{which} were three dimensional maps that contain particles from designated areas. They're abstract, they're not representational maps. I guess they represent a kind of personal ~~archaeological~~ archaeology. The preoccupation with paint -- you take paint back far enough, and you get to the raw material used to make it."

How he got involved with crystal structure: "Well, actually reduction from a kind of ~~abstract~~ ^{and I wish I knew} expressionism -- reducing out the figurative element,

Christo
Wally Goffman
Others maps

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"I began as kind of an expressionist, and gradually worked myself to a greater consciousness of abstraction." Met Ad Reinhart around 1965, strong impression. Also Sol Lewitt, Donald Judd, other minimalists.

Speaks often of the "dialogue between abstraction and nature, the dialectic of the non sites."

Lately has become more interested in all different ideas of nature in art.

Entropy -- his use is closer to Levy-Strauss view than to Fuller. Layers of structures.

"You can't assign any morality to nature."

"I'm just a geologic agent. Each piece I do just concentrates the geology of that area."

Use of water: interest in mirrors. Primordial combination of water and earth. "Formless and formal dialogue."

"There is just no ~~any~~ clear way of determining the value of this sort of work. It has to develop. There are no known antecedents..."

Christo
Yellow Curator
Others name

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Smithson bio -- 2

getting rid of all the figurative forms, finally getting down to just a crystalline form. Out of that came all these permutations, maps, non-sites, a kind of working with hypothetical problems having to do with the way the world was before man appeared. Getting back to geologic map surfaces.

"As a kid, I used to have a museum in the basement, where I had rock collections and shell collections. I used to go on hunts. I travelled a lot with my parents, and always looked out for fossils. Sort of a private interest independent from school. I wasn't motivated by the ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{imposed} subjects, and I had this private world that kept me going. At the same time I was interested in becoming a zoologist, or a naturalist, but gradually I discovered I had more of an esthetic interest than a scientific one. I decided to be an artist when I was about fifteen. Actually my great grandfather was an artist -- he was involved in ornamental plastering. Did Delmonicos, all sorts of ~~xxxxxx~~ interiors.

Non-Sites - Smithson cut out from topographical map, then used that shape as basis ^(roughly) for his three-dimensional bins containing particles from site. Mono Lake map looks like a frame - just traces of map as border; made non-site after that, using cut-out map as drawing. *First was Pine Barrens non-site, 1967 - sand & grit. Mapping ideas, grew out of airport project. Dialogue between Smithson & Cullen, back & forth etc. Dwan show of non-sites 1969.*

Other Earth Artists

In 1966 Smithson wanted to do collaborative show. Only people interested then were Carl Andre, Bob Morris, Sol LeWitt. They went down to Pine Barrens looking for land. "It sort of fell through. It wasn't enough of a context." ~~xxxxxx~~

Soon after, Smithson wrote article on airport project. 1967. Then Dennis Oppenheim contacted him, and Mike Heizer. "I was sort of excited by what they were doing, especially Mike. It turned out that Mike had been involved in this, somewhat in the area of abstractions, working with liners that were imbedded in the ground. ^{As} Our thinking developed, we ~~got~~ ^{became} more and more ~~involved~~ involved with the earth. (cf "Sedimentation of the Mind," in Artforum).

Airport Project - Smithson hired by Tippetts, Abbott, McCarthy & Stratton, big engineering company with offices in Seagram Bldg. Walter Procasch hired him. "I would go in maybe two or three times a month to talk with the architects about my ideas for spaces around the airport.* Gradually I just got away from the idea of the airport altogether, out to the fringes. At that time my art was still emerging from abstraction, ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ reductive abstraction..."

* Grant air Terminal near Fort Worth, Texas
~~xxxxxx~~

Christo
Walter Procasch
Others maps

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Smithson (ideas)

(2)

Earth Art & the Ecology Movement

"I think the ecology thing has a kind of religious, ethical undertone to it. It's like the official religion., that's replaced all the old ethics and Judeo-Christian attitudes. There's one good book, it's called Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory, by Marjorie Nicholson, about man's attitude toward the earth. She deals with man's changing attitude toward the earth, like through religions. It seems that in Shakespeare's time nature was considered really corrupt. Shakespeare thought that mountains were disfigurements, John Donne wrote about that too... People still had the idea that the world was fallen and essentially corrupt. You go back to the classical period and find there were no landscapes in Greek art, it's all sort of anthropomorphic, with an occasional tree or something. Suddenly we had the landscape painters, preoccupied with landscape...

"I think the ecology movement has an idea of scenery that's esthetically based in the late nineteenth century. I don't think it's fully explored. A kind of puritanical, apocalyptic, doomsday attitude. I don't think I'm independent of nature. In the puritan ethic there's a tendency to put man outside of nature, so that what he does is ultimately unnatural. There's this dualism lurking around the subject. The Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir period brought about this ^{return}~~back~~-to-the-wilderness idea -- let's go back to Eden, to an unspoiled world. To me, there are the three different aspects -- there's wilderness, and there's the country, where man has been, and then there's the urban area, and it's like a crystal growth, the urban area is no more unnatural than Yellowstone Park. And then there's the sentimental idea that nature is all good. They always forget about the earthquakes, typhoons, all those things."

Ecology is interesting movement, but doesn't really look into its own sources enough. "When everybody agrees, you have to be kind of suspicious."

"As I say, the urge toward abstraction is the flight from nature. That's what we're coming into contact with now. The lyrical abstraction, and a lot of the so-called conceptual art is ~~just a kind of~~ ^{nothing but} atrophy, a kind of Reinhartian abstraction taken to a kind of linguistic level.

"I think we're just discovering the multiplicity of nature's ways.

Christo
Vollin Curson
Others 1975

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Smithson quotes (published articles)

On how he chooses sites: "I begin in a very primitive way by going from one point to another. I started taking trips to specific sites in 1965: certain sites would appeal to me more -- sites that had been in some way disrupted or pulverized. I was looking for a denaturalization rather than built-up scenic beauty. And when you take a trip you need a lot of precise data, so often I would use quadrangle maps; the mapping followed the travelling." (~~Artforum~~, Avdlaunko No 1, Fall 1970)

"I don't think you're freer artistically in the desert than you are inside a room." (ibid)

"I ~~think~~ don't think we're dealing with matter in terms of a back to nature movement. For me the world is a museum. Photography makes nature obsolete. My thinking in terms of the site and the non-site makes me feel there's no need to refer to nature anymore. I'm totally concerned with making art and this is mainly an act of viewing, a mental activity that zeroes in on discrete sites. I'm not interested in presenting the medium for its own sake. I think that's a weakness of a lot of contemporary work." (ibid)

"It's an art of uncertainty because instability in general has become very important. So the return to Mother Earth is a revival of a very archaic sentiment." (ibid)

"You know, one pebble moving one foot in two million years is enough action to keep me really excited." (ibid)

"Photographs steal away the spirit of the work..."

"I am convinced that the future is lost somewhere in the dumps of the non-historical past; it is in yesterday's newspapers, in the jejeune advertisements of science-fiction movies, in the false mirror of our rejected dreams." (From "The Monuments of Passaic," Artforum, Dec 1967)

"...one cannot avoid muddy thinking when it comes to earth projects... One's mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought." (A Sedimentation of the Mind, Artforum, Sept '67)

"Art today is no longer an architectural afterthought, or an object to attach to a building after it is finished, but rather a total engagement with the building process from the ground up and from the sky down. The old landscape of naturalism and realism is being replaced by the new landscape of abstraction and artifice." (ibid)

"Pavements, holes, trenches, mounds, heaps, paths, ditches, roads, terraces etc., all have an esthetic potential." (Artforum, June 1967)

"Abstraction is everybody's zero but nobody's nought." (Arts, Feb. 1967)

"Painting, sculpture and architecture are finished, but the art habit continues." (ibid)

Christo
William Souton
Robert Rauschenberg

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Smithson quotes (published) - 2

"Far from creating a mood of dread, the power failure (1966) created a mood of euphoria. An almost cosmic joy swept over all the darkened cities. Why people felt that way may never be answered."
(Artforum, June 1966, "Entropy and the New Monuments")

"Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future." (ibid)

("Entropy is evolution in reverse" - Wylie Sypher)

Christo
Wally, Cur Van
Others 1975

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LOG - 5

June 17 - Vegas to Salt Lake

Took 10:49 flight to SLC. Another city ringed with mts, really big ones, lots of snow on top (still skiing at Durango). Got car for drive to Brigham City, which turned out to be a lot further than I'd thought (100 miles)

Dwan mentioned Smithson's Vancouver project. He wanted to make a "Glass Island," had permission from govt to completely coat a small uninhabited island in the bay with broken glass. Another water/island piece. The ecologists stopped him, claiming it would hurt the seals. Smithson quite put out. "These boys think ecology is a dirty word."

Stopped in Brigham City to ask directions from manager of Golden Spike Motel. Couldn't find GS Motel for quite a while, which seemed a bad sign. The manager, when we did find it, said he hadn't been out ~~xxx~~ to the Jetty since last fall but hoped to go soon. Not many locals even know about it, he said, because of it's being on private property (at least road to it is). He gave us copious directions, which seemed very confusing.

Drove out ~~xx~~ toward Golden Spike Natl Historical Site, abt 30 miles further. Got to that OK - low bldg, two antique locomotives (the "Jupiter" and the ~~119~~ "119") meeting on little stretch of track, to commemorate linking up of first continental RR link in 1869, marker on spot (but no RR there now). On Promontory Point north of Great Salt Lake.

After that, the promised landmarks didn't materialize. No "Dead End" signs at all. Took one wrong turn, came back, then Dwan sort of followed her nose, sorting out a succession of farm roads and heading toward the lake. Really lovely rolling landscape, very empty, catt~~le~~ and sheep, birds of all kinds including a marvellous ~~xxxx~~ brown bird with a long, down-curving, very narrow bill. Lots of shore and game birds - a refuge nearby. *Seagulls, pelicans (Mormon's seagull legend)*

Down to the water at last, and there indeed were some oil wells, out on jetty into water. But no road off through rocks to Jetty. However we could see jetty about a mile down the beach, so we walked. On the beach, over beds of tar oozing in places. It was five PM by this time, hot sun still beating down. The man at the motel had said the lake was unusually high this year, and the piece might even be under water. It hearily was. Only the edges were visible. The middle was under several inches, and the mud so soft that you couldn't walk it. Got a foot full of tar, and had to spend a while scraping off the worst of it. The water very warm, and so full of salt it stung a little - left crust of white as it dried. Water quite red, about the color of rust. *Black boulders: vesicular basalt.*

Walked back a ways. The shoreline slopes gently up for a while, then rises sharply to a ridge. Strewn with large, black, rather shiny boulders - Dwan said the were volcanic. Grass and heather. A kind of chemical smell. Struggled up to the top of the ridge, from which the Jetty emerged clearly and distinctly. A very precise shape. The underwater park dark shadow, curling to a delicate ~~end~~. From here the scale is entirely different, much smaller and more gemlike, and in propo~~rtion~~ to the vast lake not particularly strong. The landscape itself is huge and desolate. Salt flats stretching out for miles. Islands in the lake itself, bluish mountains all around, looking immemorially eroded and old, not jagged at all here. Like Heizer's *(greenish white)*

Christo

Vella, Canyon, Dikes, maps

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LOG - 6

piece, this one seemed smaller than anticipated. But in that absolutely still water, in the dense quiet, the motionless silence, a lovely and almost comforting image.

Considered what a strange thing it was to be sitting on a black rock overlooking the north end of the Great Salt Lake, where someone had made a jetty in the form of one of those paper toys that children blow into a birthday parties to make them unroll. What else would ever have brought me here? Not at all sorry I am here, but seems odd

Descended the hill. Dwan wanted to walk out to the edge of the salt flats to see if there were still dead pelicans, caught apparently in oil there. She went, and said there were. The ~~gas~~ odometer in the car registered 126 miles from SLC airport. Sun was going down. We finally left about 7:00.

Out at the turn off from the main road, there is the "World's Largest Solid Rocket Motor Research and Production Facility," the Wasatch Division of Thiokol Chemical Works. All in primary colors. Sign warns off the curious, saying "Thiokol Chemical Corporation is not responsible for injuries or damage or loss of personal property." The death industry is everywhere in the West, all done up in pretty colors

Christo
Walter Gropius
Others in 1955

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[Faint, illegible text on a large yellow sheet of paper]

Christo
Vollis, Constance
Others in 1955

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(27)

Christo Javacheff - 48 Howard Street (966-4437) 5/14/71

Christo was just back from Holland, where he did a piece (?). Of the four, he is the only one with really long hair. Thin, ascetic, scholar's face, brilliant smile. His English is still very poor, barely usable. During interview he had phone call from Jan van der Marck, the Project Director, in Colorado, saying there was a new problem about insurance.

The entire costs of the Valley Curtain are being paid by the sale of Christo's own works, -- current works such as drawings, models etc for curtain itself, and older works going back to 1958 or so, ~~xxxxx~~ of which there are about seventy in storage here and in Europe. Sponsors are allowed their pick. No money goes to Christo himself, but to the "Valley Curtain Corporation." "Officially I am the only stockholder of the corporation. # Shares are sold, and shareholders get works by Christo. More than half of cost will be paid by works relating to Valley Curtain, the rest from older works. Christo would like it if museums or donors would just make outright grants, but says this has never happened -- some museum directors have been willing, but trustees never are. The corporation will be liquidated at the end of December.

Project was started in March 1970. The engineering firm of Lev Zetlin Associates, Inc., which was recommended by Armand Bartos, gave an initial estimate of \$250,000 for the job. About five weeks ago, this figure ~~jumped~~ jumped to more than \$400,000. The construction firm is Morrison-Knudson of Boise, Idaho, a giant outfit.

~~Some workmen~~ Some workmen (about ten) are on the site now, laying power lines etc. Work on foundations will take some time - two foundations on mountains, ten in the valley to attach bottom of curtain. The curtain itself will go up in about three hours, once the main cable and pickup cable have been stretched. Will take place between five and eight a.m., when the wind is at its stillest, and will be done as fast as possible. On that day there may be as many as eighty people working on job. Original timetable was for this to take place July 1, but now looks more like July 8.

This is Christo first big American project. Ironically, most of the sponsors are European. Although the Houston Museum recently came through, and will exhibit photos, models of curtain tracing its conception - exhibition to open June 25. One of big problems will be with American union regulations -- Christo has been warned never to get into any sort of argument with the workmen, because they're likely to go out on strike. "Never dispute with a worker..."

The curtain idea is not a new one for Christo. In 1961-62 in Paris, he did an "Iron Curtain" piece consisting of a wall of oil drums entirely blocking the Rue Visconti for three hours, with permission of authorities (difficult to get because this was at height of Algerian War). Then in 1964 he did his "Shop Window" with curtain in it. The "idea of closing, of stopping the circulation between two places" has interested him. In 1969 he proposed a grandiose project for closing off all East-West highways in US by means of glass walls from 38 to 48 feet high; it was not carried out.

Having decided on "Valley Curtain" following his wrapped coastline, Christo surveyed about 3000 miles of the Rockies by airplane and Jeep. He had consulted his friend John Powers, who lives in Aspen, and decided on Rockies. But it had to be ~~in~~ at lower altitude than Aspen because preliminary work

Valley Curtain
Dikers notes

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Christo - 27

on foundations would have to be done in March and April, and around Aspen there would still be snow then.

Christo located eleven sites that would be suitable, all at altitudes between 5000 and 8000 feet. He tried to avoid National Forests and National Parks, because of difficulty in dealing with govt authorities. The best site from this point of view was Rifle. The land there was privately owned, by two individuals (a tiny portion is govt land, unfortunately). One of them asked only a trifling sum, \$400. The other, a PanAm pilot, wanted \$6000 rent. In the end they rented the whole property for \$9,000 for nine months -- \$6000 to one and \$3000 to other.

Christo and Van der Marck (who largely speaks for him) had three meetings with the locals in Rifle -- Mayor, President of Chamber of Commerce, Director of Country Club. "We made friends, and they understood that we were serious. They were very straight people. They know the project will cost something, that there is power there." Absolutely no problems with local people, Christo says. The people in the state capital had a different view - more complicated politically. Hundreds of letters were exchanged. Van der Marck can give details. Something called the "Open Space Committee of Colorado," a conservation organization, also made problems. Very much against the project, worried about the shadow cast by the curtain and its effect on insects and other creatures; a friend of a friend of Christo got a Harvard biologist to reassure them.

~~xxxxxxx~~

It will cost about \$35,000 just to remove the project in September. Christo hopes to sell the cloth, cables etc and get back some of this.

Orange fabric - the curtain material is very strong, but it also happens to be highly sensitive to sunlight (infra-red rays). If it were white, it would lose 15% of its strength after 3 months. Orange, it will lose hardly any.

Specifics

Curtain will span two mountain slopes, 1,250 feet apart, at height varying from 400' to 250', partitioning Rifle Gap. This is in Grand Hogback area of Rockies, seven miles north of Rifle (pop. 2,150), 200 m. west of Denver.

Fabric is industrial nylon polyamide manufactured by J.P. Stevens and Co. 18,000 linear yards needed for 250,000 square feet; 8,000 lbs. Has tensile strength of 5,000 lbs/ft. Width: 1300-2000 ft. Height: 350-500 ft.

Suspended by three steel cables - two main and one pickup - with length of 1,375 feet and weight of 30,500 lbs each.

Land leased for 9 months. Colorado State Highway #325 which runs thru Gap will be kept open by arched opening 100' wide and 20' high. No tree cutting or terrain clearing.

Project Director: Jan van der Marck, former director of Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Contact: PO Box 1148, Rifle, Colo., 81650.

Consulting Engineers: Lev Zetlin Associates, 95 Madison Ave., NYC

Sixty miles at seams!

Porosity: Found you'd lose more in strength than you gain in wind factor, so made it non-porous. Curtain will belly out nearly 100 feet in wind.

Yellow Curtain
Dikes in miles

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Christo - misc.

"I never think the final product is the main thing. The whole time I spend working is what is important to me."

Christo has a plan for an enormous pyramid of oil drums, for Houston. Would cost about \$7 million, and so far there are no takers. He has drawings and a scale model in his loft.

On earth artists: "The earth artists are very esthetical, I think. They are not interested in human relations. They treat the desert like the studio -- they make holes in it. ~~and they~~ I use the city, the street, the parks, the ocean... The reason I chose the coastline to wrap is that the coastline is where the earth starts and the ocean ends."

Art as a kind of information -- "Everything exists by report of us."

"I never believe art exists forever. It exists when artists need it, and after that there is only the record."

On photographs: "I believe enormously in information." The photos provide that, and as a result one project leads to another, helps to finance another. Photographs and documents "do not give the same verity" as seeing the work in person, but provide another kind of information about it.

Quotes:

"...Christo, like other artists of his generation, wanted to combine, in a double focus, an untransformed object with a new object, a work of art."

Christo is anti-conceptual. As VanderM. says, he "fully intends to see his work executed." Contrast with Oldenburg's proposed monuments.

When he wrapped the museum in Chicago, Sherman Lee, in NYT, consigned VanderMarck among "the heathen who have defiled the temple." (NYT, 3/9/69).

Yellow Curly Hair
Dikens notes

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* Wrappings include: bottles, boxes, furniture, stacks of magazines, baby carriages, cameras, automobiles, road signs, trees, girls, ~~etc.~~
TV sets, radios, ~~television~~

VanderMarck lists some popular associations with wrapping: "notions of concealment, ~~obstruction~~ death, transport, protection, construction." Also, obstruction.

C. wrapped his first objects in Paris as part of a room-sized work called Inventory - bottles, boxes, cans, oil drums etc.

Volley Curran

Dikens notes

love

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Christo - bio

Father a well-to-do mgr of chemical products; mother's family active politically. Born June 13, 1935, in Gabrovo, Bulgaria. Studied at Fine Arts Acad in Sofia, 1951-56. Studied theater design in Prague, 1956. Also spent one semester at Vienna Fine Arts Acad. Came to Paris in 1958, to US 1964.

"I believe very much in the sociological side of art. When I was in Bulgaria I was always involved in manifestations, propaganda activities..."

Says the two major influences on him were Meyerhold, and the team of Vactango(?) and Andre Chekov, who did spectacles. Now, he tends to stress the sociological aspects of his projects -- the numbers of people involved, the politics of getting them done, the spectacle, etc.

In 1950s in Bulgaria, like all young people, Christo spent one day a week at compulsory labor on state farms and public projects. Helped put up propaganda billboards, stack and cover hay in fields, etc. *Socialist realism in painting.*
"Agit-prop" work in villages and factories.

"Christo considers his work in the theater the most formative of his artistic experiences." (VanderM.) With Massalitano and Vesseliev, former assistants to Stanislavsky and Meyerhold. In Prague he worked with the Burian Theater, one of most active in East Europe. The Hungarian rising prompted him to flee west. First to Vienna, then to Geneva where he earned living as portrait painter, then, in 1958, to Paris. Joined New Realists about 1960, although Restany didn't think his ~~work~~ *wrappings* quite qualified. ↗

Oil Drum Wall in Rue Visconti, ^{("Iron Curtain") 204 oil drums} summer of 1962, confirmed his status. He also showed that fall in Janis Pop show, ~~NY shows~~ Show windows and store fronts in 1964, the year he moved to NYC.

"Temporary monuments" - stacks of oil drums along Rhine water front, ^(Cologne) etc.

Air structures began 1966 - for first one-man museum show at Stedelijk van Abbe Museum; another in Minneapolis, 1966 (32x64 foot tape-sealed polyethylene hull stuffed with balloons of various sizes). Most spectacular was for 1968 Kassel Documenta IV - "5,600 Cubic Meter Package" with height of 280 feet, diameter 33 feet, secured by steel cables (as high as Seagram Bldg in NY). ^{filled with helium.} World's largest inflatable. *\$70,000 cost.*

In Germany in 1963 he wrapped a nude model in transparent polyethylene and tied her into package with rope. Did it ~~in~~ again in ~~Chicago~~ Minneapolis in 1967 and Philadelphia 1968.

Packaged buildings began as idea in 1961 - many drawings and photo montages for projects in Paris and NY. Has wrapped two museums - Kunsthalle in Bern (1968, polyethylene) and Mus. Contemp Art in Chicago (1969, canvas tarps). Arranged to have two buildings in Spoleto wrapped as part of 1968 Festival there. In 1969 wrapped Amerika house in Heidelberg.

Land Wraps - first proposal was for wrapping sculpture garden at MOMA. Not realized, nor was proposal to wrap 15 miles of southern California coast. *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Sydney, 1969 - one mile; 1 million sq. feet fabric, 36 miles rope. (see over)*

Does not write about his work. "If I cannot make art, I would rather go for a walk than write about it."

Loves to think of the Great Wall of China, which he calls "marvellously nonsensical."

Yellow Curtain
Dikers ropes

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(3)

Christo - David Bourdon monograph

"In~~xxx~~ all his packages, he transforms familiar objects into ambivalent presences..."

20th century preoccupation with "packaging."^u Objects "metaphysically in transit."

Man Ray's "The Enigma of Isadore Ducasse" (1920 - no longer exists); cloth and rope over sewing machine. "But despite the visual similarity, Man Ray's package sets out to be, deliberately mysterious, while Christo's packages are ~~xxx~~ intended to be not so much mysterious as disquieting."

Never wraps neatly -- expressionistic. Cords crisscross erratically.

William S. Rubin, curator of ptg & sculp. at MOMA, calls him "an artist functioning more in the realm of 'events' than in that of painting and sculpture" Allen Kaprow dedicated a 1968 Happening to Christo - "Transfer", with metal barrels loaded and unloaded, sprayed, etc. But Christo himself says differente in his work is that it's always literal, never just theatrical.

"Spending vast sums of money excites Christ~~o~~ nearly as much as dealing in vast quantities of materials."c

Christo quote on ~~xx~~ book and photo records of his work: "The book will be the only remaining record and p~~ro~~of that the art once existed, but the realization is more important than the book-record."

MOMA wrapping project: Was to celebrate the closing of "Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage" show in June, 1968. Cancelled ~~xxxxxxx~~ because insurance costs would have been prohibitive - not fire, but fear of civil disorders.

Kunsthalle wrapping celebrated 50th anniversary of museum - 27,000 square feet of reinforced ployethylene, left over from skin of discarded Kassel balloon.

Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art wrapping began Jan. 1969. Had been headquarters of Playboy Enterprises. 10,000 square feet heavy tarpaulin; 4,000 feet manila rope. Also inside, with painters drop cloths. Sherman Lee called it "catastrophe."

"It is surely no accident that the proliferation of earthworks coincides with the first manned space flights to the moon, which have stretched our consc~~h~~ousness of distance, and the first lunar photos of the earth, which have heightened our awareness of the planet as a coherent, whole object."

William S. Rubin
Others notes

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Christo and Jeanne-Claude - 6/28/71 at 48 Howard Street

Jeanne-Claude is clearly the cool financial head. She said the financing of this project began just a year ago, July 1. Christo went to Europe, she stayed here and worked mainly on telephone. Huge 'phone bills -- over \$500 last month. She called the presidents of several corporations, starting with J.P.Stevens Co. (which was contracted to make the curtain) and U.S. Steel (cables). She looks them up in Who's Who, calls home number, because office secretary would never put her through. Her proposal was that the corporations make contribution to Houston Museum, which would be tax deductible; museum would then use the money to buy works from Christo. Not a single corporation was interested.

J-C doesn't want to have it referred to as "raising" money. Makes point that everything they got was in exchange for a piece or drawing or commission. And says that the European galleries have all recouped their investment by selling only half the Christos received. Durand-Ruel laughed and reminded her that in 1963, when they were living in Paris, she offered him a large Christo wrapping in exchange for a round-trip ticket to NY, about \$330 at the time; he refused, and now he's buying same work for \$10,000.

All these early Christo works are still available, in NY and Paris, because nobody would buy them at the time. They would have sold them for the cost of the materials, but nobody interested. Nobody bought from Castelli's show. Now the big ones go for \$40,000.

Christos very encouraged because just this morning (28th), two calls from Europe netted \$20,000 (Zurich). This puts them just about over the top, and if John de Menil comes through with \$10,000 as promised they will be fully financed. Still, she wants to raise about \$35,000 more because that much has been given in loan form, must be repaid.

Valley Curtain Corporation - Before setting it up, they tried a dozen museums as possible sponsors. Idea was that museum would receive the funds, tax free, and Christos would do everything else. None interested. When the last museum had refused them, Hodes said they would incorporate. It was too difficult to set up a non-profit corporation, so this is technically a ~~profit~~ regular corp, and any profits will be taxable. But there won't be any. Jeanne-Claude is president and treasurer, Jan Van der Marck is vice-pres and executive director, Christo is secretary. Each exec can draw up to \$2000. checks. Corporation will be dissolved within one year, so no tax.

~~Text~~
Australia

Christo was invited to lecture and give an exhibition there.* He replied saying he would like to wrap part of a coastline. Long silence, then incredulous letter. Company that was putting up the \$3000 ~~monthly~~ did it annually for n Australian artist, who always went abroad on it; this time, why not give it to foreign artist to come here and so something we could see? The firm was heavily criticized for "sponsorship" of piece, although all it ever gave was original \$3000. The rest was raised by sale of Christo works. Overall budget of \$120,000, but only about \$80,000 cash. There were numerous problems, the most spectacular of which was a nurses' strike. The land belonged to Prince Army (privat) Hospital, and the nurses and doctors used beach to swim; when the project was announced, they went on strike. But later the found that the wrapping made it much more pleasant, soft underfoot etc.

* by John W. Calder of Alicorso - Sellers Co., which gave annual scholarship to artist. Kalder is Hungarian-born.
Total man hours work: 117,000. Completed Oct. 28 (begin Oct. 5)

Valley Curtain
Dickers notes

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Wally Curshaw

Dikers notes

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First evening with Van der Marcks, Aspen (6/20/71)

Jan had been out to Rifle that day to oversee the moving of drilling equipment from one side of the pass to the other by helicopter. This was his idea, to save time during rock test boring by Boyle Bros (see his log). The men ~~xxx~~ from Morrison-Knudson came out on Sunday with their wives and kids - it was Father's day.

All the workers are caught up in the project, according to Jan. The chief engineer's wife told Ingeborg Van der Marck that her husband "may not understand it, but he sure talks about it a lot!" Allan Kaprow, there for the Design Conference, said after dinner how interesting it was that the artist is getting back into the social role that he abandoned 100 years ago. Jan said he saw this as "the primitive beginnings of the new art." Lot of talk about museums, which Kaprow wants to see abolished (Jan somewhat sympathetic, having considered his own role for some years as a guerilla curator").

Note: Jan said he had gone to Salt Lake recently to see the Spiral Jetty. Asked several people he knew in town how to find it, nobody knew a thing about the piece. He looked unsuccessfully all one day, next day rented a plane and flew over it. The pilot was astonished - "You mean that's it?" From above, the jetty looked very much like all sorts of other underwater formations.

To my question about costs, Jan conceded that the holdups, the overtime, the helicopter etc would probably add at least \$20,000 to overall budget.

(He gave me xerox of his journal, which follows in excerpts).

Dikers notes

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Van der Maede's Log

Jan. 13

[Christy Hunt]

Visit to site. Found "extraordinary amount of interest and acceptance" locally. Seen as "a boost for the Rife town image and, possibly, economy, rousing no suspicion and no ecological objections." Lloyd Wilson and Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Kangsen, land owners, highly cooperative (Wilson demanding \$5000, K's less). Jim Le Doune, former owner of one piece of land and currently golf pro + mgr of Rife Golf Club eager to see Curtan built; "offered his personal help and the Golf Club's facilities." Meeting in Mo's Cafe.

Courtesy calls on Stanley Megarger, City Manager of Rife, and Wm. J. Jadas, the Mayor (also owner of Harris Jewelry Co., where Jadas' "Polish heart opened for Christy.")

Decision to approach Wayne H. Cymrall, the Rep. in Congress, who backed the Rife Exp. Act and "apparently has a soft spot for Rife."

The locals were so enthusiastic that they spoke of popping Curtan up this fall hunting season. Thought Curtan would "put Rife on the map."

[Also notes that "foul smoke belching from uranium processing plant of Union Carbide, 10 m. away" contrasts with ~~the town's~~ ^{the town's} ~~interest~~ ^{interest} for ecology: no trees cut, no wildlife hunted except snakes + jack rabbit (bird migration come before Sept etc.)

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From Rifle paper "The Telegram," March/ 4, 1971

Reprints article from Rocky Mountain News, in which Gov. Love is quoted as saying the VC project "doesn't appeal to me as a great work of art. I'm not prepared to fight it, but I'm not too carried away with it, either." Article itself states that "Christo's aesthetic antics over there in ~~xxxx~~ the Rifle valley may well prove to be explorations as valid as the moon probe of the astronauts."

Same issue carries letter to ed. from Jimmy Le Donne, saying: "I think it's about time we as a community handle the situation without interference from state and federal governments."

Jan. 8, 1971, letter from Phyllis Lambert (Chicago, architect)

"This absurdity would create an ecological disaster. I would consider it a criminal act."

Feb. 28, 1971 letter from Edward Connors, Pres. of Colo. Open Space Council, Inc.

Said Council not advised of project and wanted information, invited Van der Marck and Christo to April 8 Board of Directors Meeting in Denver. Expressed anxiety over effect of "the three month shadow cast by the Curtain" on plant-life, animal and insect life and communities. Also: "How was your site selected? Inasmuch as most of your financial backing comes from Europe, why were the Europeans deprived of the opportunity of having such art in their back yard? (4) Please understand, Sir, that I feel Colorado and its citizens are as avant garde as the rest of the country, as witnessed by the effort and expense we are putting into our new Art Museum in Denver. We do love art and we love our mountains and their pristine state, but we feel that each has its proper place. Art, even of a three month life, does not seemingly need to be draped in our mountains...."

"xxx

(On April 20, Connors wrote to John Powers to say COSC had met with Van der Marck and Christo at April 8 Board meeting, and discussed project fully. ~~xxx~~ Said that COSC did not support development of landscape that "create frivolous use of the land. Perhaps in some artistic eyes, the VALLEY CURTAIN is good and conforms with the highest and best uses of the land. We at COSC do not concur..." ~~xxx~~ Added that he taught history of art and "fully realize the fallibility of placing strictness on artistic expression." But added that COSC was "not presently planning any legal opposition" to Curtain.

Dikert notes

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Feb 18-21 (with Christo + Genda)

Press conference with St. Gov. John D. Vanderhoop in Denver. 3 W Clams, all men there. "Ecological and environmental fears were paramount in reporters' minds." Delegation from Rifle included Mayor Tatus, Chamber of Commerce Pres. Jimm Seaney, and First Natl Bank Pres Allen Zoeneke. Vanderhoop keen of involving his support at this point.

[Rocky Mtn Center on Environment (ROMCOE), org. of businessmen seeking to redeem ecological guilt. ~~Shows~~ ^{shows} interest, very little opposition.]

Gov. Love quoted ^{same} that a day or so before he didn't know about Curlein (Vanderhoop had written him a month before), that he didn't think much about it as a work of art, and that he was afraid it might interfere with his career. Becoming a political hot potato. (Same day, was commended by Nixon for support of arts).

April 7-9 (with Christo)

To Boulder & Univ of Colo. MET Prof. Dr. Weber of Biology Dept (introduction by Dr. Howard of Hawaii Arboretum). Weber eased fears of upsetting ecology. Birds wouldn't kill selves, animals could go under or around.

Meeting with Open Space Council in Denver. "we couldn't convince everybody" but did persuade some.

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May 3 - (first part missing)

Zetten's estimate of \$229,000 is "firm." Money raised to be channelled thru Houston Museum - Montebello agreeable. Morrison - Knudsen of Boise, Idaho gets contract. Plans for May 10 start on site development work.

Al Rife, bought Indian ring for Ingeborg, "for good luck and P.R. and paid with our first check carrying picture of Rocky Mountains."

May 6 - (Ingeborg to Rife)

Meeting at ^{Mc's Cafe} ~~Mc's Cafe~~ with Joe Shelton of Zetten; Leon D. Stoddard, V-P of Morrison-Knudsen; Meade Harkey, Carbondale mgr. of M-K; Les Hoffman and Jack Webb, field managers of Jim Le Doune. Lunch at Mc's Cafe. Discovery that Zetten had not yet sent working drawings to Colo. State Highway Dept. so permits could be obtained & work begun.

Stoddard mentioned that much of terrain around Coy was radio-active and still hot from underground mine fires.

Dikens notes

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May 12

(Jan + Ingeborg)

"Jim Le Donne showed himself worried about Highway Dept. Permits still not rec'd.

Telephone wires put underground (one pole had to be cut down).

(Next day) learned that permission had come through and that work was to start, possibly on Friday but certainly on Monday, May 17."

Le Donne informs that work is over Wilson's property line for a stretch of 50 x 200 feet or Federal land. No way to re-adjust plans. Permit must be obtained.

"The Highway people were very upset still." Mayor Jacus agrees to write Gov. Love urging favorable consideration.

May 13

(Aggen)

Jacus + bank pres. Doeneke had telephoned Love instead of wiring.

Called Bureau Land Management in Wash. DC, to prepare Colorado maps for request.

Jimmy Seaney ran poll of his radio listeners (see Seaney memo) this am, from 7:30 to 9. Asked for phone calls, pro + con. 127 positive, 23 negative. "Of those against the curtain, most lived in adjoining communities and not in Rifle proper." Then Seaney called Gov. Love, who asked why people were pro it. Answered hype of tourist biz, job opportunities. Gov. said this made sense. "He seemed ill-informed about the curtain", but disposed ^{favorably} permit it. Said he would call back after conferring with ^{Thomato} (Thomato) of

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Highway Dept. But no return call that day.
 Permit for putting power lines underground across.

May ~~20~~
 You informed his petition to Bur. Land Management
 invalid because he's not US citizen & to be refilled.
 Also became evident that BLM would insist on a
 bond, in add. to bond required by State Highway Dept.
 All this evaporated next day, when ~~BLM~~ it turned out
 they were not encroaching on Fed. land after all.

May 24 Agreement to employ, 7 days a week, 2 daytime & 2
 night guards against vandalism Retired Rifle citizens,
 deputized. \$70 per week each

~~June 7~~
 May 28 Letter from ~~A. Zuban~~ Chas. E. Shumate, Exec Director and
 Chief Engineer Colo. State Dept. of Highways (via A. Zuban,
 Asst Chief Engineer), stating that various Volley Curtain
 proposals not acceptable. Need sep. insurance
 policy covering Highway Dept (\$1,000,000 per occurrence of
 bodily injury or death, not less than \$100,000 for prop. damage).
 Also require services of outside consultant (paid for by VC)
 to check stresses etc; access to premises in event it
 becomes necessary to remove Curtain; information on
 flammability of curtain. Ends, "Please be assured we
 are not attempting to delay the project." But must do so
 it will not jeopardize the safety of the travelling public."

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June 7-

Shumate told Jan everything in order except independent engineering survey. Jan got on phone to speed that up. (Ken R. White Co. in Denver sending a geologist).

June 8

Geologist on job at Rifle: Rolf Rohwer. His first opinion negative - pointed out that East slope sites for anchors consisted of shale, dried clay - wouldn't hold, certainly not the $2\frac{1}{2}$ million lbs pull anticipated. Said that the mtn. had once been a mudflat, pushed up vertically by cataclysmic forces. Only a test drilling could show capacity. "We climbed down somewhat pessimistic." Rock anchor designs inadequate, had to be redesigned. Frantic calls to Zetlin, which unhelpful.

June 9

More frantic calls. Agree that test drilling needed.

June 10

Sargis Sako Safarian, Chief Structural Engineer of Ken R. White Co., proves cooperative, says he'd delay report to Highway Dept. pending test borings and redesigned rock anchors. Said that "while he didn't understand Christo's curtain from an artistic point of view he thought it was interesting enough from an engineering point of view for him to want to see the curtain go up."

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June 7 - letter from Copyright Office in Wash., saying the
~~request~~ request for copyright on curtain could not be accepted
because all the design elements of the article are directly
related to the useful functions of the article (see letter)

Dikens inquis

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June 15 Boyles Bros of Golden, Colo, the drilling firm, had been doing all they could. To save time, Jan engaged helicopter to move their equip. from one side of river to the other - plans for lift to take place on Friday, June 18.

June 17 New flap about registration of Zetter in Colorado. It had not been done, and was now impossible because reg. board wd not meet until Sept.! Only recourse to have another firm, licensed to do biz in Colo., do sign drawings. After much anguish this accomplished. Drilling results ~~was~~ "a little better than expected" ~~company~~ foreman said "it was as good a rock as he had ever drilled into." Now seems certain rock will hold if anchor properly designed. Helicopter lift re-scheduled for Sunday June 20, 8 AM. Drilling to start on Monday (21) on West slope, with hope of final results by Wednesday.

Another hitch: local representative of Bureau of Reclamation visited site, said that anchor #4 ^(bottom) situated on top of a water pipe; the Bureau has a right-of-way here and if anyone builds where Bur. has right-of-way needs special permission.

Also conferring on compliance with Federal Aviation ~~Authority~~ ^{Agency} requirements - warning lights.

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Interview with Jan Van der Marck - 6/21/71

Van der Marck is just short of 41, Dutch, blond, attractive fellow whose last post was Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Before that was Chief Curator of Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (1963-67). Well looked upon in museum circles. Has done some excellent shows, including Christo's WRAP IN WRAP OUT of Chicago museum in 1969.

He met Christo in New York right after he came here in 1964, was immediately interested in his work. Jan had been enthusiastic about the New Realists in Paris, collected their work, and Christo was more or less a member of that group (Arman, Klein, Raysse, Tinguely etc). Jan's "The Ambiguous Image" show at Walker Art Center included Christo. He also helped Christo get an invitation from the Minneapolis School of Art for a project that had to do with an air balloon, in the fall of 1966. Two years later he asked Christo to have a documentary exhibition in Chicago. Christo changed that into a wrapping of the museum, in Jan. 1969 (see Arts Canada article by Jan, Feb 1969)

Jan's Chicago earthworks show, "Some Evidence on the Flight of Six Fugitives" (early spring 1970) included Smithson, Heizer, de Maria, Oppenheim, Long, and Hutchinson. Mostly documentary, some films. Nobody seemed too upset by show, and it was not the cause of his leaving museum - earth art idea already accepted in Chicago. ~~The~~ Christo's museum wrapping caused a considerable uproar, however.

"It becomes increasingly difficult to show inside a museum what people outside it are interested in," Jan says, adding that today the museum itself is something of a "forced concept."

Jan resigned from Chicago museum this spring, planned to spend the summer writing intensively (see list of publications). Christo had asked him previously to supervise the VC, and he'd said no. But ^{in Jan} Christo asked him again, and he said he would. He's been formally connected with project since Jan. 1, 1971.

Working with Christo

A highly improvisational, friendly, pleasant relationship. They use the phone a great deal, and Jan himself has logged at least 35,000 miles to and fro across the country.

Christo was "extremely effective" in presenting his ideas to the people of Rifle and also in Denver. "He is very endearing in speaking English not very well. People grasp immediately his own enthusiasm and sincerity and dedication. I felt rather like a sports coach, ~~managing x keeping track of~~ I saw to it that things were organized and details taken care of. Christo is almost the exact opposite of Heizer, who has no talent for getting people enthused about his work. And then of course Christo has Jeanne-Claude, who always keeps a cool head in crises."

In Rifle, the people just took it on faith that Christo was a great artist from New York (once they realized he was paying for it himself). Jan said that in talking about the piece he (Jan) would resort to simple language, told them to "look at it as a big outdoor work that combines painting and sculpture."

Others in files

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VanderMarck - 2

Suggested also that they note the color of the curtain, the way it changes from morning to evening (modulations in color). "Let them have a Beaux Arts slant." Although actually it is neither painting nor sculpture. The workmen on site are always being asked what it's going to be, and they've evolved their own answers (see invus). "Whenever you get these construction people involved in a non-functional project, they begin by being very sceptical, but then they really enjoy it and do better work than they might have otherwise, and they're also very proud of the attention they've been getting in the papers and so forth." Jan also makes point that such projects get the workers out of the routine details of their jobs, often suggest interesting new solutions to old problems. (see Hoffman invu - he says every job does this).

Christo's Career

The American art world in the 1960s was very chauvinistic. Christo has suffered the results. He is a European amidst Americans, working in a very American aesthetic - the American glut and abundance reflected by Pop Art. Earth art itself is very American, showing the vast scale of the country, the back-to-the-earth sentiment of the ecologists, and a kind of frontier romanticism that many Europeans find admirable. "Europe is so tight, so filled up and small scale compared with America." At any rate Christo was looked upon with a certain suspicion by many here - looked upon as a European aesthete, out of Dgchamp, and allied spiritually with the New Realists, Pop rivals.

Another deterrent was Christo's lack of a strong New York gallery. His main support has always come from European collectors and galleries. Leo Castelli felt it would somewhat obscure the American-ness of his gallery to take Christo, who had only one show there. Christo himself is still highly controversial among Amer. artists of the new generation. Kaprow, Rauschenberg, Johns, Oldenburg are friendly, but not Flavin, Judd, Andre, deMaria, Heizer. The younger artists tend to crack nasty jokes about his work, about the help he gets from Jeanne-Claude (the dinner parties, the appearances on art scene). Conversely, "I feel few artists of my acquaintance are as fair or objective about others' work as Christo is; I have never heard him make a snide or vicious remark."

There has never been an article about Christo in Artforum, the avantgarde establishment's magazine. He doesn't complain.

"Maybe Christo is not tough enough. He never spits in your face, the way Heizer does or deMaria does. People seem to love that now, there is this new mystique of the slap in the face. Christo is always helpful and willing, so people think he is a self-promoter."

Earthworks

Heizer likes to go with nature, Christo prefers to outwit nature. Heizer brings his urban sensibility to bear on nature...

Jan sees earthworks in general as another means by which the artist can get involved with society. He would like to see more works that can serve as models for this kind of involvement, that would bring artists into closer relation with their times (somewhat like Billy Kluger's dream of having artists work with technologists and planners). But he feels that Heizer and deMaria are both very cerebral artists who have no apparent interest in that sort of thing (esoteric as hell).

Recently both Heizer and deMaria took to baiting Jan at a dinner party, ~~xxxxxx~~

Others invus

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for his museum work. They expressed scorn of the most raking kind for everything to do with society, which they clearly believe is in its final stages and on the way out. They consider their own work the "last scratchings" on a condemned planet - condemned not by Vietnam or the bomb but by man's own stupid mess. Out of a final contempt for man and his society they have turned to nature in a sort of apocalyptic way -- they seem to think that their works will serve as "signals for some future (and better) civilization to pick up on."

There's a chilling arrogance here. They asked Jan which would last longer, the Mona Lisa or the Double Negative - clearly they thought the DN would.

Jan feels they also have some sense that salvation will come (from the West, from the California sensibility maybe, or beyond that to the sort of Vegas frontier. (Note: Frank Lloyd Wright's remark that if you were to turn the country on its end and shake it, everything loose would end up in California)).

At the same time, Heizer is always on the run. He feels vulnerable to fame (as Dwan said) - doesn't want to become like Rauschenberg, fears being sucked into the vortex of the art world, hence does things like disappearing act in Vegas. He acts out of a profound disgust with our time?

Dikens myus

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* Arvey, Hodes + Mantyn band

32

Scott Hodes (by telephone, 6/29/71) (312) CE 6-9760

Hodes, a lawyer, is also something of an art collector. Has written book on art and antiques, and owns a Christo -- the 1966 Annual Report of the Chrysler Corporation, wrapped. Has often wondered how Chrysler would feel about that. His firm in Chicago* handled the Picasso case out there. They argued that the statue had been given to the city and therefore could not be copyrighted-- it had become part of the public use before copyright request filed. Irony there, in unsuccessful (so far) attempt to copyright Valley Curtain. (see below).

"Christo wants to involve everybody in the process of creating art -- lawyers, engineers, administrators, everyone. Christo views my role as a lawyer-artist because I was involved. What I was concerned with was the vehicle that Christo used to protect himself..." Decided that a non-profit corporation was not the right vehicle, because there might turn out to be a future profit in terms of enhanced reputation for the artist, etc. Present setup foresees that ~~all~~ all monies raised will be spent in the process of creating the curtain. Christo is the sole shareholder. "Christo doesn't understand this and doesn't want to -- this is my problem." Christo is employed by the VC Corp.

The Colorado Highway Dept. "blbody well wanted to make certain that the curtain ~~was~~ was going to come down by a certain date. They made us put up a bond, and Morrison-Knudson made us put up a bond. "Many, many aspects of society were involved -- banks, insurance companies, ~~state~~ state officials, etc."

Jeanne-Claude "is the driving force behind the whole project. She runs the books, is responsible for making certain that everything gets done and gets sent where it belongs when it's needed. She's an amazing woman, very level-headed. She is as much responsible for the project as Christo - without Jeanne-Claude this could not have been a reality. Christo is really the one responsible for raising the money, but she deals with all the other aspects."

Enormous amount of money to raise - quite amazing that he did it.

The greatest problem, from Hodes' point of view, was insurance. "Last October, when Christo unfolded the project, I mentioned that the hardest thing was going to be to get insurance. Christo said 'Why do we need insurance?' I had to explain that it was in case something unexpected happened -- the cable snapped, or something." They worked through Marsh McLennan, and finally placed the policy with Home Insurance Co. - \$1 million.

Permission from Highway Dept was second toughest problem.

"The companies that provided us with steel and textiles were very unsympathetic to the problems of the artist, in terms of delivery on time and so forth. J.P. Stevens didn't want to give us any rights in the event the material didn't turn out right, etc. They looked on it as a one-shot deal, thinly capitalized, having to do with the arts (all dubious qualities). They all accepted hard dollars and gave very little in return." (Note: When Stevens was asked to make curtain, their first question was "How many?")

Many of the state officials felt simply "why do it here?" Would bring in hippies, disturb the environment, etc. "My suggestion that the news be released from the office of the Lieutenant Governor was very helpful -- if it had come from anywhere else, our problems would have been greatly increased."

(Over)

Dikens notes

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Hodes (cont.)

The local people of Rifle were the ones who really came to the aid of the artist, and who negated the environmental arguments.

The legal problems were far beyond anything Christo had imagined.

"But Christo's ~~project~~^{work} is going to stimulate other artists to take the environment and give it aesthetic implications."

The Copyright Office in Washington said they couldn't copyright the curtain because it was ~~xxx~~ too utilitarian! Hodes has reworded the request and is now writing to Wash. to explain that there is no utilitarian aspect whatsoever. "The government is perplexed by the idea of a curtain across a valley." Hodes anxious to gain copyright in order to prevent other people from exploiting the project with Valley Curtain ashtrays and souvenirs.

Dikers in yus

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Christo - 6/22/71 (Taped)

En route from Aspen to Rifle in Charles Russell's Saab. Russell is a graduate student in comparative lit. at Cornell, getting his doctorate (thesis on contemp./ French, German, and American writers). Christo met him when he was coming to US for first time, on the boat. They sat at the same table. (Jeanne-Claude couldn't come because only/ money for one round trip - Durand-Ruel refused offer of Christo piece in exchange for r.t. ticket). The first thing Christo said was "What do you think of Pop Art" (in French). Russell currently serving as principal assistant to Van der Marck, has been in Rifle about a week with his young wife Susan. They will take care of Cyril, Christo's son, until Christo and Jeanne-Claude arrive.

Money in hand so far is \$370,000. Having trouble raising last \$30,000. Jeanne-Claude working on that in NY.

Country gets dryer as you drive from Aspen down to Rifle. Rifle is in heart of big game country, also oil shale country. Towns on way: Newcastle, Silt, Rio Blanco (18 miles other side), Glenwood Springs abt 20 miles east. Rifle right on the Colorado River, swollen and muddy at this time. Also on the Rio Grande Railroad, and near the site of a spectacular derailment of freight train two days ago - lots of people and equipment on site dealing with crumpled cars. Rifle has pop. of 2,300, elevation 5346 feet. Local chamber of commerce is housed in old railroad car. Drive north out of town, to join state route 325 - through lush meadows with horses, cows grazing along Rifle Creek. Pass nine hole Rifle Creek Golf Course (in its 9th season under Jimmy le Donne), Rifle Creek Museum, up to spectacular gap with layered sandstone cliffs.

During the ride, Christo talked about the project. They had hoped originally that the Aspen Institute would sponsor it (Institute sent them \$10,000 in Australia within three days when desperately needed; out of gratitude they named it as co-sponsor). But the Institute wanted no part of this piece; ~~Bartos~~ Bartos and Powers were evidently ~~outvoted~~ outvoted. And neither Bartos nor Powers gave anything individually -- state of the market, etc.

In Aspen everyone is very intellectually conscious. When Christo said he was going to do the curtain in Rifle, everyone jumped on him. "They are going to kill ~~you~~ you, they're all hard hats and Nixonians down there." Cowboys who love to beat up longhairs. But Christo says they've had ~~marvellous~~ marvellous relations with the townspeople and the workers, trouble only with the NY engineers.

Wilson, the PanAm pilot, had been to Australia and seen the coastline project. Thought he was ~~dealing~~ dealing with big-time operation, so asked \$6,000. The other people got \$2,400. Wilson lives in Calif., has grandmother in Rifle.

Stuart Hodes, in Chicago, gets much credit. (Call?)

~~The next strong man in xxxxxx~~

Got to site about 3 PM, met contractors crew, then climbed up the west bank of canyon with Christo, Russell, Cyril. Boyle Bros. drillers hard at work, and getting finer results. Rock samples come out in long smooth cores like salami, are broken up with hammer to fit into sectioned cardboard boxes. "That's as good rock as I've ever drilled." Mr. Banks, the foreman, said he'd be finished the following morning.

Asked Christo about the impermanence, whether it bothered him. Not at all. "You climb Everest, but you don't want to stay there." The idea of permanence or impermanence is of no interest to him.

Over to golf club for interviews.

Others in NY

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Rifle Interviews

Jack Webb : "I've hung cables before, and basically this is all it is. But I'll sure be glad when I can see it!" Asked what he tells people who ask what it is, Webb said: "At first I tried to ~~xxx~~ explain that I think his idea is something like a mobile. They always have the impression that there's something going to be painted on the curtain, a portrait or a scene or something. Trouble is, after you explain it to them what it's for, they still don't understand, and you're really in deep water. Now I just tell 'em it's to feed my wife and children." (Box 52, Palisade, Colo.)

Jimmy LeDonne: Project controversial in Rifle? "Not any more. A lot of people were suspicious at first, but I told 'em you've got to be a little broadminded in this world. Different people do different things. Christo knew what he wanted, he had the money to do it, he wasn't going to hurt anything, so why not? It took a while to convince people... I got so mad at everybody I wrote that article in the paper. It takes a lot to make some of these old sand farmers understand a thing like this, they've never been confronted with anything like this before. A lot of people here have never been more than a hundred miles from home. After they had an understanding they felt fine. But for a while they thought, 'We're going to get a lot of long-haired, long whiskered guys we don't know nothing about in here.' I said, 'Hell, they're comin' anyhow, they're human beings like the rest of us.'"

Jimmy born in Newcastle, up the road. Used to be an old coal-working town. "My grandfather came as a guard on the railroad during the Indian time, when they were building the line. At the end of the job, all those Italians working on it saw the coal sticking out of the hills there, and they were out of jobs, so they started digging coal and selling it to the railroad. But they weren't smart enough to buy up the land, so the big companies moved in. At one time there was six thousand people living in Newcastle, and there was twenty-one saloons and four cathouses! Can you imagine? What was back in the 1880s or 1890s, up to about 1930."

Wes Hoffman (Box 1218, Rifle - or Midvale, Idaho, 83645)

"I call Boise home now. Was born and raised in the midwest, but I've been in the West ever since, for the last fifteen or twenty years."

This project "a hell of a challenge." Somewhat similar to putting a high line over a dam, except for problem of wind load. "Here the weight of the curtain really isn't important, it's the force of the wind ~~xxx~~ blowing against it you have to consider." Would say the maximum wind velocity through gap is approx. 70 mph.

"Actually we run up against unforeseen things almost every day..."

Raising cables: Pull them off the reel ~~xx~~ at the bottom and attach one end, with hoist; other side will pull up at attach other side. "It's going to take a lot of thinking, so we don't damage the curtain dragging it across the rocks. At this point I don't even want to guess how long it'll take to hang the curtain. We will fasten the curtain on the cable, and pull it up the hill at the same time.

On all jobs, "you get a lot of ideas, and it's just a question of which one you think will work the best. Then if we see that won't work, we go to another idea. It's standard practice in our business. Sometimes we change our minds several times before we get to the right one."

Others interviews

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Hoffman's last job was a building in North Flat, Nebraska, large enough to ~~xxx~~ accomodate three football fields.

Cables have arrived. On siding in Rifle.

Over to Rifle, Mc's Cafe, for invu with Mayor Tadus. He is also owner of Jewelry store in town, a ~~xxxxxxx~~ solid citizen, stocky, slightly red-haired, in a red-figured shirt. Has two more months to serve. What was his first impression of curtain idea? "Well, like everybody else, I wondered why they were going to do it, how they were going to do it, and so forth. But I've been for the project from the very beginning." Why? "Well, I'm the mayor here, and I'm responsible in a way for the welfare of the community, and I thought this would give us a little boost in the arm here. We need it. We haven't got all the business in the world out here.

State

Rifle facts: Mostly farming, ranching, sheep-raising. Fish Hatchery closed for years, but hope to have in operation next year (water pollution problem solved by sewage disposal plant). One of largest trout hatcheries in world.

Oppositáon early? "Not much. Naturally there were a few sceptics."

Eastern vs Western slope, separated by Continental Divide. "We feel left out over here, because Denver is on the eastern slope and so forth, and it seems like they want to keep this country over here so they can come over on the weekends."

Tadus here ten years. Comes from New Mexico, raised in southern Colo.

"A lot of people say, 'Well, it's pretty foolish, but each one to his own.'"

Tony Macchione (Anthony C.)

(Owns Mc's cafe, Mc's Boat Sales, apartments, ⁷⁰⁰ Cattle. Heavy, tough Italian with pear-shaped face and body. Local strongman. He had been "moving cows" when we first tried to see him - had to wait until next day).

pioneer

Gave us history of Rifle. Some ~~xxxxxxx~~ found an old rusty rifle here, and when they were looking for name for town that was it. Used to be real big buffalo and Indian territory. Winter range for animals. Newcastle big mining town in 1900. Big explosion in early 1900s - ever since; half these mountains have been on fire inside. "That mountain where you're hanging your drape is still on fire." Over 500 men still buried in mine that exploded (maybe 1899 or earlier). Stopped the whole industry here.

Reaction to VC. "I thought it was the greatest thing I ever heard about. I was in Las Vegas when I first heard the news. I said, 'What kind of curtain is he going to hang?' 'Well, I can't explain it,' Jimmy said. Course I'm on the aggressive side, I want people to be people. Some say 'What good is it?' I say that isn't the idea, that it's going to do any good. It's going to do the community a lot of good, if you want to figure out the dollars it'll bring ~~xxxx~~ into town. But I said ~~xxx~~ what's important is that there's a man in the world who's thinking great things. Wanting to do something like this, I think this is the greatest place in the world to put it. It's beautiful over there.

"In my young life, I took up painting. I've got a decorator and a painting license.

Dikers notes

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(Macchione - cont.)

in California. I could mix any color of paints you want. Other people couldn't visualize what this thing was going to look like, but I'll tell you it's going to be quite a sight. Anybody that doesn't have an appreciation of anything beautiful or anything different wouldn't appreciate it. But the world's advanced so fast now that these things are fabulous."

What people thought of Christo at first. "I'll tell you, I had a lot of arguments over Christo. Some of them almost came to knock-out and drag-outs. First thing the taxpayers said was Well, what is this going to cost us in taxes? I'd say it ain't going to cost you a dime. He's told everybody in the world that he puts up his own money. He's not out here begging for money. And I think as long as that's the case, in any country he ought to be able to express his ideas."

Macchione born down Colorado R. at Silk - came ~~xxxx~~ to Rifle in 1960, bought cafe, put on new front, redid inside.

Dil Shale - "They tell me about ten years ago that it's about to open up, but it never has."

Jimm Seaney

(Runs local radio station, KWSR, from lobby of Winchester Hotel, where Teddy Roosevelt stayed once on a hunting trip. Bar of hotel has a strip of cloth strung between two peaks on a mural. Seaney is originally from Illinois ; lived in Denver for ten years, in radio-tv, moved here in 1967 because he wanted to get out of the city. Trim, rather handsome man with neat moustache).

~~xxxx~~
Christo

Radio Survey: "This nickel-dime stuff was going on, ~~xxxx~~ and I believe in direct action, I was tired of messing around. I went on the air at ten minutes to seven and stayed there until eight-thirty, and I said do you believe or don't you believe we should have the Valley Curtain. I also took the names. I got a very positive result, so I said there's no sense fooling around, the next thing is to call the Governor. I went down to the bank where I could get on three phones, and put the Mayor on one extension and the president of the bank on the other -- not because he's president of the bank but because he's also the director of the Chamber of Commerce. I called the Governor, and got right through. I said, 'Here's the results of a survey that I've just completed.' The Governor's first thing was, 'Why do you people want that curtain up?' Being an honest man, I said 'We are in a depressed economic situation over here, and we feel that if nothing else Christo's curtain will bring an influx of people to our community.' He said 'I'll accept that.' He asked how the weather was and hung up, and the next day he got thrown off a horse. Oh, well." Survey results: 123 in favor, 21 opposed. Yes or no answers - no discussion. Several people drove up, came in and gave vote - couldn't get through by phone. Looked up at one point and school bus was stopped outside - kids had driver stop and wanted to vote for curtain (didn't count).

Depressed Area - Three years ago, lost experimental oil shale plant, run by govt and bureau of mines - many out of jobs. Big game hunting not very good last 3 years. People had hoped for lot more from Project Ruleson, two years ago Sept. - underground nuclear blast to free oil from shale. (People around here sceptical about oil shale; first book on oil shale dev. pub. 1912, too many disappointments ever since).

Others in file

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(Seaney - cont).

Rifle: When railroad came through, Rifle became one of biggest rail heads for cattle. Later, lot of sugar beets raised here.

George Nelson

(Engineer in engineering-surveying firm in Aspen. ^(Tri-Co Management) Blond, tanned, friendly man with quick humor. Originally from Denver. Came to Aspen in 1946 first, to ski. Christo says he's "very pragmatic, very good," and that he was really the one who swayed the Open Space Council).

Nelson knows John Powers, who called him one day to say that a friend of his was coming out from New York to look around, and would Nelson show him the area -- no further explanations. Nelson agreed, although this is not his usual role. The friend turned out to be Christo, his wife, and Shunk-Kender. "Just what, he asked, did they have in mind. Christo said he wanted to find a valley to hang a curtain in." Once the initial shock was over, they started to look.

Nelson says that the minute he saw Christo's drawings, he thought of Rifle Gap. But didn't mention it at the time because it was 70 miles west, and Christo was talking about the Aspen area. Problem was that most of the land around Aspen was owned by the govt, which meant that it would take a lot of time and red tape to get permits (Forest Service very slow). They scouted several possible sites, none of which seemed possible, and finally Nelson mentioned the one in Rifle. It is one of the very few valleys around that have ~~xxx~~ such vertical sides and such a narrow opening. As soon as Christo saw it he agreed it looked right.

Nelson says that motorists on the new Route 70 will be able to see the curtain, and that as a result it will probably attract hundreds of curious.

Conservationists: Very little vegetation in Rifle Gap - mostly juniper, not much of anything else, so shadow won't hurt anything. As for the bird problem, "Any bird that can't fly over the curtain is in pretty bad shape."

Nelson says his dealings with Christo have been uniformly pleasant; feels he's a very nice person.

Nelson's firm is also building London "ridge in Arizona. "But this has to be the nuttiest project I've ever been involved with."

Mr. Mrs. Stanley Kansgen

Mrs. Kansgen has lived here for 65 years, in cottage just down road from the Gap. Pretty garden. Rifle Gap Museum ~~just down~~ adjoining, open Thurs-Sun. 1-5 PM. Owns 40 acres; used to own land across road but sold that to Wilson. Said that when she first got the letter from Scott Hodes, "We didn't say anything about it for quite a while, because we didn't want people to think we'd gone crazy." Mrs. K. used to climb all over those hills as a child. Says everybody in town is writing to friends and relatives across country about curtain. Both the Kansgens obviously delighted to see Christo, who was his usual warm self with them. Mrs. K. made him promise to give her several yards of the curtain material when it's taken down.

Others in view

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Dikers in vms

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Jennifer Licht (MOMA Curator) - lunch 5/26/71

Jenny has been close to Heizer and de Maria for several years (not so much to Smithson). She feels the Dwan has had the most interesting artists and has followed them personally.

Last February (1971), she proposed three earth works to the MOMA purchasing committee: Spiral Jetty, Double Negative, and de Maria's last Nevada piece. Showed slides - very large projection -- and says the reaction was "fantastic." Trustees really impressed. "I told them beforehand that I knew they weren't going to buy the works, but that I thought this was the most interesting art being done now and what should the museum do about it?" Never did arrive at a specific answer. But Blanchette Rockefeller and Bill Burden were more than enthusiastic, and agreed that something should be done. It was mentioned that several of the trustees had mining interests in Nevada, and that it should be entirely possible to arrange for the artists to have the space and the heavy equipment made available to them for whatever they wanted -- not only for creation of works but for later maintenance. Heizer and de Maria were quite excited when they heard about that.

Jenny hasn't done anything more since, but says she plans to next fall. She doesn't agree with Weber, though, that unless money is made available soon the movement will collapse; says Walter and Michael will just find other means to do what they want, without heavy equipment etc. Double Negative was probably the most expensive work of art of the 20th cent to create (check) - would have been impossible except for Virginia Dwan. But now Heizer is working on vertical piece that will make use of gravity rather than heavy machines, much as ancient Egyptians did.

Heizer is more involved with sculpture -- mass, volume, displacement. De Maria with a kind of ritual -- religion, performance, mystery. He will not let anyone use his work in any way he doesn't approve. Is not close to anyone, hard to get along with - but Jenny says she goes to him whenever she has a ~~xxx~~ serious problem. Feels he's one of the most important artists around.

Jenny says she tries to tell the MOMA trustees that ~~xxx~~ museums in the future should become agencies for helping artists to do ~~xxx~~ their work. Awfully hard idea to get across. Trustees cling to 19th century concept of collecting precious objects and educating the public to appreciate them. Still tend to look on purchases as investments -- hopefully, blue chip. But museums are only a couple of hundred years old, and it is not unreasonable to think that the basic premise can and will change: emphasis on artist, rather than on collections and public.

She went out to Nevada last summer and saw the work. Overwhelmed by it. Came back feeling phenomenally invigorated, so that even New York looked entirely different to her. "You'll be different when you come back, you'll see." Says one has to be in very good shape to see the work, though. Not only physically exhausting, but you have to be prepared to become deeply involved with yourself. Walter and Michael worried about her low shoes -- danger of snakes. "Don't go out with a hangover!"

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John Weber - 5/19/71

Dwan got into earth art through Smithson, to whom they'd given shows before -- non-sites, minimal. Smithson brought in Heizer, de Maria. In last couple of years about 75% of gallery's activities have been connected with earth art. Great problem raising money. Some of the pieces were commissioned (Scull), and many are still for sale, but collectors scared to death of it.

Dwan closing this June. Weber opening his own gallery downtown in "Gallery House" with Castelli at al. Will have Smithson, Heizer (his) Long, Sol Lewitt, Carl Andre. Has to spend all summer "raising money like mad." No backing, just his own \$\$\$\$. "Unless we get some really large scale private or corporate support ~~we~~ I'm afraid the movement is done for."

Scull helped Heizer until Dwan took over. May be helping him again now -- ask Heizer.

Jenny Licht presented three earthworks to MOMA trustees at last meeting, says they were fascinated. See her. Jetty, Double Neg., one other.

Ecology - Life mag, in its anniversary issue, had photos of forests being ravaged, pollution, and Heizer's Double Negative. They were all afraid they were going to get tarred with that brush, have played down the ecology aspect ever since.

Weber has taken European museum people, others out to see works, by car and by helicopter. Says "everybody who sees the work is just bowled over by it. The strength, the power of it..."

Heiner Friedrich has been very helpful. "He's a great German guy." Has spent a lot of his own money, got nothing back. Now working to get earthworks into 1972 Munich Olympics, which would be huge boost.

Weber sees no real connection with minimal art.

Weber himself from California. Used to work for Martha Jackson.

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Dwan (cont)

They all reacted to Nevada with great enthusiasm. Like a new frontier. Liked the western aspect --bought western clothes, etc. New York still seems very European to Dwan, who is from West Coast.

The artists cut their hair when they go to Vegas, so as not to run afoul of local sheriffs who are very tough on hippies, marijuana.

Vegas a sort of "instant America." Instant marriage/divorce, instant winning/losing, instant destruction (missiles nearby). Neon capital of world?

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to Maria

Don't want be assoc. with Smithsonian -
have earned his work

Serra dropped in - piece for Joseph
Kutner in St. Louis.

Munich - total debt on one whole country
abt project - full page stories - New York
Zeitung, etc. Two vote before political
committee - finally rejected, mid-
November. Very close. We have
cost \$400,000. But unique experience,
Chief architect and most suitable proposal
of all 600 submitted; he endorsed
it. Only German artist being used.

Something like the SS7 controversy - do all
most famous artist in Germany.

Large grid of steel or aluminum poles -
similar to grid in spike bed - minimum
of 40 acres - interspersed with poles at 45-50
interval - poles wd work as lightning rods.
Lightning field wd attract lightning -
one might walk thru, seems up to one involved

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Smithson

Olson Island - guy who ran radio show gave out wrong info - callers - dropped it immediately. Province giving me island after checking out -

Quarries + disused mining area recycled as earth art. Holland piece in quarry. John Steyer mined area and recycle the -- diff. kind of cultivation. That's a bit of that interests. Just a practical application.

Nancy Holt, the artist + poet

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Beds & Spikes, show print 1969,
sold to Paul Mun for \$45,000
(fine beds). Sold & compensated
for Olympic price failure.