

**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**

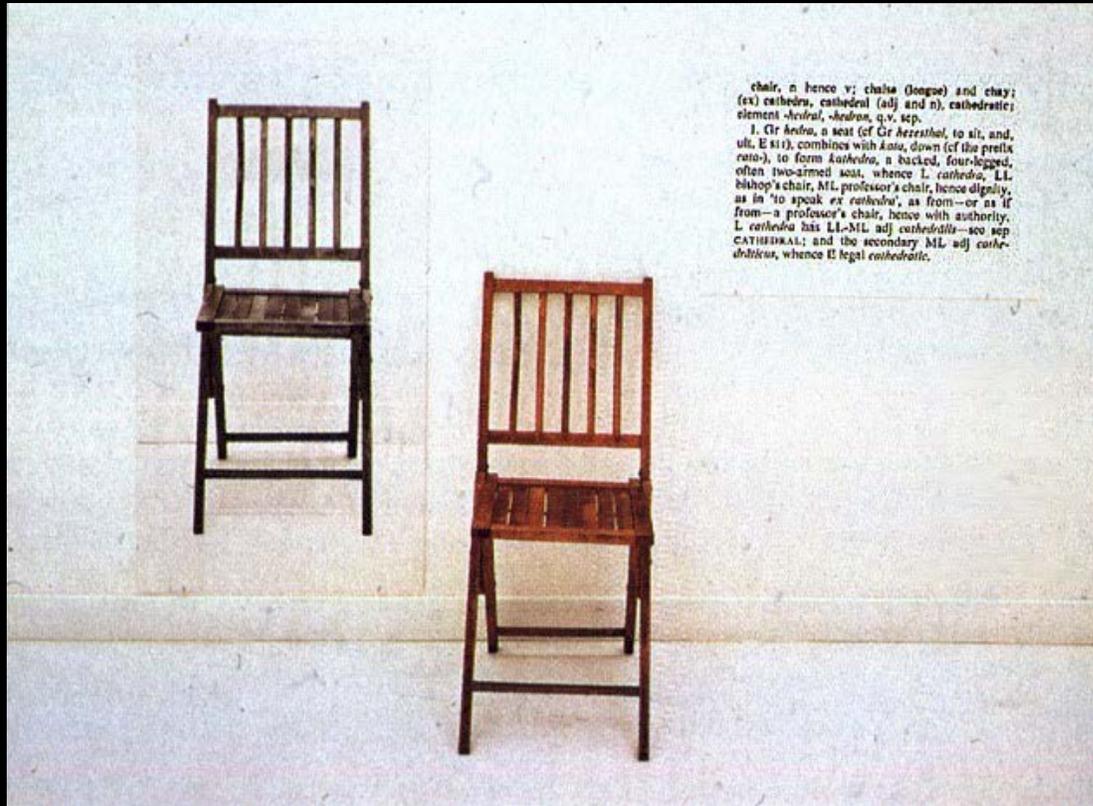
**Thursday 04/12/18**

**Discussion**

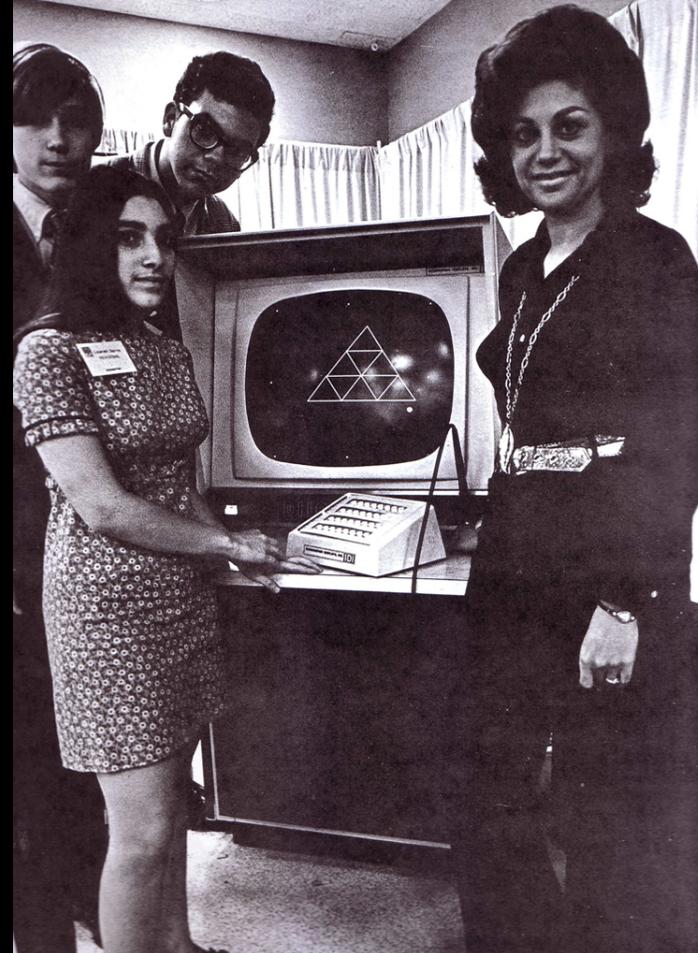
**Experimental Exhibitions**

# CONCEPTUAL ART BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND TECHNOLOGY

## Defining Conceptual Art



Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Chairs, 1965



At Software, Agnes Denes programmed her computer display with the assistance of Theodor H. Nelson and The R.E.S.I.S.T.O.R.S.

# Cybernetic Serendipity

## Serendipity

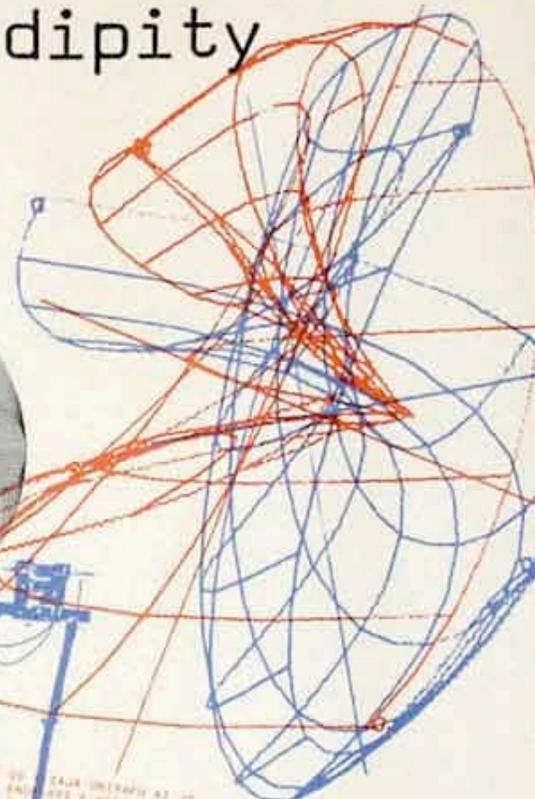
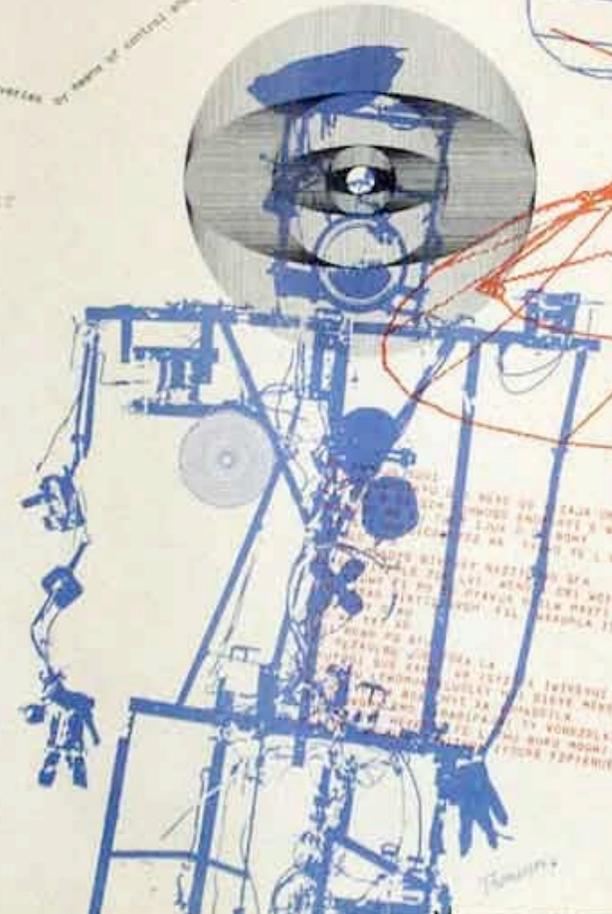
Asydipuzrag

the faculty of seeing  
happy chance discovery of  
the faculty of seeing  
happy chance discovery of

the faculty of seeing

the faculty of seeing  
happy chance discovery of  
the faculty of seeing  
happy chance discovery of

Institute of Contemporary Arts  
August 2 - October 20  
1968



PROGRAMME  
SERENDIPITY  
LECTURES

Thursday August 8  
Tuesday August 13  
Thursday August 15  
Tuesday August 20  
Thursday August 22  
Tuesday August 27  
Thursday September 3  
Tuesday September 10  
Thursday September 12  
Thursday September 19  
Tuesday September 24  
Thursday September 26  
Tuesday October 1  
Tuesday October 8  
Thursday October 10  
Thursday October 17

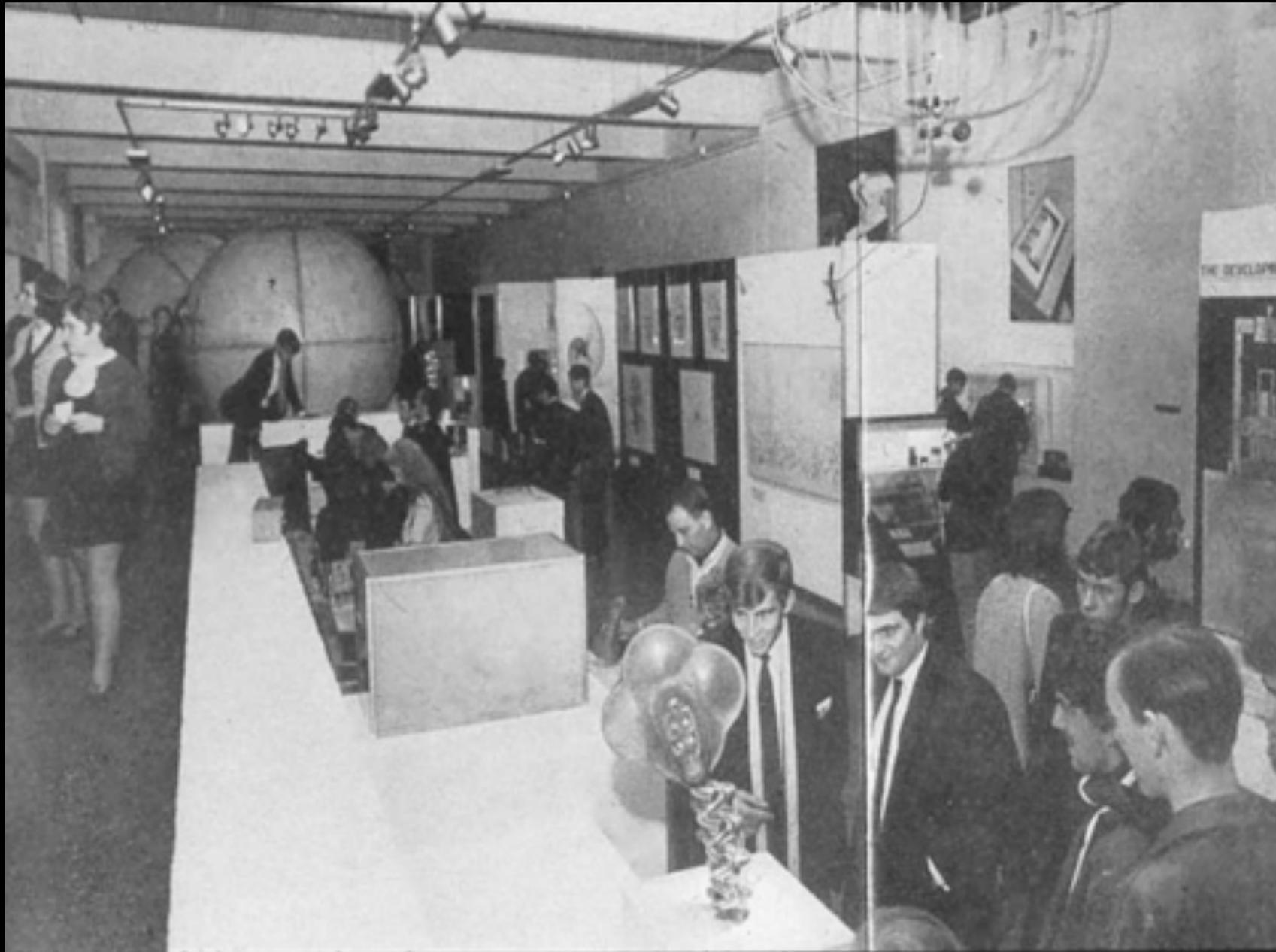
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Cybernetic Serendipity, curated by Jasia Reichardt at the ICA London August 2nd to October 20th, 1968









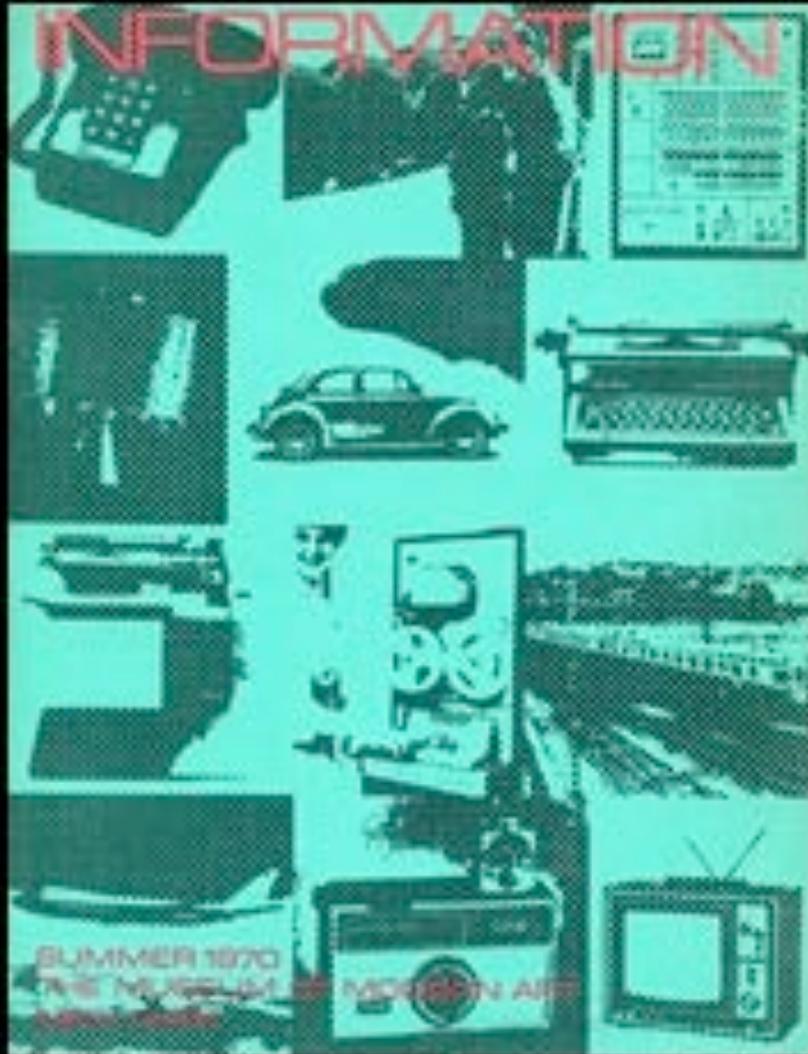


*The Machine As Seen at the  
End of the Mechanical Age,  
New York, Museum of Modern  
Art, 1968*

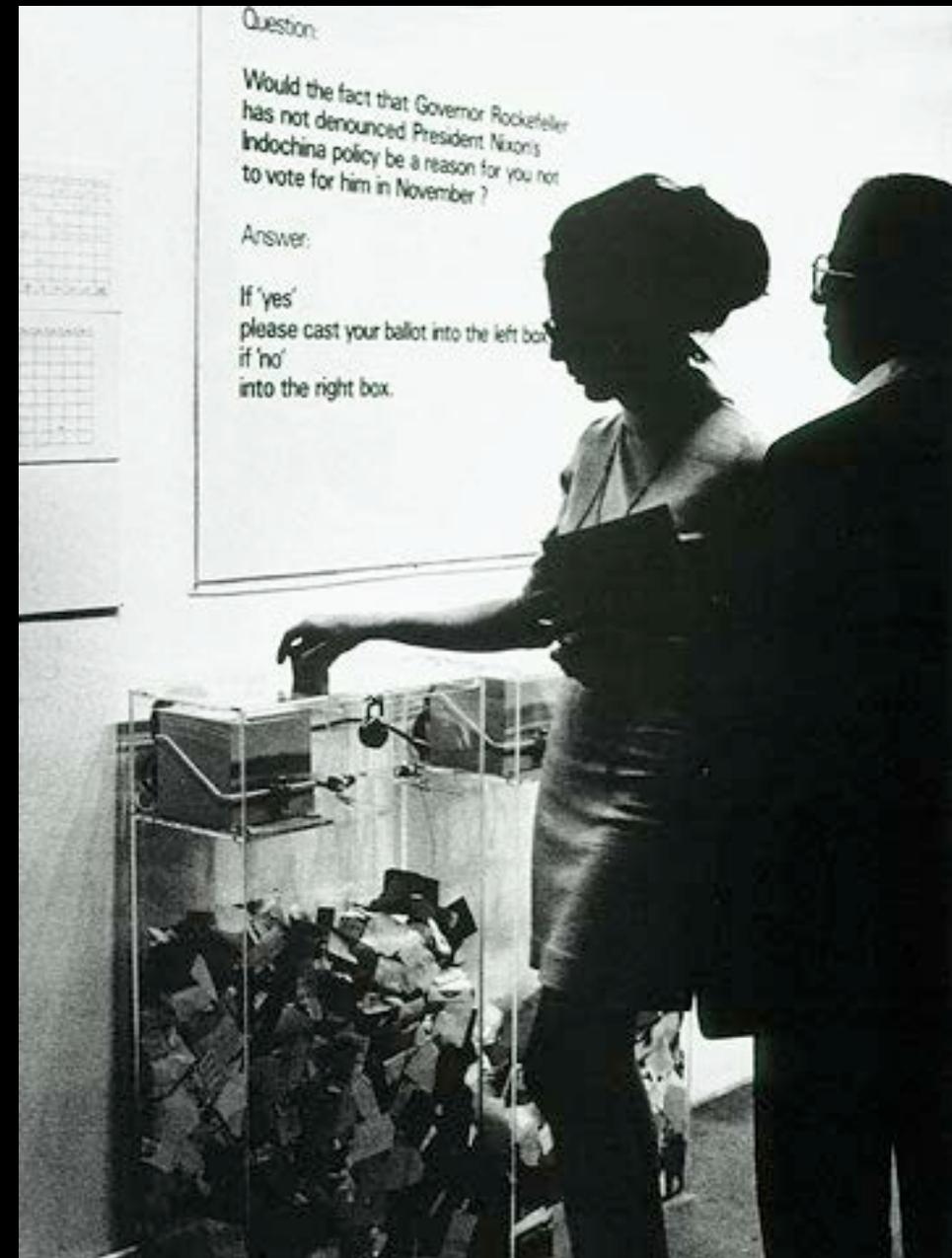


*Art by Telephone*, Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1969

On the LP the Museum's director, Jan van der Marck, interviews, by long-distance telephone, artists Siah Armajani, Richard Artschwager, John Baldessari, Iain Baxter, Mel Bochner, George Brecht, Jack Burnham, James Lee Byars, Robert H. Cumming, Françoise Dallegret, Jan Dibbets, John Giorno, Robert Grosvenor, Hans Haacke, Richard Hamilton, Dick Higgins, David Humpson, Robert Huot, Alani Jacquet, Ed Kienholz, Joseph Kosuth, Les Levine, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Claes Oldenburg, Dennis Oppenheim, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Gunter Rambow, Stan Van Der Beek, Bernard Venet, Frank Lincoln Viner, Wolf Vostell, William Wegman, and William T. Wiley, each discussing with van der Marck how to execute an artwork for inclusion in the show to be fabricated by in Chicago strictly by the artist's verbal instructions.



*Information*, curated by Kynaston McShine,  
Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970



Hans Haacke, *Poll*, 1970

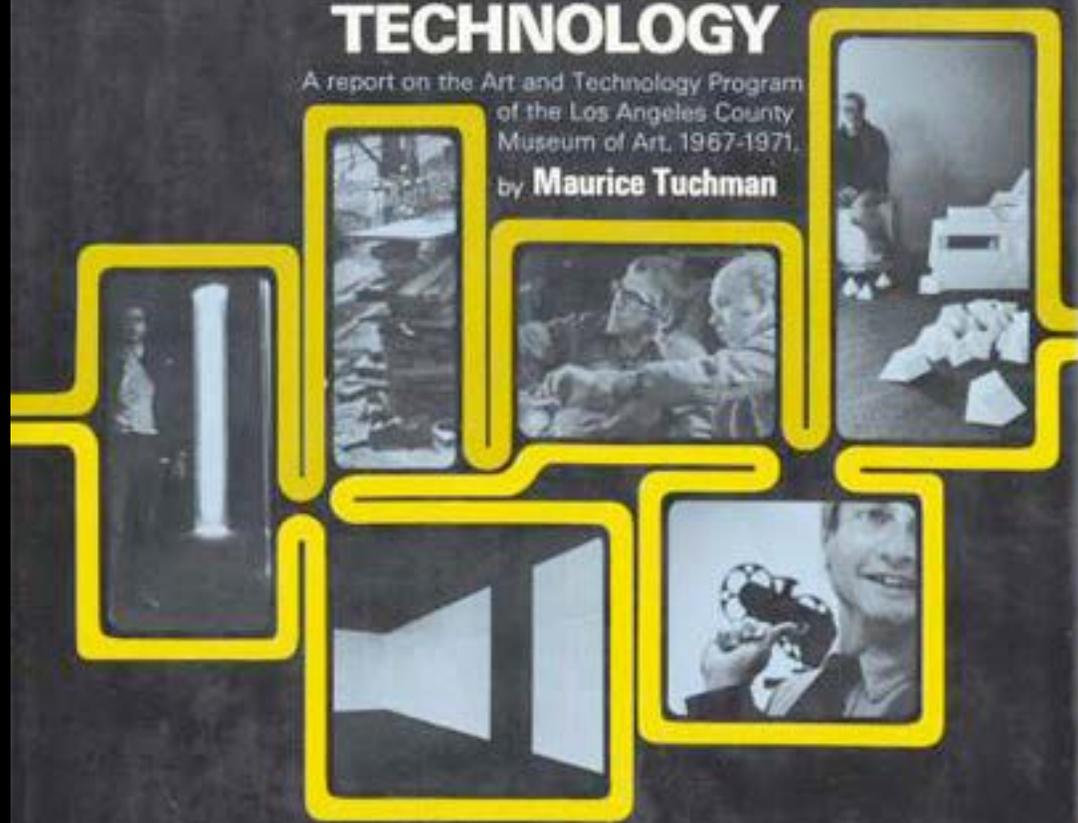


*Information*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2 July – 20 September 1970

# ART AND TECHNOLOGY

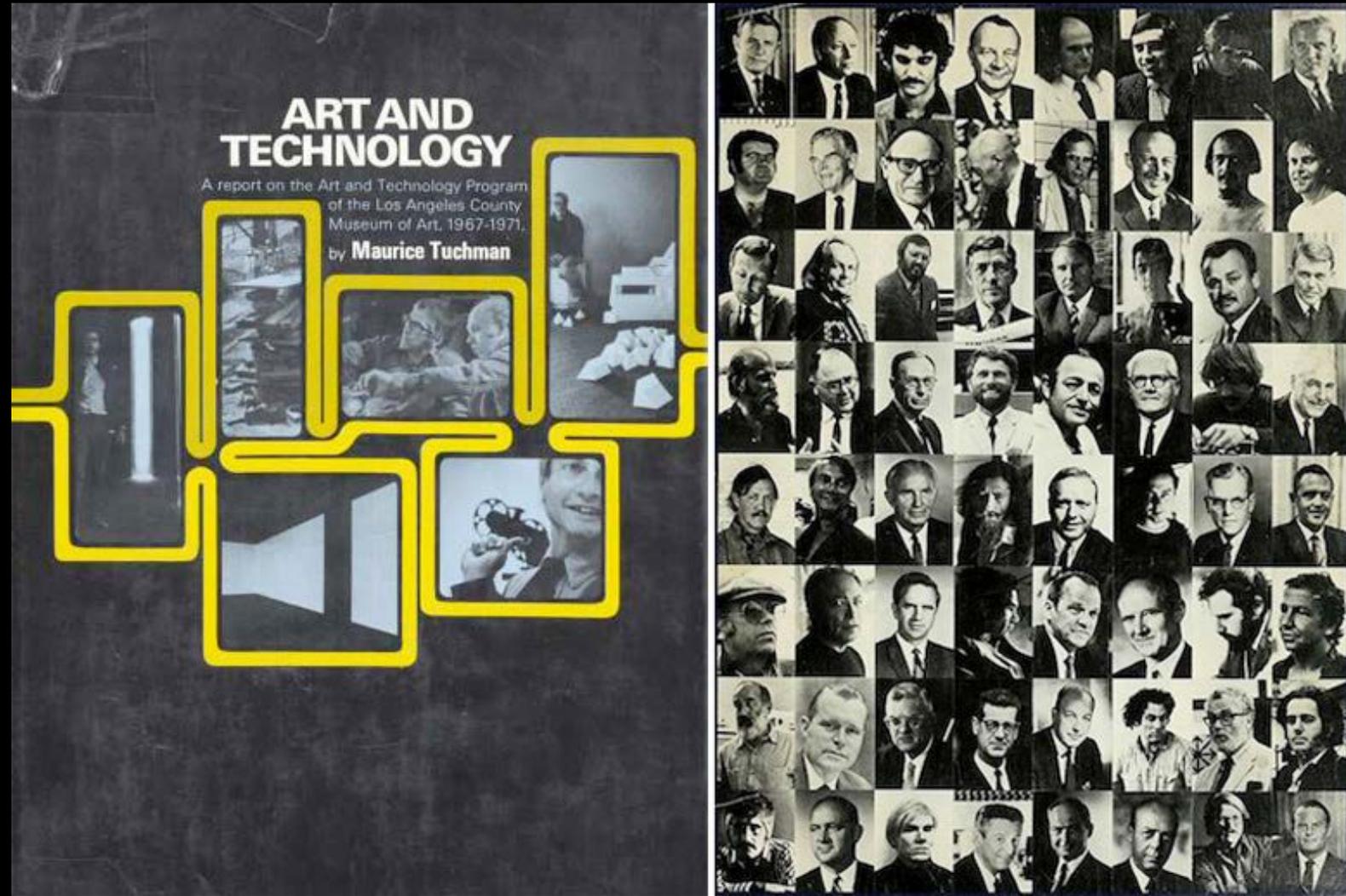
A report on the Art and Technology Program  
of the Los Angeles County  
Museum of Art, 1967-1971.

by **Maurice Tuchman**



The Art and Technology Program at LACMA—or A & T as it came to be known—was a forward-thinking initiative run by the museum from 1967 to 1971. The brainchild of curator Maurice Tuchman, A & T paired artists with corporations in the areas of aerospace, scientific research, and entertainment. Although some of the matches (such as James Turrell and Robert Irwin's well-known collaboration with Garrett Corporation) did not result in completed artworks, other partnerships led to ambitious projects that were exhibited at the 1970 World Exposition in Osaka, Japan, and at LACMA in 1971.

Among the artists who realized work through A & T were Oyvind Fahlstrom, Newton Harrison, R. B. Kitaj, Rockne Krebs, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Serra, Tony Smith, Andy Warhol, and Robert Whitman. This installation features photographs, correspondence, and ephemera documenting the original Art and Technology Program at LACMA.





Robert Irwin and James Turrell in the anechoic chamber at the University of California, Los Angeles. The artists explored the concept for an unrealized project with the Garrett Corporation as part of the original Art and Technology program at LACMA. They experimented sensory deprivation chambers, meditation processes and ganzfields (fields of sight with no objects in them to focus on), measuring the reactions volunteers had to various sensory experiments. At first, they thought they would build some kind of sound-free anechoic chamber for the LACMA show, but reading through the notes, memos and interview transcripts from the last stretch of the project, is like watching the three men gradually disengage themselves from goals and order.

The Art and Technology Program was the brainchild of LACMA's curator of Modern Art, Maurice Tuchman. According to Tuchman, "Much of the most compelling art since 1910 has depended upon the materials and processes of technology, and has increasingly assimilated scientific and industrial advances. Nevertheless, only in isolated circumstances have artists been able to carry out their ideas or even initiate their projects due to the lack of an operative relationship with corporate facilities. Our objective now is to provide the necessary meeting ground for some eminent contemporary artists with sophisticated technological personnel and resources. Naturally we hope that this endeavor will result not only in significant works of art but in an ongoing union between the two forces. It is our conviction that the need for this alliance is one of the most pressing esthetic issues of our time."

## PARTICIPATING CORPORATIONS



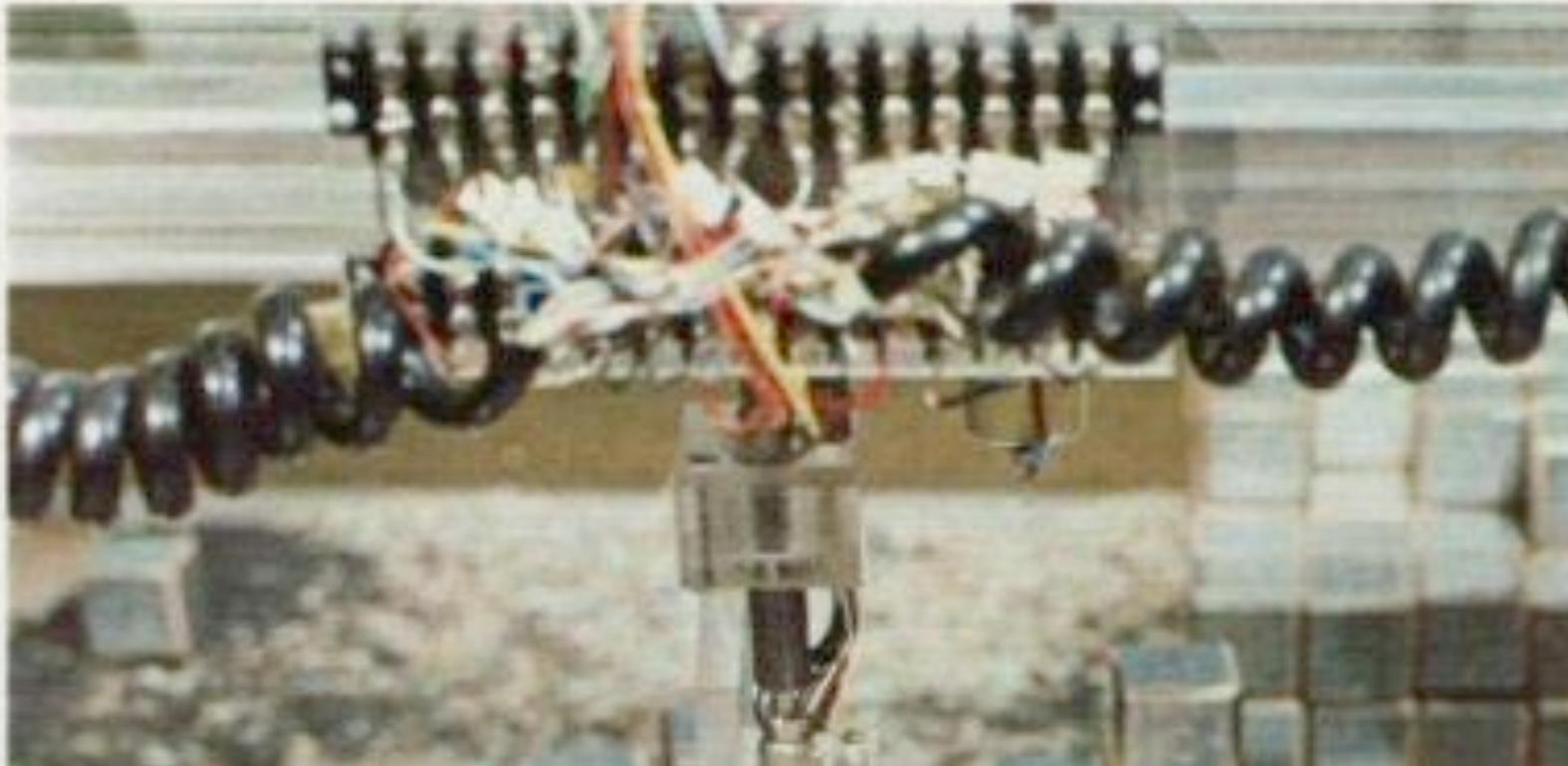


Artist Newton Harrison (right) and Jet Propulsion Laboratory technician Ray Goldstein examining a preliminary design for Harrison's Art & Technology installation of glow discharge tubes, 1969

<https://unframed.lacma.org/2014/07/07/art-and-technology-in-the-archives-at-the-balch-art-research-library>

# SOFTWARE

Information technology: its new meaning for art

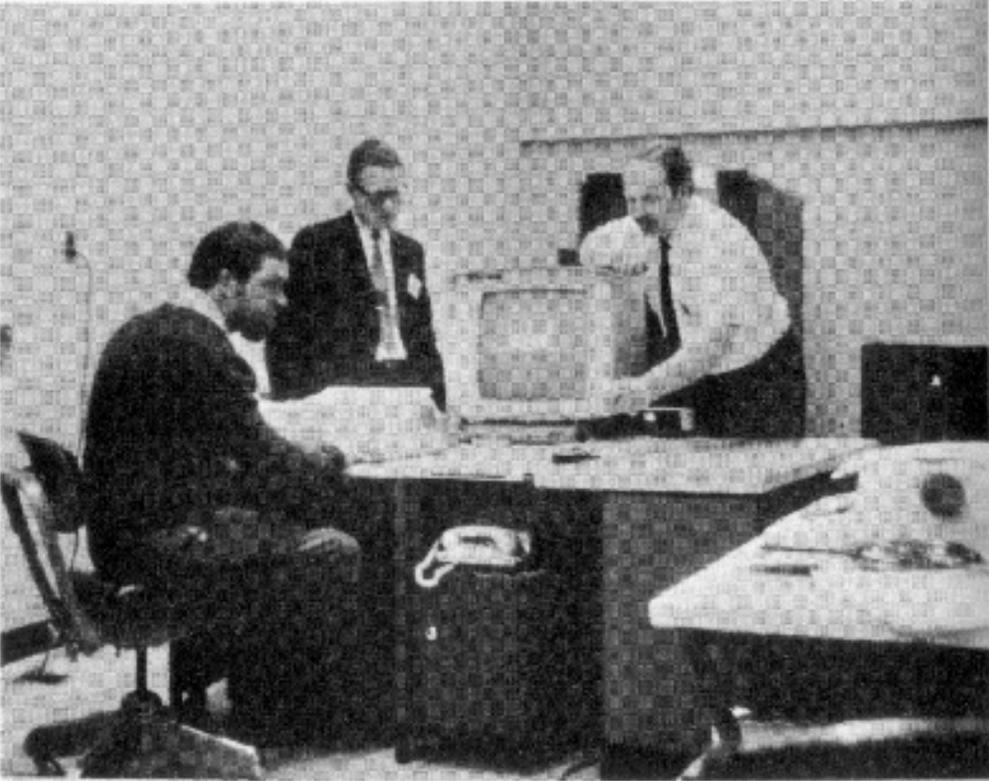


*Software, Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art* Jewish Museum, NYC, fall 1970

Participating artists: Vito Acconci, David Antin, Architecture Group Machine M.I.T., John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Linda Berris, Donald Burgy, Paul Conly, Agnes Denes, Robert Duncan Enzmann, Carl Fernbach-Flarsheim, John Godyear, Hans Haacke, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Nam June Paik, Alex Razdow, Sonia Sheridan, Evander D. Schley, Theodosius Victoria, Laurence Weiner.

## Jack Burnham (1931-)

Jack Burnham at console, Computer Room, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lincoln Laboratory, Lexington, Mass., 1968



- **Objet to System:** “It becomes apparent that the Kinetic construction is not an *objet d’art* in the conventional sense, but a *système d’art*. It is a system in the sense that any series of interacting components may need repair and adjustment from time to time. This hardly fits the description of the traditional inert painting or sculpture.”
- **Object to Matrix:** “They reject the Kinetic construction as an object but regard it as the matrix for a possible event or ‘happening’.”
- “The specific function of modern didactic art has been to show that art does not reside in material entities, but in relations between people and between people and the components of their environment.”

Student question + writing:

Could Burnham's embrace of software over hardware be considered the next logical step in the progression of conceptual art?

The exhibition's goal was to shake the centuries-old stranglehold of the *paragone* on contemporary definitions of art through deconstruction of the materiality previously held to be inherent in art.



Leonardo, Lady with an Ermine, 1489-90

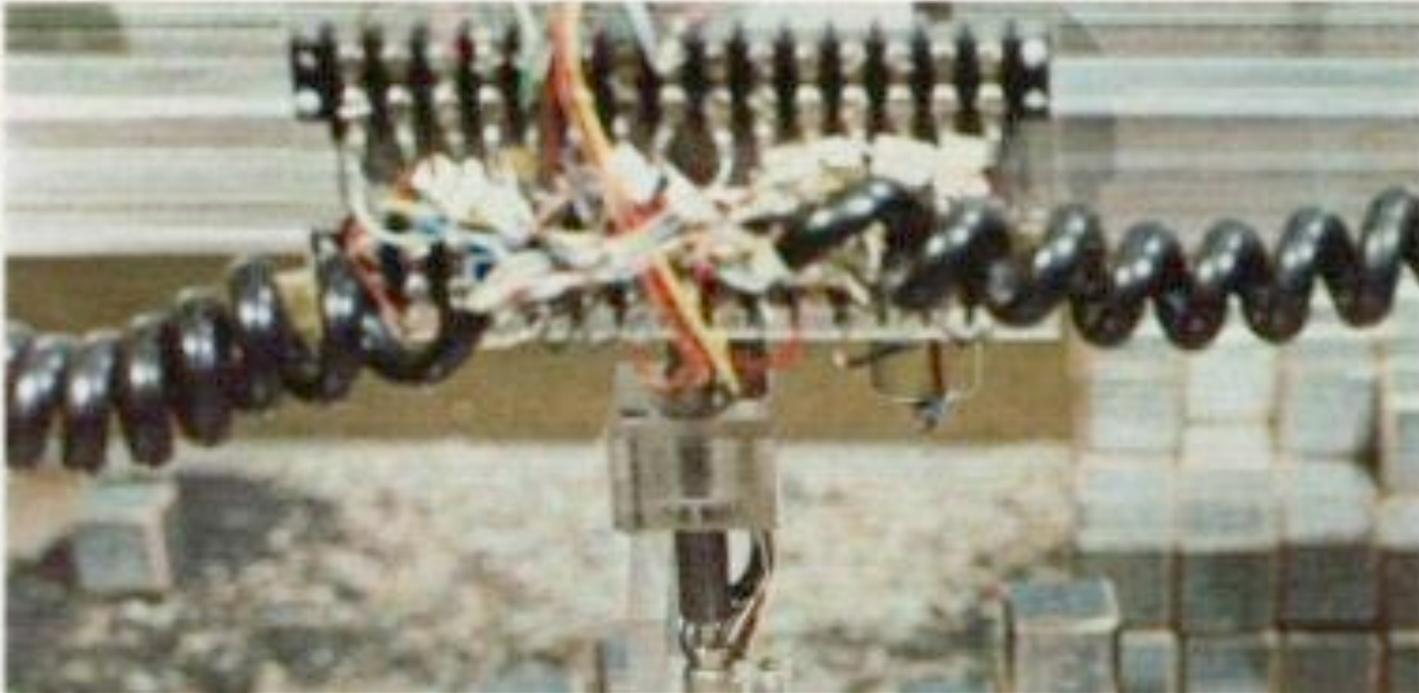
Paragone  
(meaning comparison)

**Which of the arts is best equipped to rival nature - painting or sculpture?**

Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, notes compiled after his death, comparing painting and sculpture: Painting has universal truth because of its superior ability to mimic nature and sits at the top of the arts hierarchy.

# SOFTWARE

Information technology: its new meaning for art



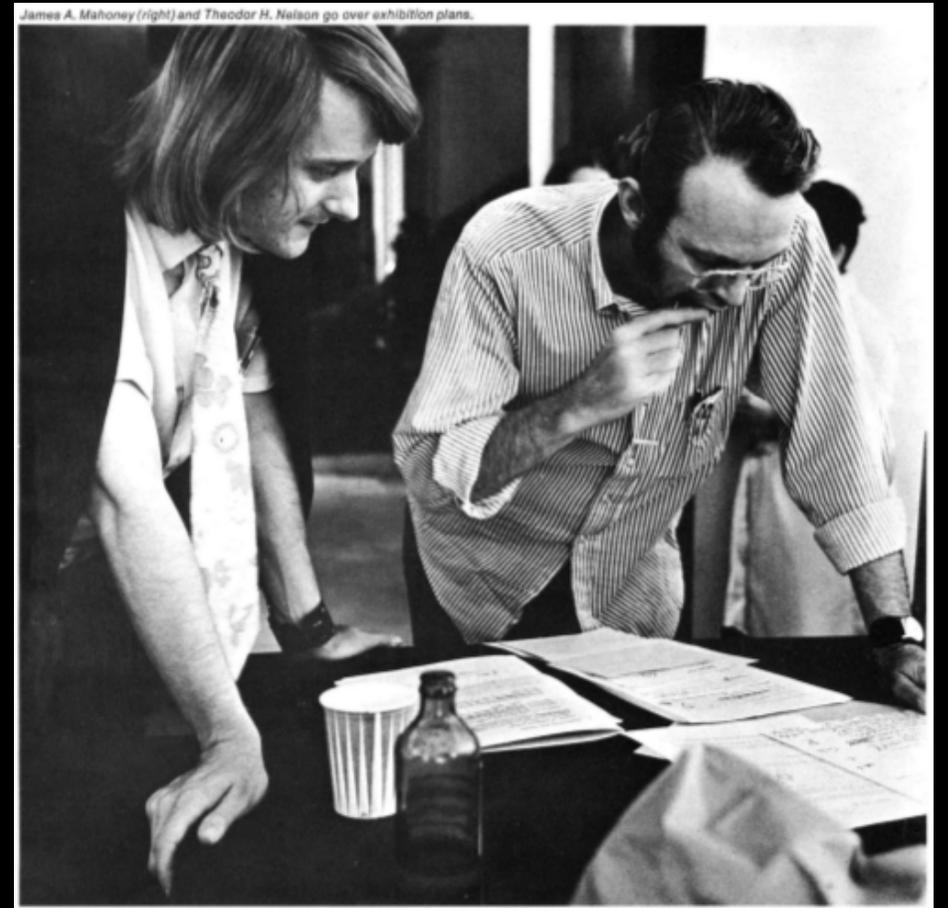
The exhibition Software proved that art was a system as such. For Burnham, the logic of the art in Software was relational, a matter of people interacting with information, be it other living creatures, commands written on the wall, printed teletexts, or various kinds of machines.

Before launching into his explanation of the terms “software” and “hardware” in the catalog essay for the show, Burnham made clear that an ecological paradigm had superseded the traditional understanding of the ontologically freestanding and disparate art object made according to the conventionally bound and separate medium. According to Burnham, “In just the past few years, the movement away from art objects has been precipitated by concerns with natural and man-made systems, processes, ecological relationships, and the philosophical-linguistic involvement of Conceptual Art. All of these interests deal with art which is transactional.”

Student writing + question:

The production abilities of software are infinite; some might argue that they are far more endless than the human mind itself. Is that even possible, that we could create something that performs cognition and ideological tasks even better than ourselves?

As transactional work, the art of Software mediated ideas and interaction between artist, viewer, and world. Intimating the coming rise of the personal computer, for example, Ned Woodman and Theodor H. Nelson's "Labyrinth: An Interactive Catalogue" was a participatory text retrieval system. It had a round keyscope for a screen and an F-key and R-key for visitors to move text forward and backward. Reflecting the ever-increasing importance of demographic information, Hans Haacke's "Visitor Profile" required museumgoers to answer questions about themselves and their beliefs in the creation of a statistical database. Bringing the transactional action into the public realm of the city and mass media, Joseph Kosuth's "The Seventh Investigation (Art as Idea as Idea) Proposition One" was made up of four ambiguous texts placed in different public contexts: a billboard in Chinese and English in the Chinatown neighborhood of New York City; an advertisement in *The Daily World*; a banner in Italian in Turin; and a text in the exhibition Information at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The constant movement of information – ideas flowing through various conduits and modes of mediation – was more important than any single, separate object. Artwork in this instance becomes catalyst and connector. Thinking art through systems theories further dislodged its form and matter from market-created hierarchies of value. Burnham explained that the art in the show dealt with, "underlying structures of communication or energy...for this reason most of Software is aniconic; its images are usually secondary or instructional while its information takes the form of printed materials." In giving life to the terms "software" and "hardware," Burnham carefully treaded Cartesian waters, explaining, "our bodies are hardware and our behaviour software." Tempering the Cartesianism, though, the inculcation of systems theory would transform this would-be binary into a rhizomatic reticulation of harry bodily interconnection.



Ted Nelson ( left ) in collaboration with programmer Ned Woodman created an interactive exhibition catalog for the show called "Labyrinth", "by choosing their own narrative paths through an interlinked database of texts, then receive a print-out of their particular "user history." The self-constructed, non-linear unfolding of Labyrinth shares affinities with structuralist critiques of authorship, narrative structure, and "writerly" (as opposed to "readerly") texts, made by Barthes. [...] It should be noted that this first public exhibition of a hypertext system occurred, and this was perhaps not just a coincidence, in the context of experimental art." [Shanken]

Student questions:

Is there such a thing as non-art?

Can we utilize Jack Burnham's concept of "software" as a metaphor for art and apply it to any common, everyday object in an art context...transforming the object...into conceptual art?

Is the use and production of software the only route to originality we have left?

Student question:

Is the object really the end of a system?

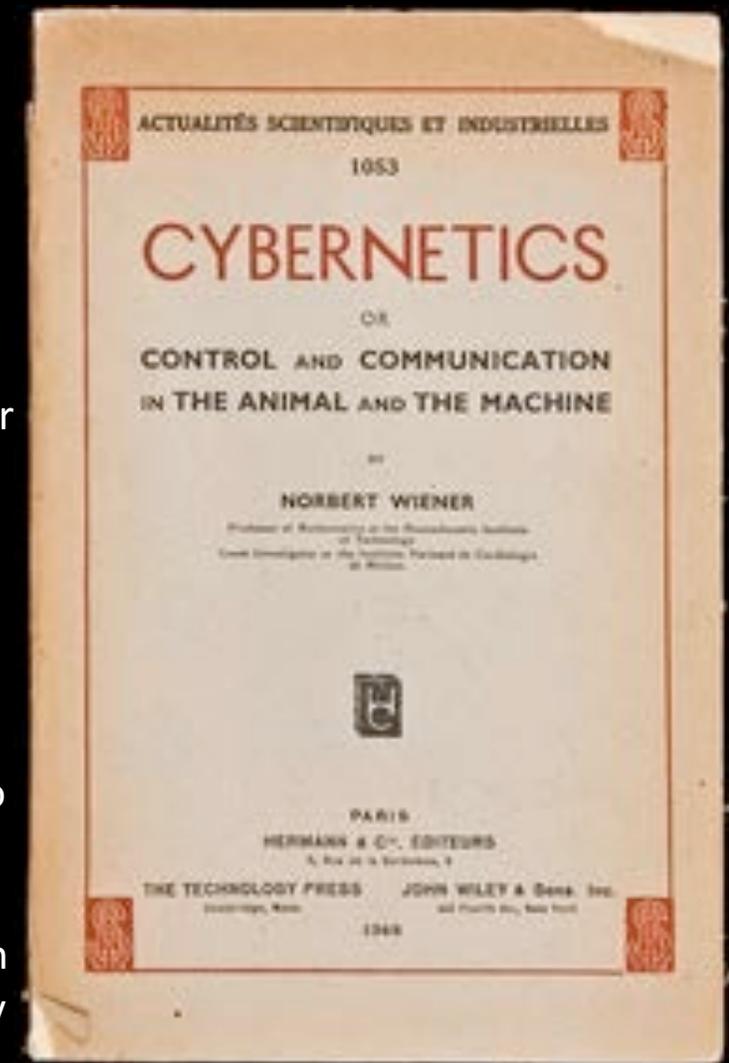
Student writing:

Perhaps the object really is the end of a system, especially in today's world. Many seem much more interested in the concepts or 'software' behind a work, rather than the object itself. Entire classes are centered on discussing works that students may never see in person. One could argue there are some left who view the object as the most valuable, but they could be a dying breed. In a day and age where museums are quickly moving to catalogue their works and make them available to the public online, one is left questioning whether a day will come where most see no purpose in taking time to go to a museum and view works of art first hand.



Les Levine, Contact: A Cybernetic Sculpture, 1969  
9 monitors, video cameras  
<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1817&dat=19690418&id=biceAAAAIBAJ&sjid=BZwEAAAAIBAJ&pg=5429,4061379>

"I don't tend to think of my work purely in psychological terms," he explains, "but one must assume some psychological effect of seeing oneself on TV all the time. Through my systems the viewer sees himself as an image, the way other people would see him were he on television. In seeing himself this way he becomes more aware of what he looks like. All of television, even broadcast television, is to some degree showing the human race to itself as a working model. It's a reflection of society, and it shows society what society looks like. It renders the social and psychological condition of the environment visible to that environment."



Levine is fascinated with the implications of self awareness through technology of closet circuit TVs.

## Student question and writing:

Is ideal time possible in a world of state changes?

Les Levine's understanding of software was essential to the direction of *Software*, the exhibition. In the context of art, Levine used the idea of software as a stand in for information and ideas and hardware as a representation of real world objects and actions. This lens attempts to view the world in terms of computer logic...Early digital art focused on the idea more than the object in part because of the lack of complex output methods on the machines of this time. Because of this, the concept behind the creation became the most important part of the piece, while the creation of the piece itself became secondary. Art as an object of admiration is dead in this system. Without meaningful contributions, the existence of objects without purpose takes valuable resources away from meaningful parts of the system.

Student questions:

If non-art is work that does not bear traditional attributes of art, what are the aspects of the work in *Software* that distinguishes it from both art and non-art?

What role does the aesthetic play in *Software*?

Would a truly immersive virtual reality promised by technology obsolesce all previous forms of art?

none <b>\$1 – 1999</b> <b>\$2000 – 4999</b> <b>\$5000 – 14999</b> <b>\$15000 – 29999</b> over \$30000	How much money have you spent on buying art(total)?	Do you think the preferences of those who financially back the art world influence the kind of work artists produce?	<b>yes, a lot</b> <b>somewhat</b> <b>slightly</b> <b>not at all</b> <b>don't know</b>
<b>only to themselves</b> <b>patrons of museum</b> <b>museum membership</b> <b>museum staff</b> <b>artists' representatives</b> <b>publicly elected officials</b> <b>American Association of Museums</b> <b>College Art Association</b> <b>National Endowment for the Arts</b> <b>Associated Councils of the Arts</b> <b>foundation representatives</b> other(write in) _____ <b>don't know</b>	To whom should the trustees of art museums be accountable(more than one can be named)?	Have you ever lived or worked for more than one half year in a poverty area?	<b>yes</b> <b>no</b>
		It has been charged that the present U.S. Government is catering to business interests. Do you think this is the case?	<b>always</b> <b>often</b> <b>occasionally</b> <b>never</b> <b>don't know</b>
		Do you think the collectors who buy the kind of art you like, share your political/ideological opinions?	<b>generally yes</b> <b>generally no</b> <b>don't know</b>
		How old are you?	<b>under 18 years</b> <b>18 - 24 years</b> <b>25 - 30 years</b> <b>31 - 35 years</b> <b>36 - 45 years</b> <b>46 - 55 years</b> <b>56 - 65 years</b> <b>over 65 years</b>
<b>responsible</b> <b>not responsible</b> <b>don't know</b>	Some people say President Nixon is ultimately respon- sible for the Watergate scheme. Do you agree?		<b>yes</b> <b>no</b> <b>don't know</b>
<b>poverty</b> <b>lower middle income</b> <b>middle income</b> <b>upper middle income</b> <b>wealthy</b>	How would you charac- terize the socio-economic status of your parents?	Would your standard of living be affected, if no more art of living artists were bought?	<b>yes</b> <b>no</b> <b>don't know</b>
<b>Catholic</b> <b>Protestant</b> <b>Jewish</b> <b>other</b> <b>mixed</b> <b>none</b>	What is the religious back- ground of your family?	Do you daily read the political section of a newspaper?	<b>yes</b> <b>no</b>
		Do you think the visitors of the J. Weber Gallery who participated in the poll dif- fered from those who did not?	<b>very different</b> <b>somewhat d.</b> <b>essentially same</b> <b>don't know</b>

Thank you, Drop the card into the ballot box. Your answers will be tabulated with the answers of all other visitors. Intermediate results will be posted during the exhibition.

## Hans Haacke, Visitor's Profile, 1970

The piece consisted of a questionnaire about contemporary events that was distributed to museum visitors to a group exhibition in Milwaukee. While Haacke had used questionnaires in his works before, this particular questionnaire was the first time that he successfully used a computer to compile the results and generate a statistical profile of the exhibition's audience. The work introduced the idea of visitors playing an active role in their information environment and "completing" the work of art.

Student question:

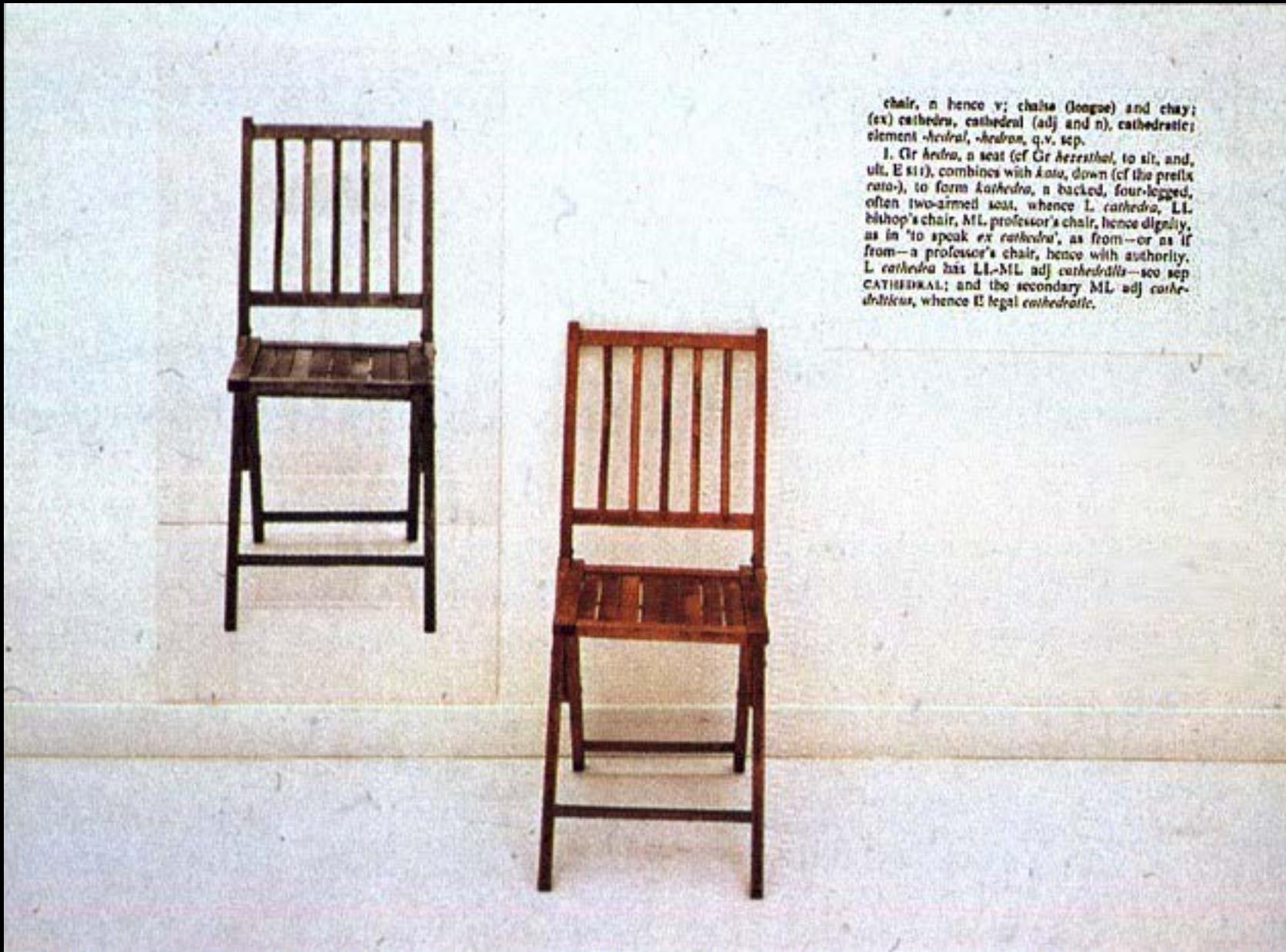
Does the possibility of technical difficulties put electronically-based art at an inherent disadvantage relative to other mediums?

Student writing:

*Visitor's Profile*, along with several other works in the exhibition, encountered technical difficulties and did not work. ...Visitors were not able to engage with this technologically-driven [exhibition] due to the medium of its presentation. While the final result of the work was faster, more complex, and more compelling for viewers, it suffered the drawback of being fully dependent on hardware and software that can go awry in ways other mediums do not.



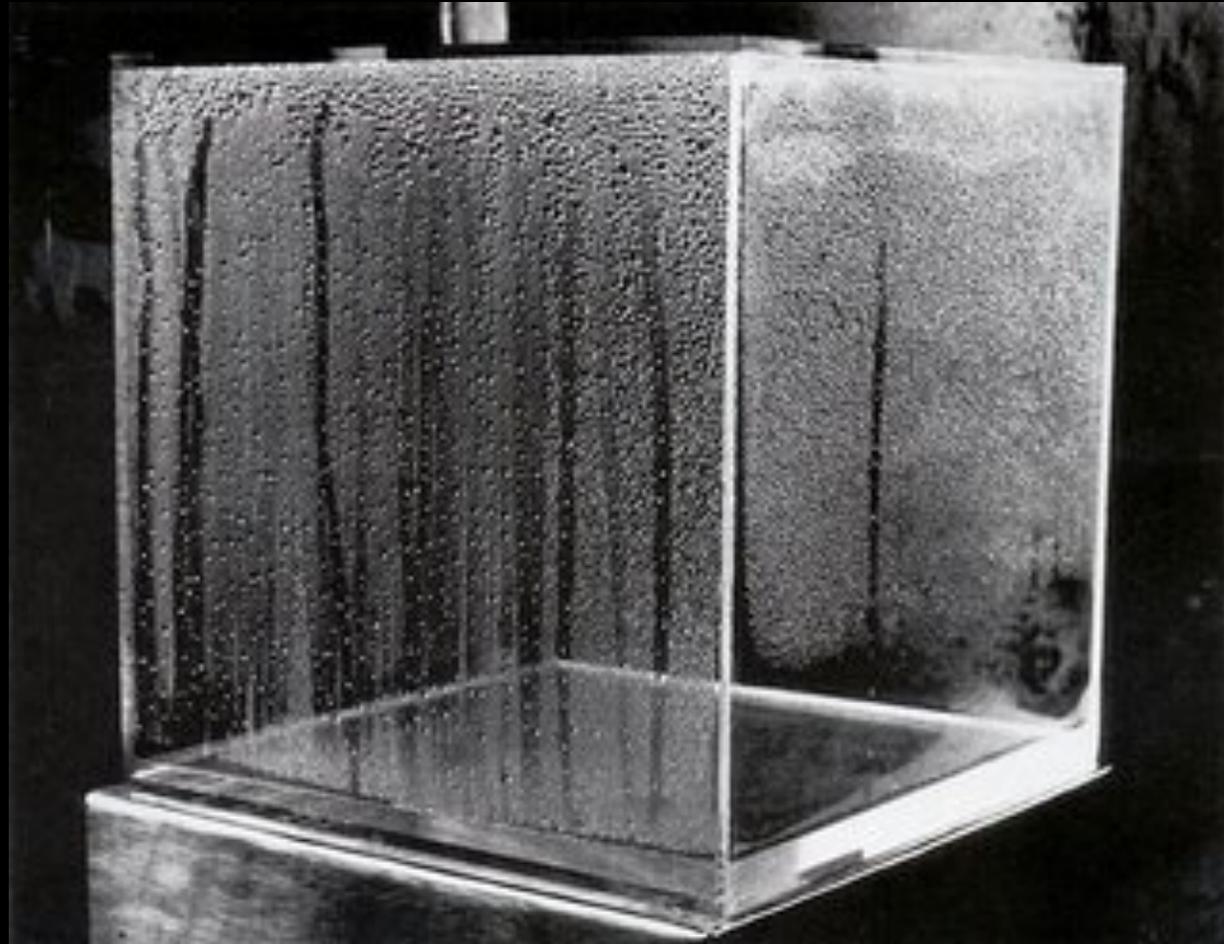
Joseph Kosuth, The Seventh Investigation (Art as Idea as Idea) Proposition One, 1970



chair, n hence v; chaise (longue) and chay;  
(ex) cathedra, cathedral (adj and n), cathedrae;  
element -hedra, -hedron, q.v. sep.

1. Gr *kathra*, a seat (cf Gr *kathra*, to sit, and,  
ult. E *kat*), combines with *kata*, down (cf the prefix  
*cata-*), to form *kathedra*, a backed, four-legged,  
often two-armed seat, whence L *cathedra*, LL  
bishop's chair, ML professor's chair, hence dignity,  
as in 'to speak *ex cathedra*', as from—or as if  
from—a professor's chair, hence with authority.  
L *cathedra* has LL-ML adj *cathedrālis*—see sep  
CATHEDRAL; and the secondary ML adj *cathē-  
draticus*, whence E legal *cathedralic*.

Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Chairs, 1965

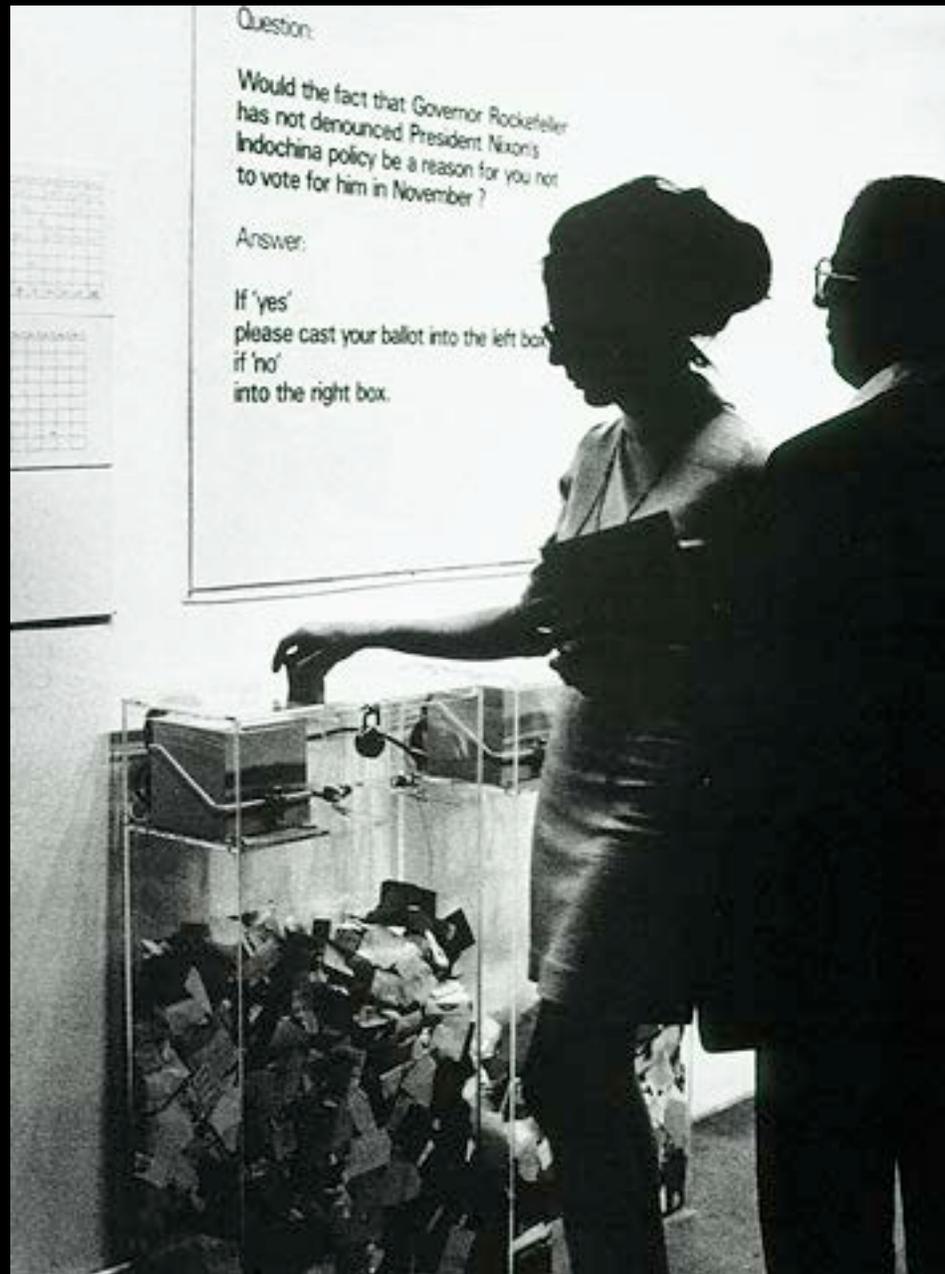


Hans Haacke, Framing (Condensation Cube), 1963-65



Hans Haacke,  
*Chickens Hatching*,  
1969

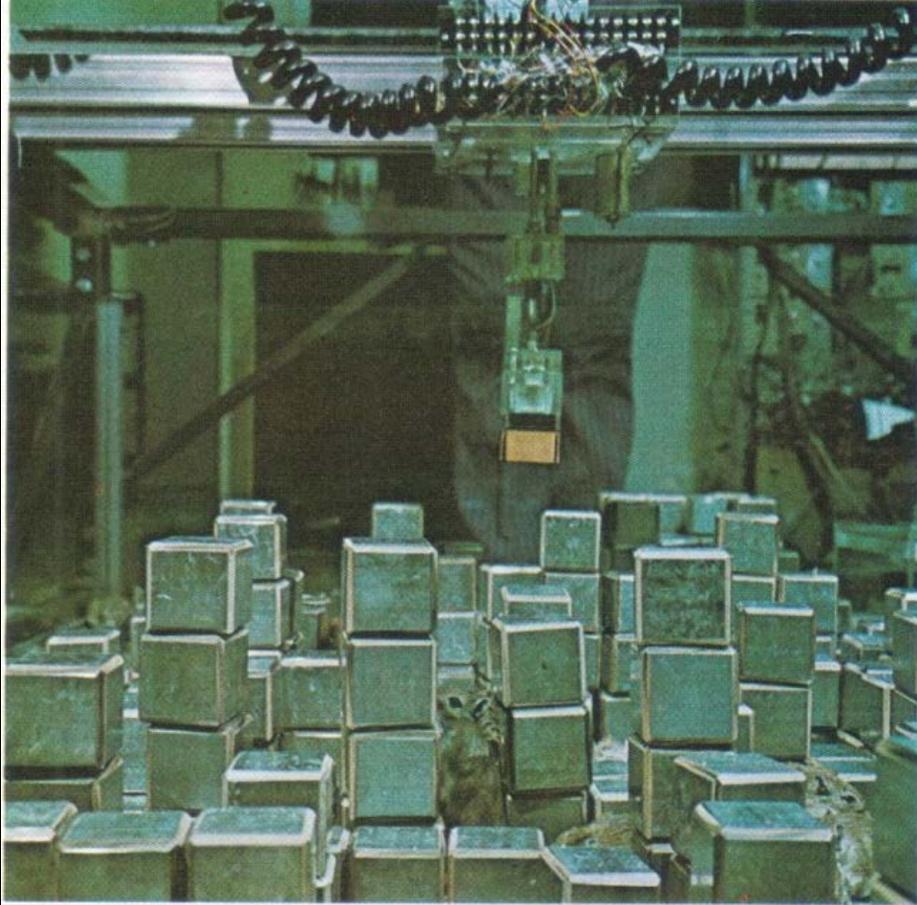
In *Chickens Hatching*, Haacke installed eight small incubators in the Art Gallery of Ontario and placed inside fertilized chicken eggs, which he synthetically monitored with a feedback system of lamps and thermostats until they hatched.



Hans Haacke, Poll, 1970



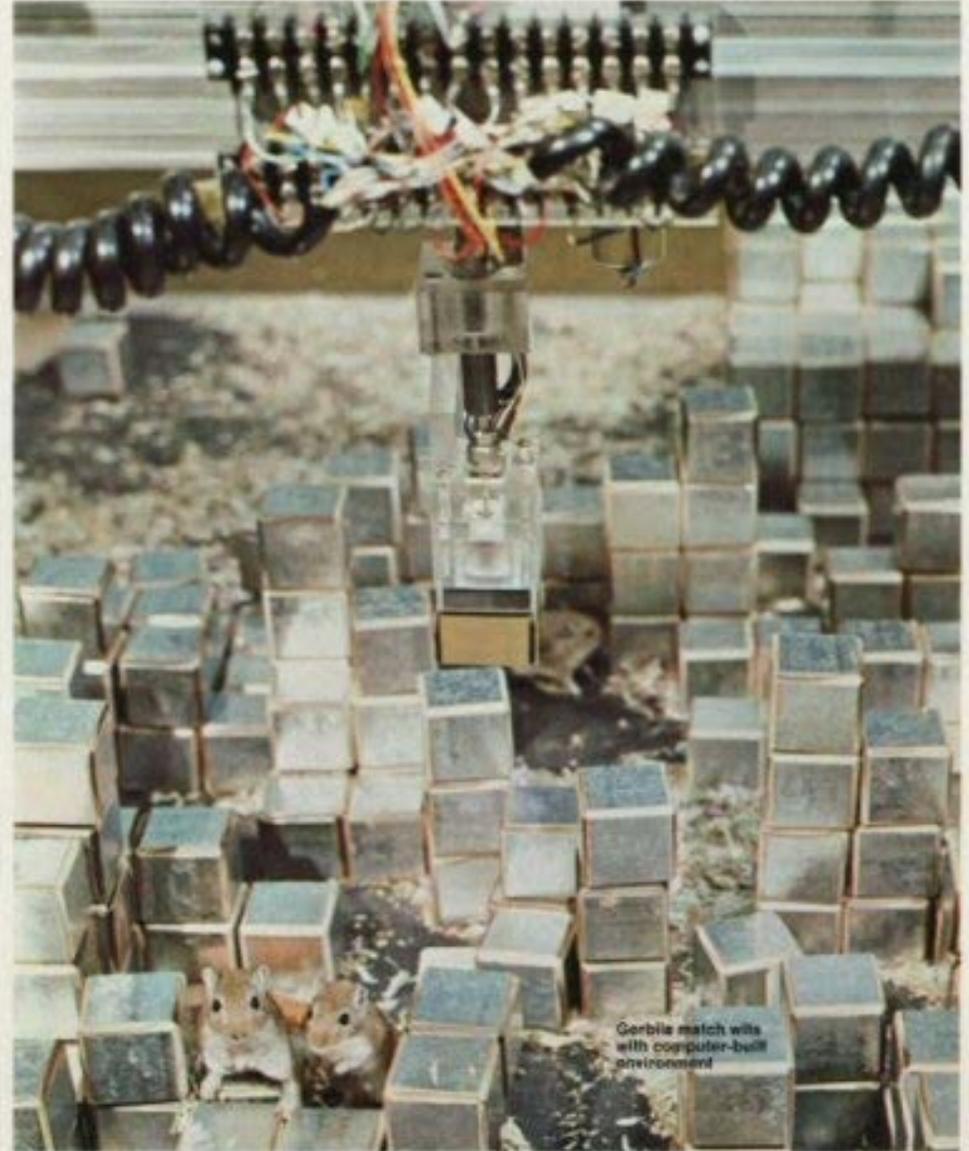
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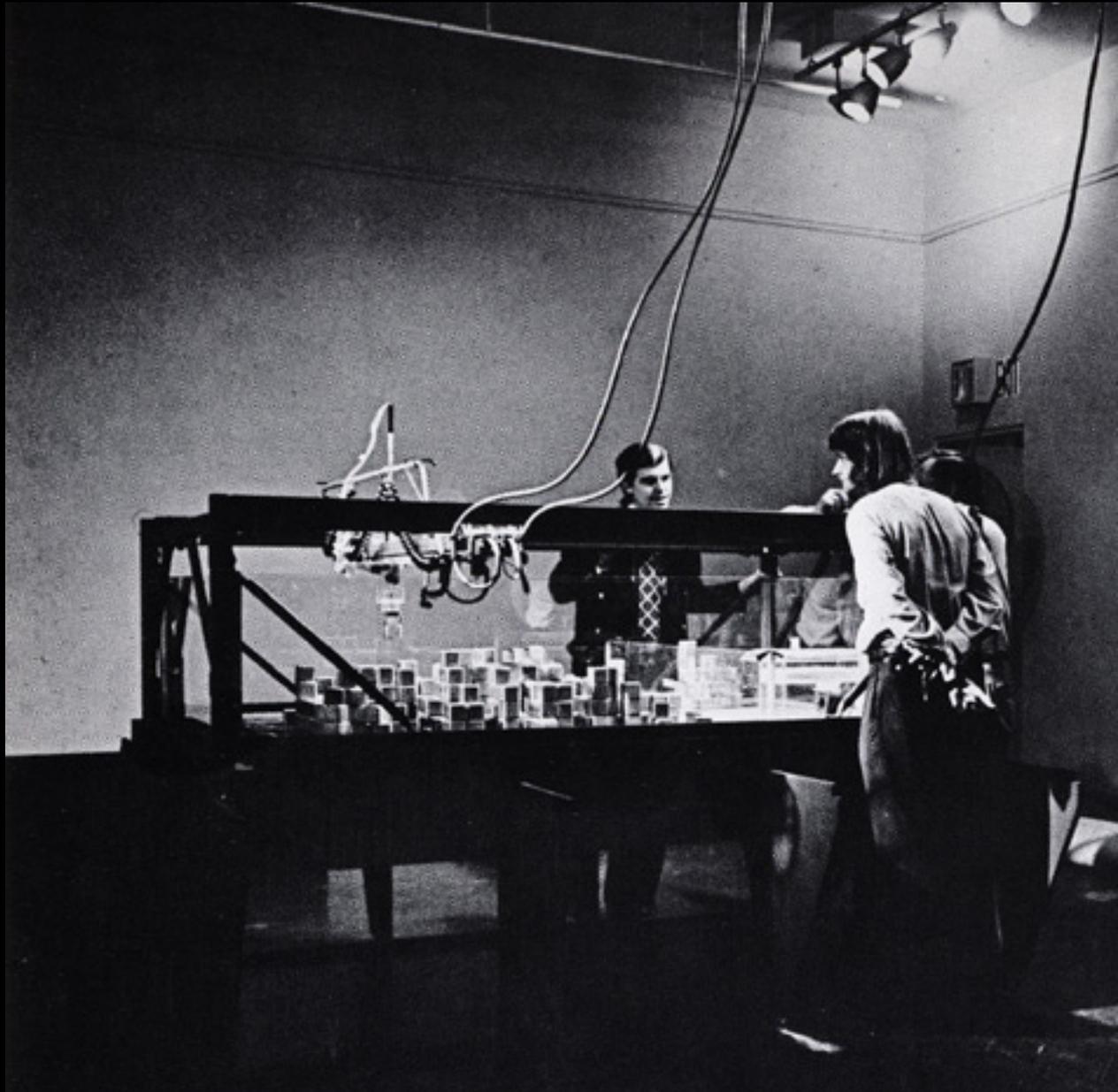


"Seek", 1970 by Nicholas Negroponte with the Architecture Machine Group , M.I.T. Originally shown at the "Software" exhibition, curated by Jack Burnham for the Jewish Museum in New York 1970. This piece consisted of a Plexiglass encased, computer-controlled environment full of small blocks and inhabited by gerbils, who continuously changed the position of the blocks. Following instructions programmed by the authors the robotic arm automatically rearranged the blocks in a specific pattern. Once the arrangement was disrupted, a computer-controlled robotic arm rebuilt the block configurations in a manner its programmers believed followed the gerbil's objectives. The designers, however, did not successfully anticipate the reactions of the animals, who often outwitted the computer and created total disarray. The exhibit was also referred to as "Blocksworld".

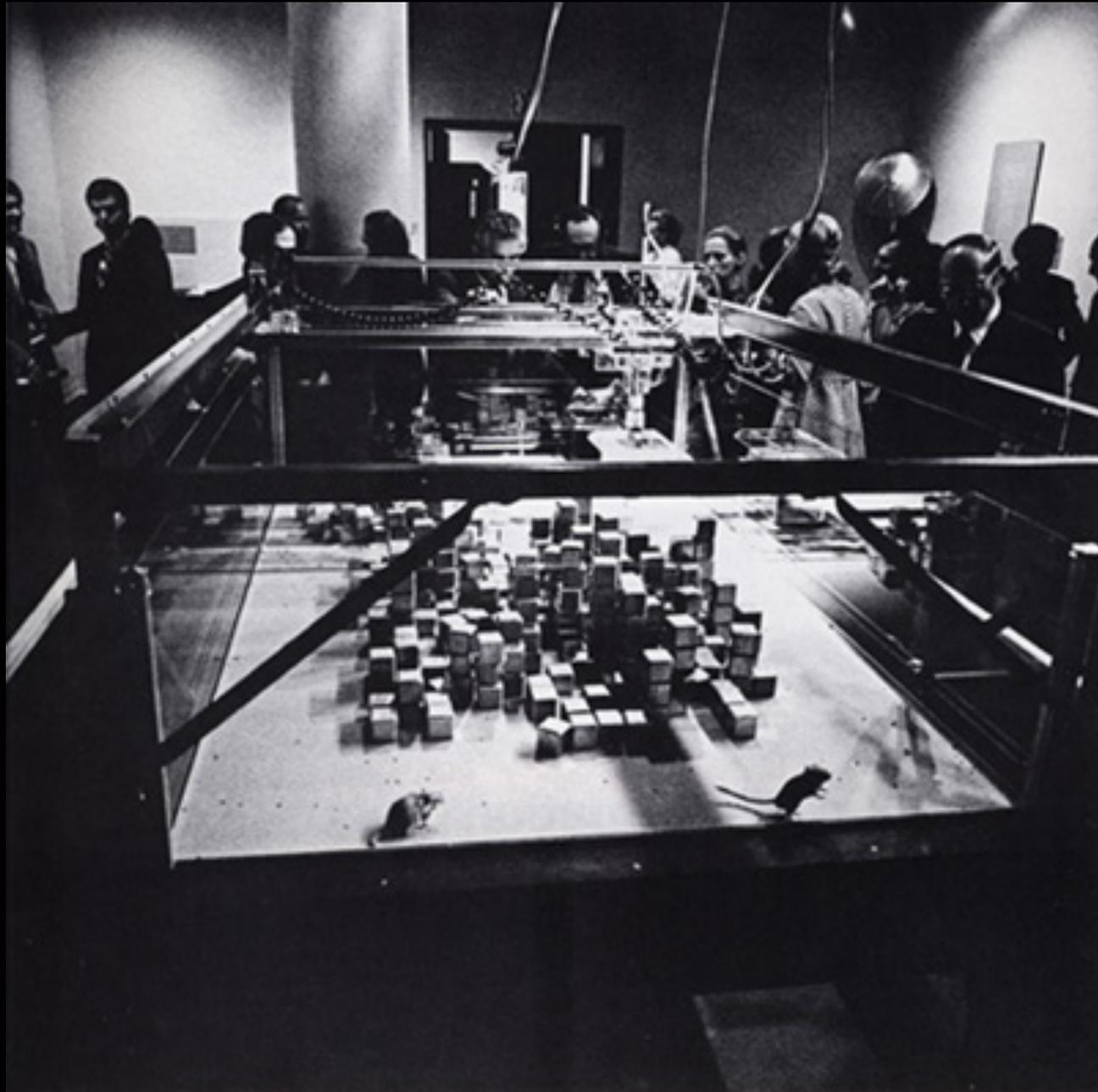
# SOFTWARE

Information technology: its new meaning for art





The Architecture Machine Group, MIT, Seek, 1969-70



The Architecture Machine Group, MIT, Seek, 1969-70