AHST 4342-501 (27532)
History of Media and New Media Art
Spring 2018
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities
T-Th 1:00-2:15

Thursday 03/08/18

Discussion

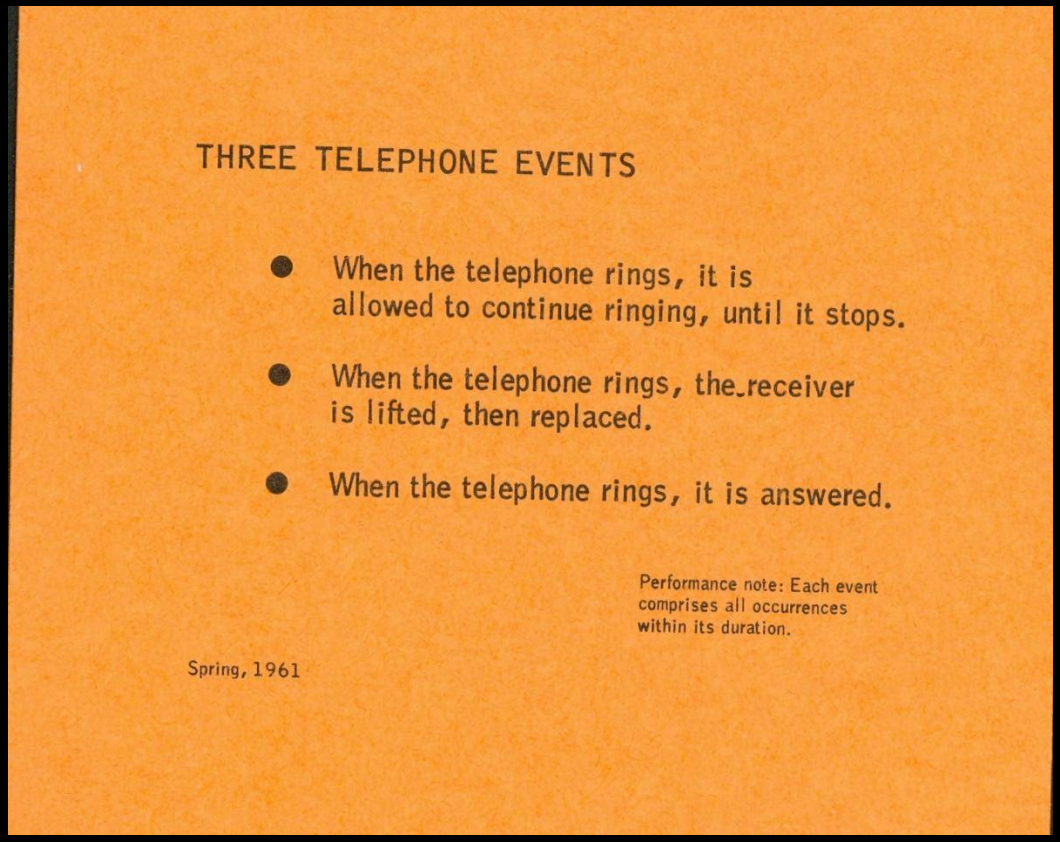
Fluxus and Computers

Left: Fluxus Women Mieko Shiomi & Alison Knowles photographed by Peter Moore, 1964

Right: Fluxus artist Alison Knowles, b. 1933

Allison Knowles and James Tenney, The House of Dust, 1974

EVENT SCORES

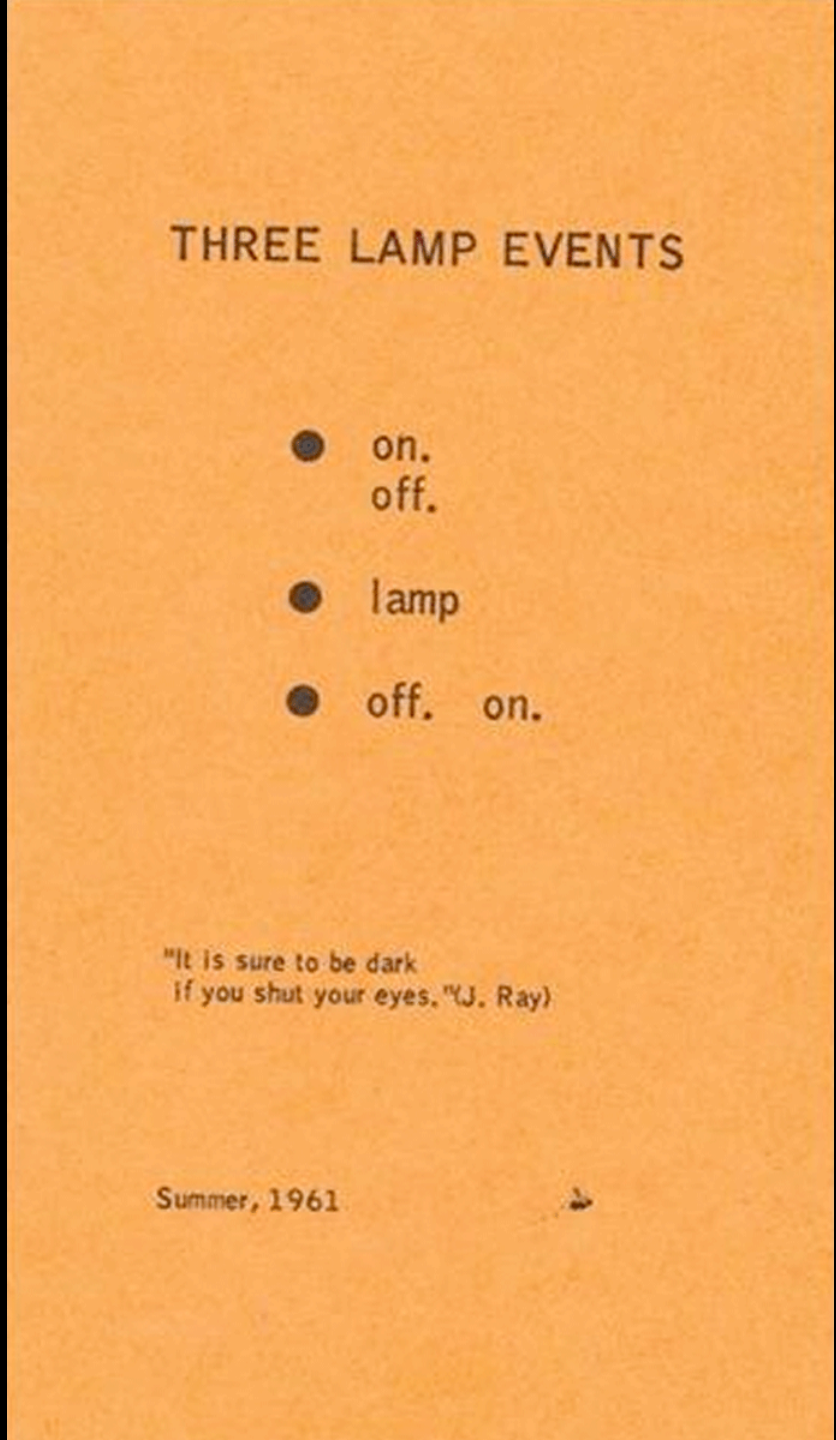


THREE TELEPHONE EVENTS

- When the telephone rings, it is allowed to continue ringing, until it stops.
- When the telephone rings, the receiver is lifted, then replaced.
- When the telephone rings, it is answered.

Performance note: Each event comprises all occurrences within its duration.

Spring, 1961



THREE LAMP EVENTS

- on.
  off.
- lamp
- off. on.

"It is sure to be dark
if you shut your eyes." (J. Ray)

Summer, 1961

George Brecht, Solo for Violin, Part of Fluxus Street Theater, 1964

Dick Higgins, Danger Music No. 2, Wiesbaden, 1962

Dick Higgins (1938-1998)

Still from video at Drawn from Score, an exhibition Feb. 2018 at the Beall Center for Art and Technology, University of California, Irvine

STATEMENT ON INTERMEDIA

Dick Higgins [1966]

Art is one of the ways that people communicate. It is difficult for me to imagine a serious person attacking any means of communication per se. Our real enemies are the ones who send us to die in pointless wars or to live lives which are reduced to drudgery, not the people who use other means of communication from those which we find most appropriate to the present situation. When these are attacked, a diversion has been established which only serves the interests of our real enemies.

However, due to the spread of mass literacy, to television and the transistor radio, our sensitivities have changed. The very complexity of this impact gives us a taste for simplicity, for an art which is based on the underlying images that an artist has always used to make his point. As with the cubists, we are asking for a new way of looking at things, but more totally, since we are more impatient and more anxious to go to the basic images. This explains the impact of Happenings, event pieces, mixed media films.

For the last ten years or so, artists have changed their media to suit this situation, to the point where the media have broken down in their traditional forms, and have become merely puristic points of reference. The idea has arisen, as if by spontaneous combustion throughout the entire world, that these points are arbitrary and only useful as critical tools, in saying that such-and-such a work is basically musical, but also poetry. This is the intermedial approach, to emphasize the dialectic between the media. A composer is a dead man unless he composes for all the media and for his world.

Student question:

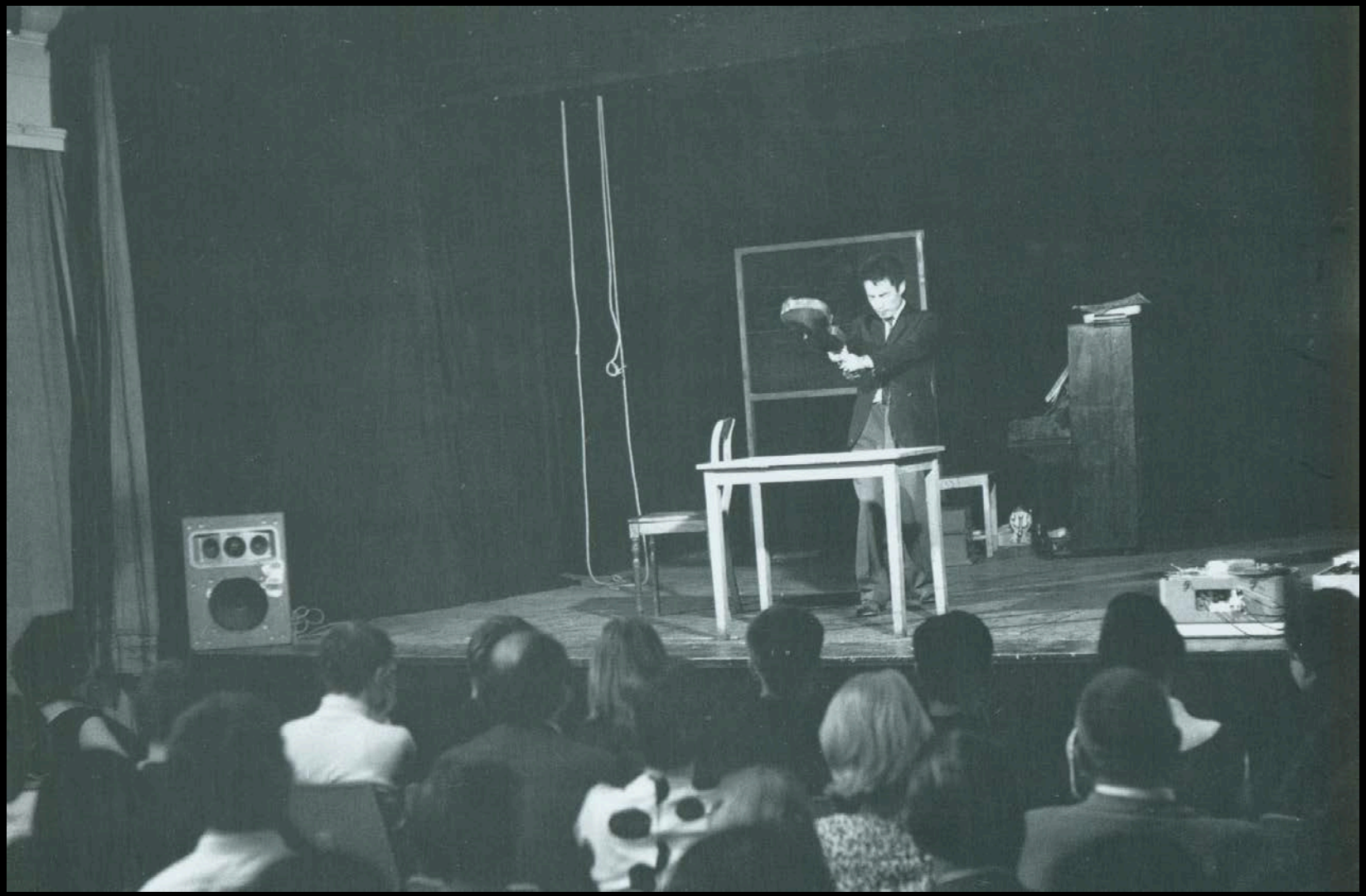
Would Dick Higgins still consider computers “stupid” if he were alive today?

George Maciuinas, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, Benjamin Patterson, Emmett Williams, Piano Activities, Wiesbaden, 1962

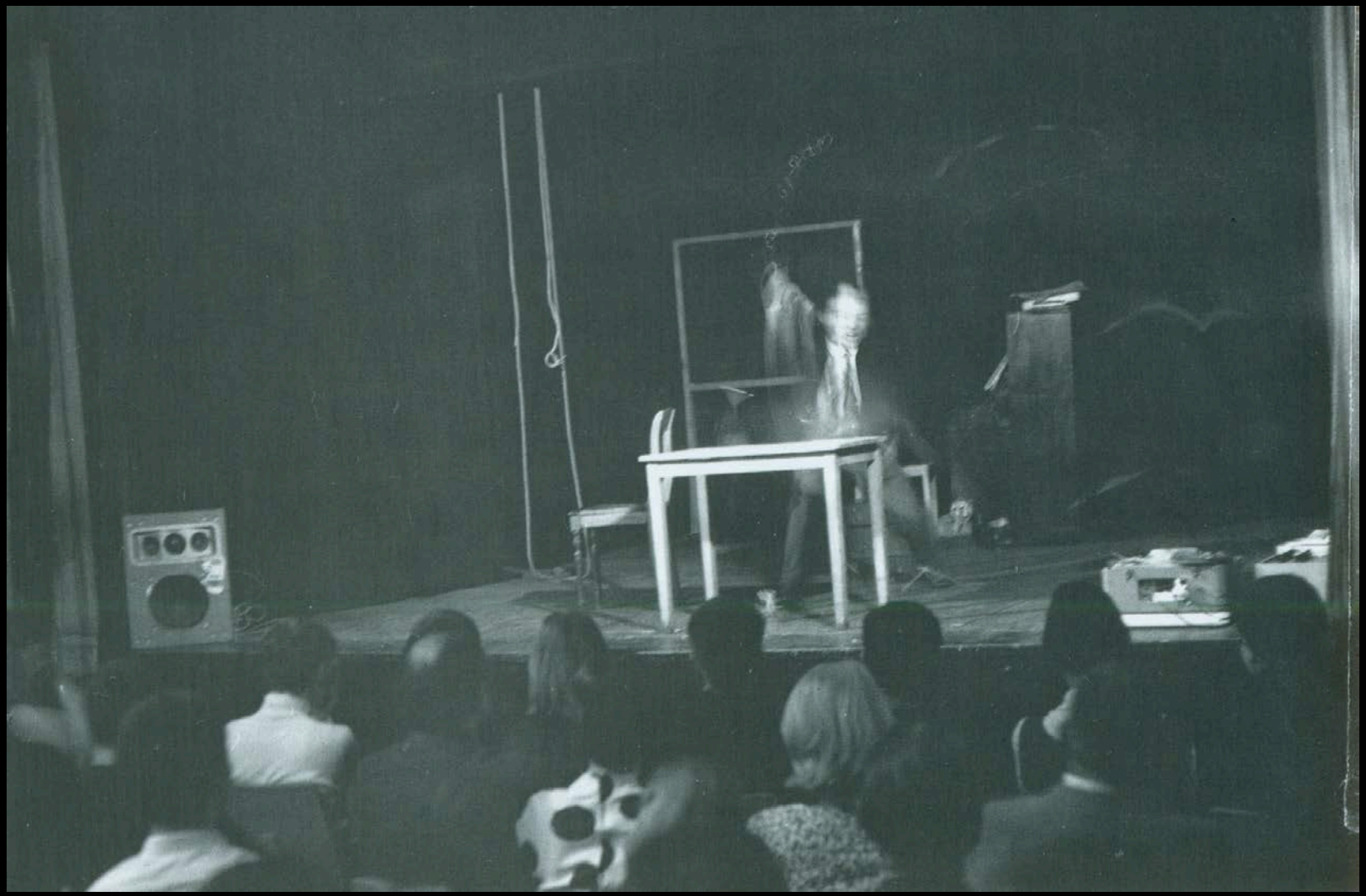
Nam June Paik at performance

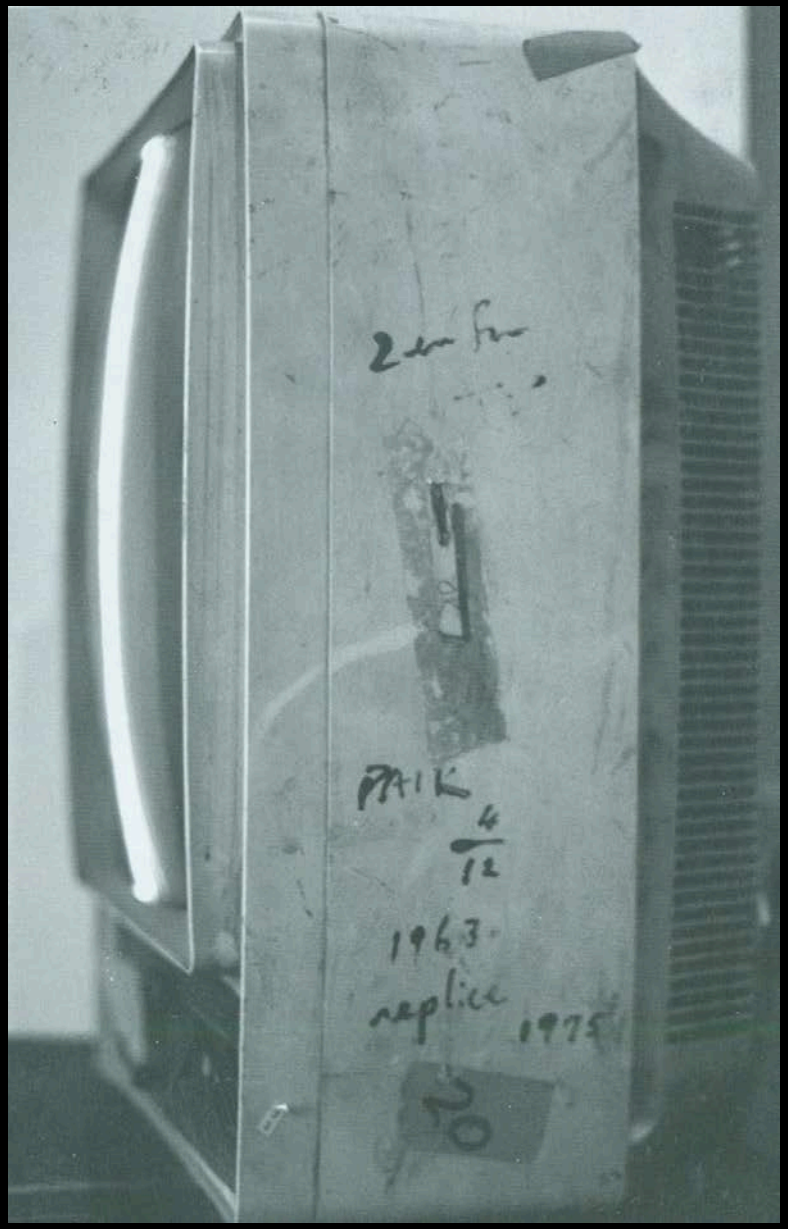
In the performance “Simple,” Paik did the following scripted act: 1.) threw peas into auditorium; 2.) smeared shaving cream on his body; 3.) put rice in shaving cream; 4.) slowly unwound a roll of paper; 5.) went into a pool of water; 6.) came back and played piano with baby doll in mouth.

Nam June Paik, Simple, Wiesbaden, 1962

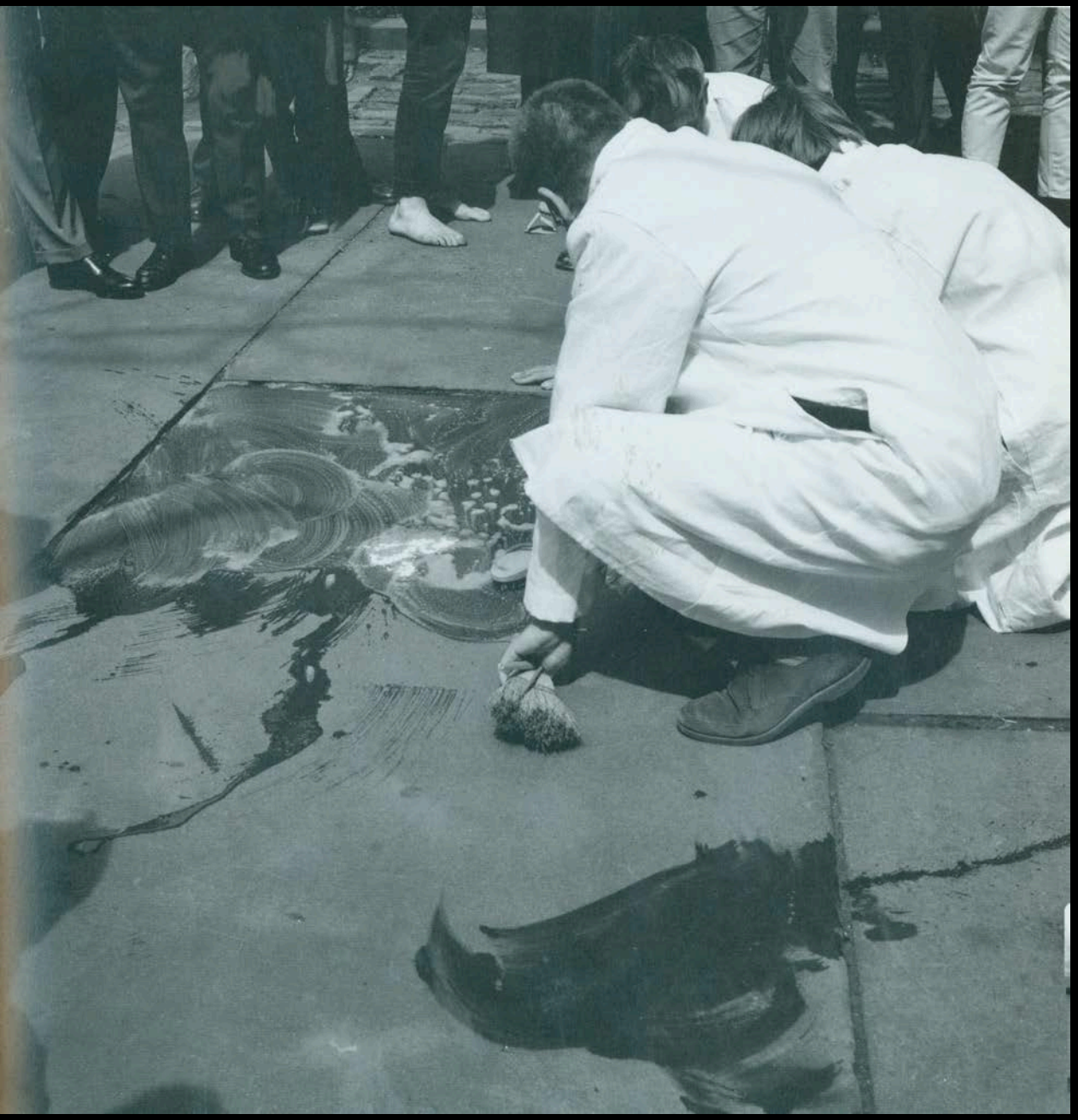


Nam June Paik, One for Violin, Düsseldorf, June 16, 1962





Nam June Paik, Zen for TV, 1963/1975



Hi Red Center, Street Cleaning Event, June 1966

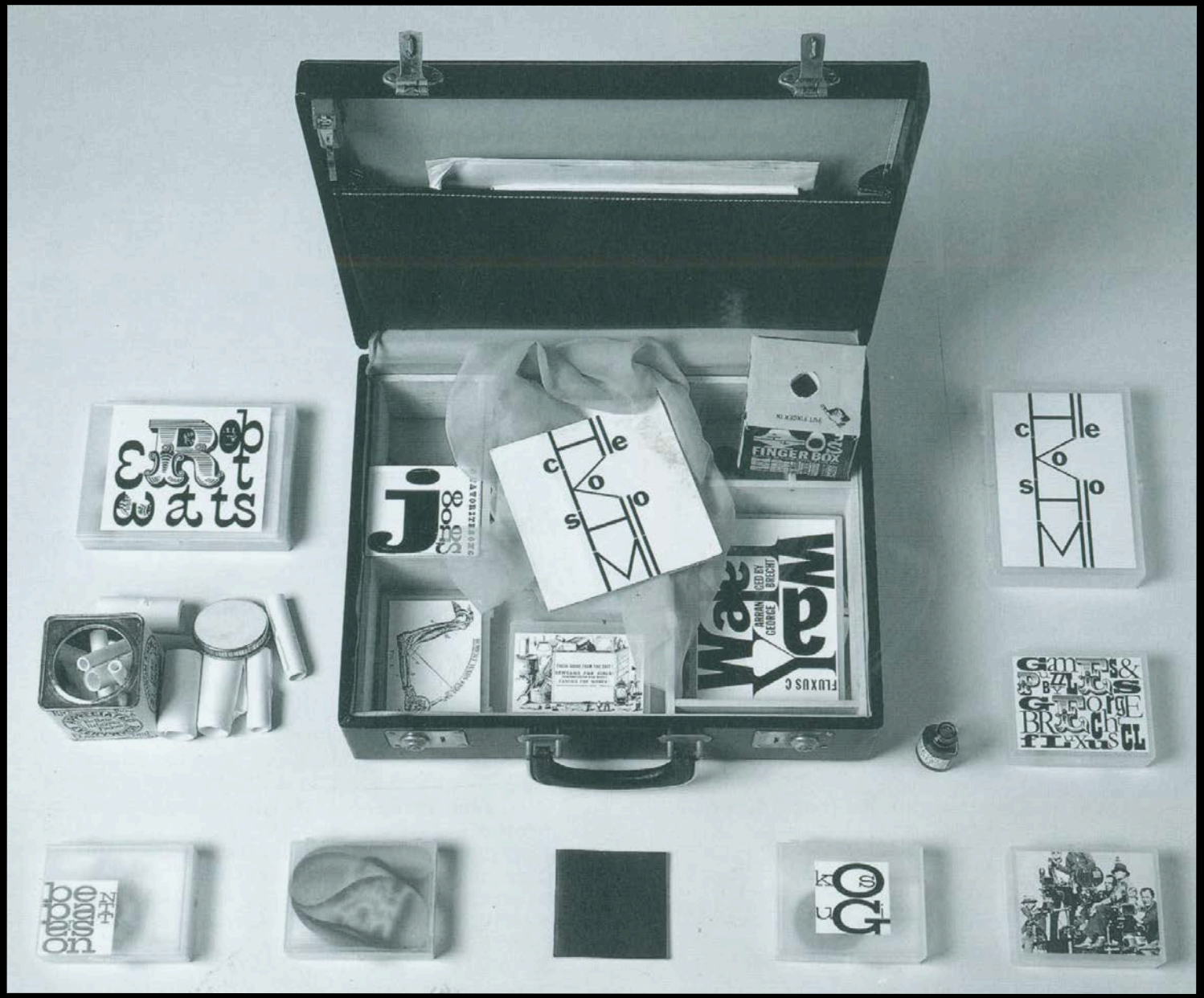
ALMOND
掃除

Left: Fluxus Women Mieko Shiomi & Alison Knowles photographed by Peter Moore, 1964

Right: Fluxus artist Alison Knowles, b. 1933

Alison Knowles, Music by Alison, May 23, 1964

Alison Knowles, The Bean Rolls, 1964



assembled by George Maciunas, Fluxkit, 1964

Student question:

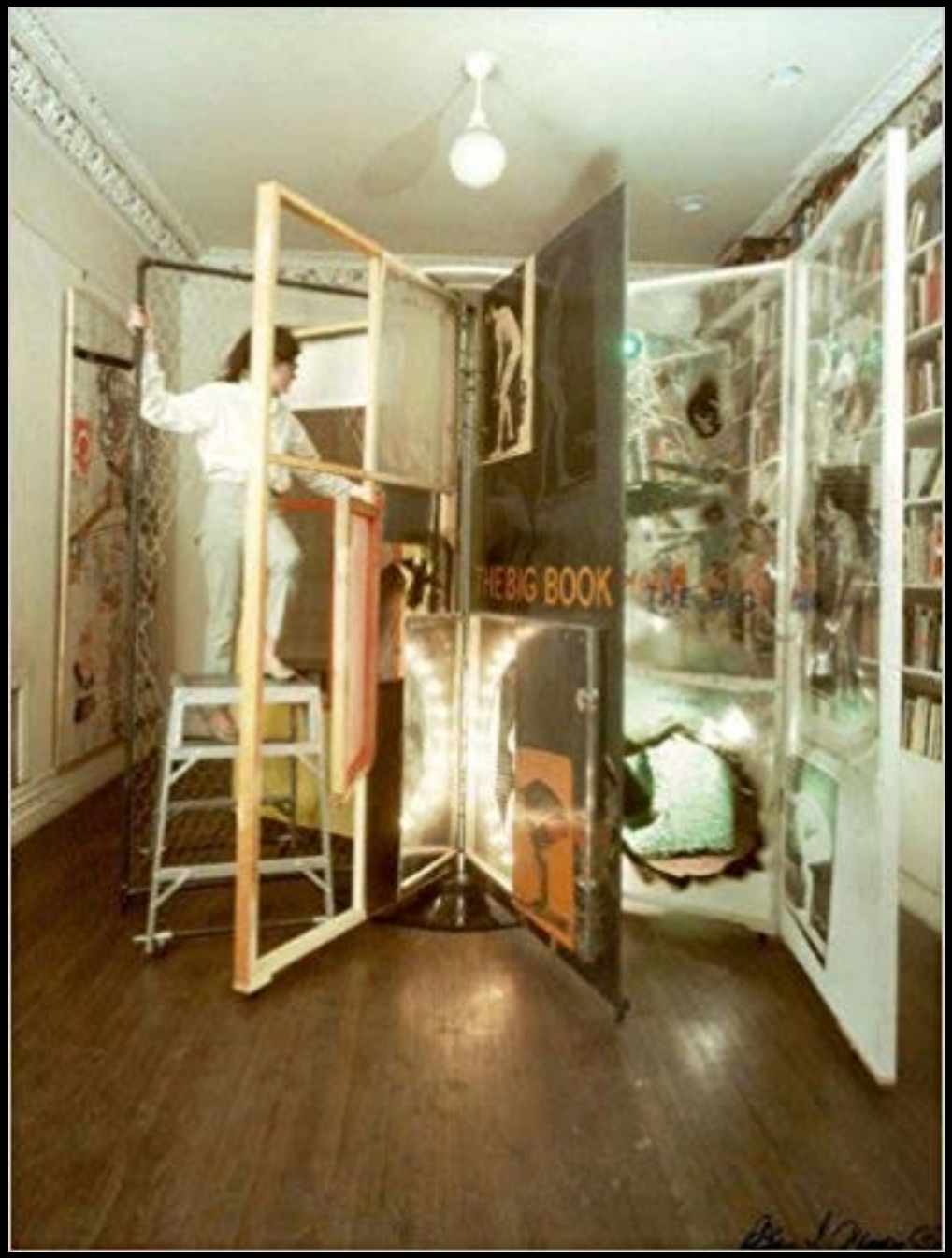
Why did Knowles' work ["House of Dust"] garner such opposing reactions?

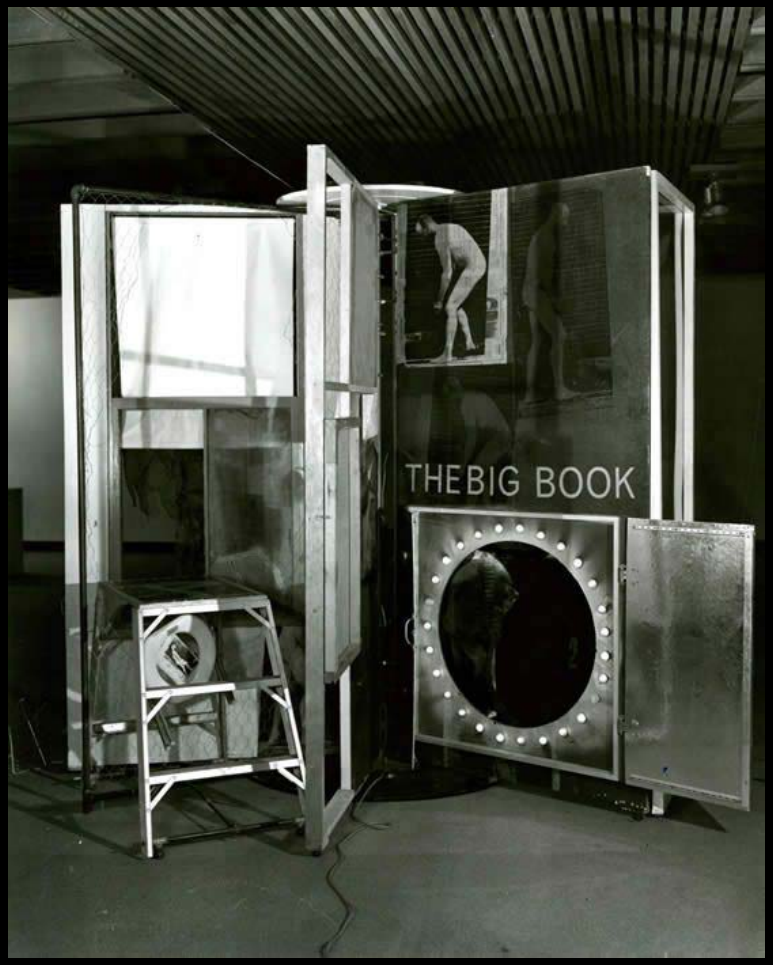
Professor's related question:

What is the relationship between the avant-garde and otherness? And, by connection what is the connection between an audience's resistance to avant-gardism and xenophobia?

Student writing:

As people, we are afraid of what we do not understand and like to stick to what we know and are comfortable with. An electrician might not appreciate the nuances of modern art and more than an artist would appreciate the complexities of intricate wiring. The physical “House of Dust” was intended to be a place for “people from all walks of life.” It may not have ended up that way, but that does not take away from its importance.





Alison Knowles, The Big Book, 1967

Student question:

Does negative audience interaction still allow a work to be considered an “open work,” à la Umberto Eco’s idea of the “open work”?

Alison Knowles' computer-generated poem and sculpture *House of Dust* was created in association with James Tenney. The work had its beginnings at an informal Fluxus seminar in 1967 in which Tenney, who had been a composer-in-residence at the Bell Labs in the early '60s, demonstrated how the Fortran programming language could be employed in chance operations in artmaking. Knowles' contribution to the session was a poem of the in which combinations of the variables were randomly generated. It's generally considered to be the first computer-generated poem. Knowles then embarked on the creation of a large interactive public sculpture and sound installation inspired by one quatrain of the poem ("a house of dust, on open ground, lit by natural light, inhabited by friends and enemies"), in which electronic sensors would control sound equipment in response to varying light levels. The sculpture was briefly installed on the lawn of New York's Penn South housing co-op, but it generated opposition from residents and was ultimately set on fire by an arsonist, a surprisingly violent expression of hostility toward a work of public art. In 1970 Knowles brought the reconstructed *House of Dust* with her to CalArts.

Gathering inside the House of Dust for a screening, c. 1971

Professor’s question related to student writing:

What is the role of “nature” and “naturalism” in Knowles and Tenney’s “House of Dust”?

Allison Knowles and James Tenney, The House of Dust, 1974

Student questions:

Who wrote “The House of Dust”?

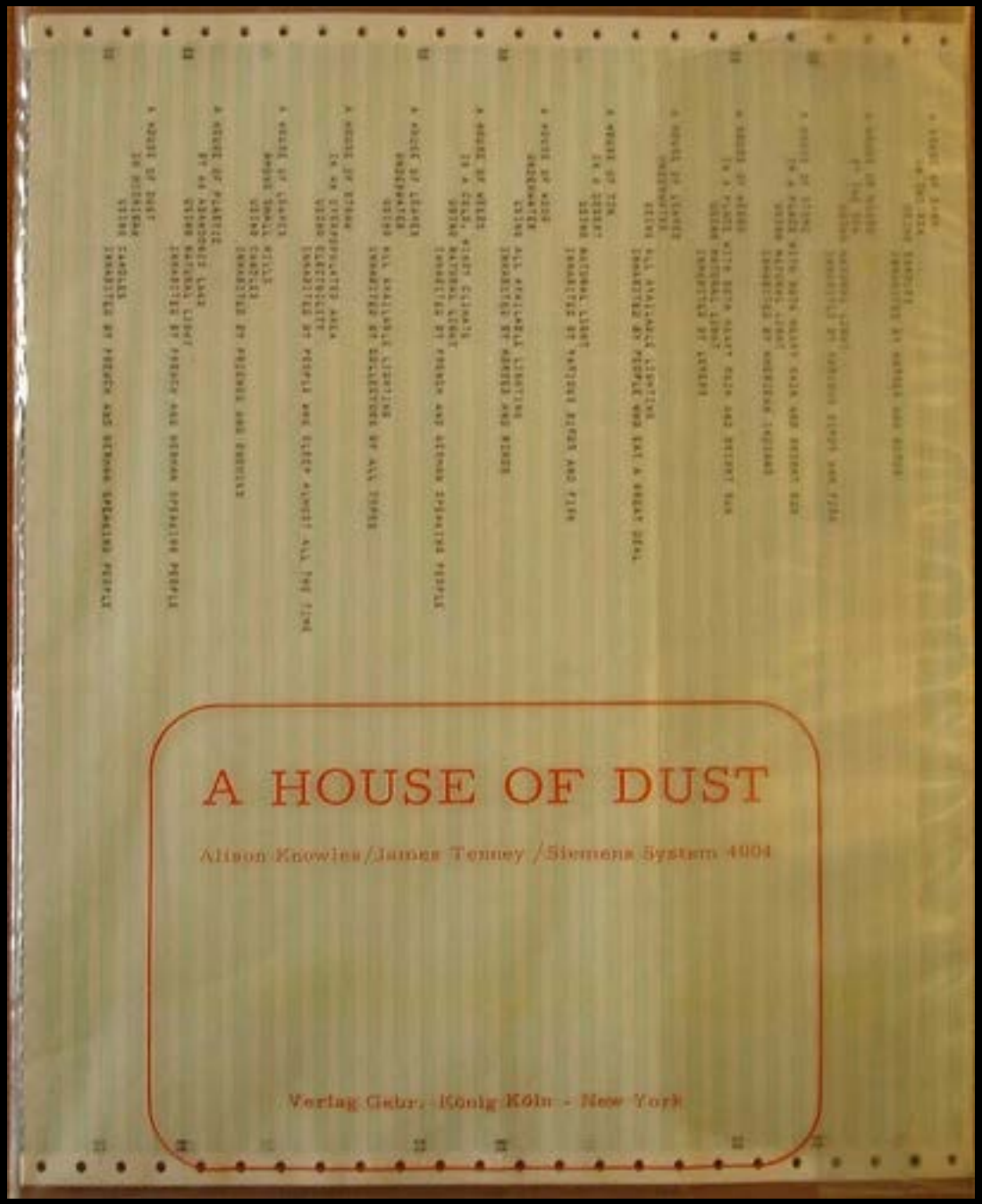
Can we get meaning from computerized poems and writing?

How are art and creativity related to randomization?

Student writing:

When a computer generates a poem, it effortlessly tears through specific patterns and calculations that eventually lead to a structure poem. A human being has the ability to think critically about the lines that he or she will generate, even before the thoughts are put onto paper. If the author wants to connect with the audience on a certain emotional level, that can be achieved through the brilliant sculpting of words…A computer-generated poem does not have the emotional characteristics of human poetry, but it can still impact peoplein a positive way.

From roughly 10,000 possible stanzas, Knowles selected one quatrain—“a house of dust / on open ground / lit by natural light / inhabited by friends and enemies”—as the basis for an interactive sculpture on the California Institute of the Arts campus in the early 1970s.



Student question:

How important is artistic intent when analyzing the meaning of a piece?

A HOUSE OF DUST
IN A DESERTED FACTORY
USING NATURAL LIGHT
INHABITED BY PEOPLE WHO ENJOY EA ING TOGETHER

A HOUSE OF STONE
UNDERWATER
USING NATURAL LIGHT
INHABITED BY PEOPLE WHO ENJOY EATING TOGETHER

A HOUSE OF GLASS
IN SOUTHERN FRANCE
USING CANDLES
INHABITED BY VERY TALL PEOPLE

A HOUSE OF TIN
ON THE SEA
USING CANDLES
INHABITED BY NEGROS WEARING ALL COLORS

A HOUSE OF MUD
INSIDE A MOUNTAIN
USING CANDLES
INHABITED BY NEGROS WEARING ALL COLORS

A HOUSE OF WEEDS
IN AN OVERPOPULATED AREA
USING ALL AVAILABLE LIGHTING
INHABITED BY HORSES AND BIRDS

A HOUSE OF ROOTS
IN JAPAN
USING ELECTRICITY
INHABITED BY PEOPLE WHO EAT A GREAT DEAL

A HOUSE OF ROOTS
AMONG HIGH MOUNTAINS
USING CANDLES
INHABITED BY PEOPLE WHO SLEEP VERY LITTLE

A HOUSE OF SAND
INSIDE A MOUNTAIN
USING CANDLES
INHABITED BY NEGROS WEARING ALL COLORS

A HOUSE OF WEEDS
IN A PLACE WITH BOTH HEAVY RAIN AND BRIGHT SUN
USING CANDLES
INHABITED BY PEOPLE WHO EAT A GREAT DEAL

A HOUSE OF BROKEN DISHES
ON THE SEA
USING ALL AVAILABLE LIGHTING
INHABITED BY LOVERS

A House of Dust '67 Verlag gebr. König Köln-New York 2 A/P '67 Mieke Bernink

Student questions:

Does “The House of Dust” tell stories?

How did “The House of Dust” withstand time?

Do the arts transcend language as a more universal way of communication?

Will a global language eventually emerge? If so, what ramifications does this have for language and literature as a whole?

10 Most Spoken Languages in the World

- Mandarin 845 million
- Spanish 329 million
- English 328 million
- Hindi 182 million
- Bengali 181 million
- Portuguese 178 million
- Russian 144 million
- Japanese 122 million
- German 90 million
- Javanese 85 million

http://www.education.rec.ri.cmu.edu/fire/naclo/pages/Ling/Fact/num-languages.html

Student questions:

How could “House of Dust” be recreated today?

Does conceptual art and its use of language, sound, and visual effects necessitate the use of commonly known objects or common cultural elements to communicate ideas?

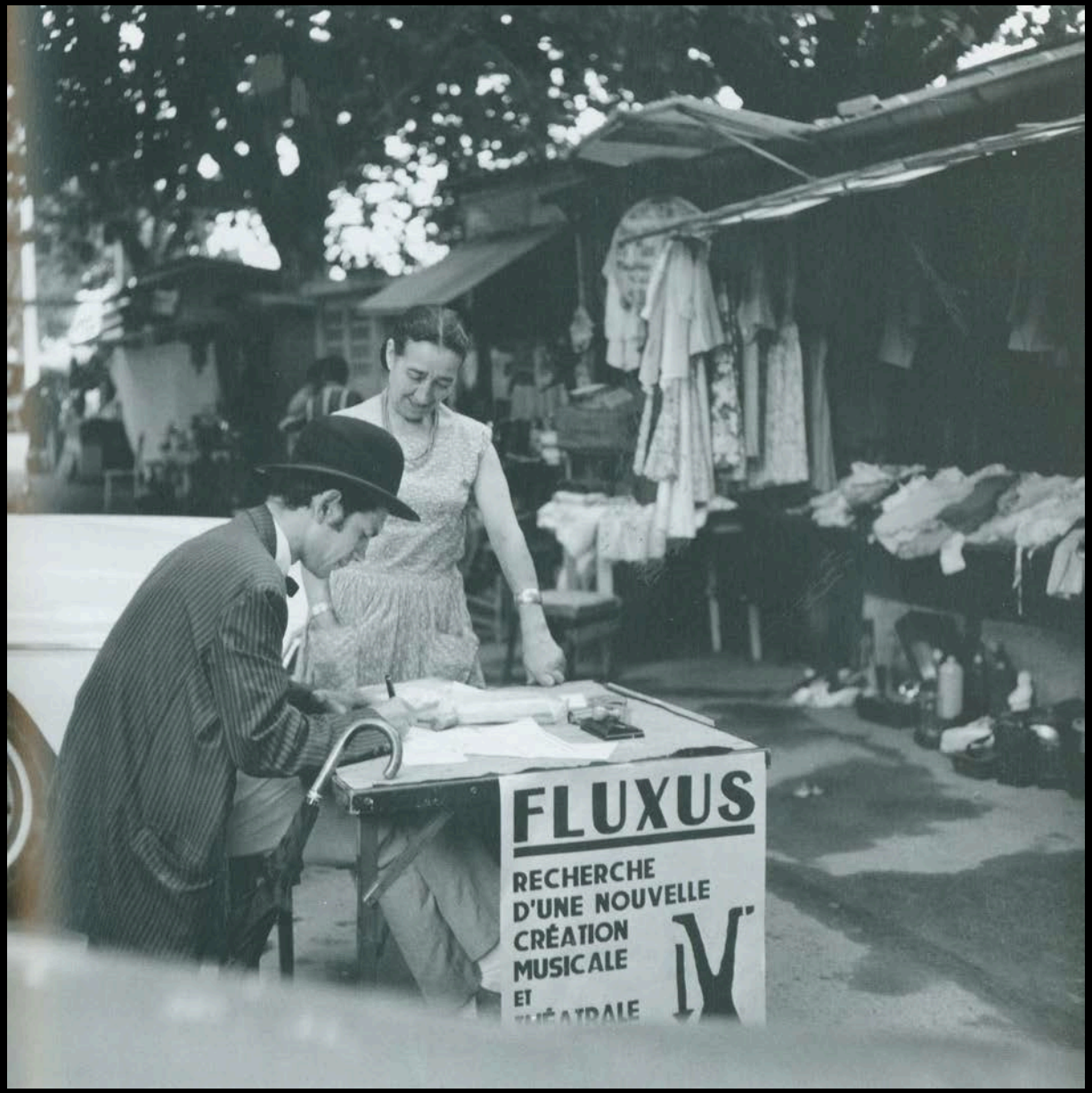
Alison Knowles, Make a Salad [Event Score], 1962/2012
Event scores involve simple actions, ideas, and objects from everyday life recontexualized as performance. While each iteration of the piece is unique, the basic ingredients include Knowles preparing a massive salad by chopping the ingredients to live music, tossing it in the air, then serving it to the audience.

George Maciunas, Solo for Violin, May 23, 1964

Ben Vautier, Living Sculpture, 1962

Living Sculpture was a performance-installation work that required the artist to live and work for two weeks in the sidewalk window of a London gallery.

Ben Vautier, Brushing Teeth, Nice, France, July 26, 1963 -- LIVING SCULPTURE



Ben Vautier, Signing of Certificates, Nice, France, July 27, 1963

Ben Vautier, One Must Be Wary of Words, 1993

René Magritte, The Treachery of Images, 1928-29

Ben Vautier, One Must Be Wary of Words, 1993

Yoko Ono, A Grapefruit in the World of Park, 1961

Yoko Ono, Everson Catalogue Box, 1971 -- Includes work by Yoko Ono and John Lennon; Wooden box with paperback copy of Grapefruit, glass, offset lithograph, acrylic on canvas, plastic boxes, and mixed media; packaging designed by George Maciunas; served as the catalogue for Yoko Ono's exhibition, This Is Not Here, Everson Museum, 1971

Shigeko Kubota, Vagina Painting, 1965

Jackson Pollock, c. 1951

Shigeko Kubota, Vagina Painting, 1965