WHAT WE MADE

Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation

TOM FINKELPEARL

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This book is dedicated to my most inspiring teachers:

Jeff Weiss, *middle school science*

Nancy Sizer, *high school composition*

Richard Rorty, *undergraduate philosophy*

James Rubin, *undergraduate art history*

Alice Aycock, *graduate school sculpture*

They were often way off the (narrowly imagined) subject, so each one taught me far more than the curriculum might have predicted.

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PREFACE

IN THE FALL OF 1984, Group Material arrived at P.S.1, where I was working to install "Artists Call against U.S. Intervention in Central America." Building the show was an interactive process; in the gallery the collective (which then comprised Tim Rollins, Julie Ault, and Doug Ashford) worked with a couple of dozen other artists both physically and intellectually to interweave art and political commentary into a forceful and depressing timeline. During this process I asked Tim Rollins if he had a piece in the show. He pointed out some painted bricks and said that he had helped create them in collaboration with several young men and women who were also in the galleries working on the installation. He identified his collaborators as the "Kids of Survival" and told me that they had recently been working together on a number of projects in the Bronx. I admired the bricks, but I asked him if, aside from the collaboration, he had any time to do his own work. Rollins told me his work was a contribution to their collective work. I found the idea energizing, and twenty-seven years later I still do. In 1987, along with Glenn Weiss, I organized a show at P.S.1 called "Out of the Community, Art with Community." That project introduced me to Bolek Greczynski and his work at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, Mierle Laderman Ukeles's work with the New York City Sanitation Department, and the ongoing debates surrounding cooperative art that I have found fruitful and confusing ever since.

In 2003, as we were preparing for her exhibition at the Queens Museum of Art, Wendy Ewald was telling me about her collaborative photography and its reception. She said that after more than three decades of work, she still sensed a profound misunderstanding of what she and her peers were up to. Even after considerable critical writing on artistic cooperation, exchange, and artistic participation, people still ask her if the collaborations are all she does, or if she has time for her own work. I cringed, remembering my own question to Tim Rollins. We agreed that a book specifically on socially cooperative art might be helpful.

With Sondra Farganis we gathered a group of colleagues for a one-day symposium at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School for Social Research. The discussion circled around a series of the most important issues, in particular the ethics and aesthetics of collaboration.

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After the conference Brett Cook, Wendy Ewald, and I continued our discussions regarding a possible publication and developed the format of this book: an introductory text setting a framework for cooperative practice inside and outside artistic traditions, followed by a series of conversations between artists and an array of thinkers from social history, aesthetics, political science, urban planning, education, and other fields. Since the conceptual, intellectual, social, and physical sites of these projects are so complex, it is helpful to look outside of the discourse of art criticism for new perspectives. And why not use conversation as a structure of a book on interactive, conversational, dialogue-driven art? Nine years later the project is complete. So first, thanks to Wendy and Brett for those generative early conversations and for the ongoing discussions that have followed.

I would like to thank Ken Wissoker and Jade Brooks at Duke University Press. Ken has been intelligent, patient, good humored, and encouraging while guiding me through the publication process. Jade was responsive and enthusiastic in every query and request. For Duke, Judith Hoover was a superb copyeditor with amazing attention to detail. The anonymous readers to whom Duke sent the manuscript were immensely helpful in this project. The review process can be a bit humbling, but it is what makes university press books consistently worth reading. The designer, Jennifer Hill, did a wonderful job making it all look great.

Prior to final submission of the manuscript I worked with Nell McLister, who is a truly excellent editor, and her invisible hand is on every page. Ricardo Cortes was a promising research assistant before his own book hit the bestseller list, but Adrianne Koteen stepped in and did a stellar job in his place. It really helped that Adrianne is so deeply steeped in the subject matter. Writing a book, even one filled with conversations, is essentially a solitary pursuit. I spent many long days at the computer overlooking the beach in Rockaway, Queens, breaking only for a Greek salad at the Last Stop Diner. The staff there was encouraging, and that mattered.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Eugenie Tsai, for her cheerful support when I was off at the beach writing or editing and when I was running ideas by her over almost a decade. That might have been a bit tiresome, but she never let on. Her intelligent and honest insights were always on the mark.

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ONE INTRODUCTION

The Art of Social Cooperation

An American Framework

Definition of Terms

Consider two art projects.

November 1986. At dusk on a fall evening, you are approaching a tan brick building on the grounds of Creedmoor Psychiatric Hospital at the far end of Queens. In this season, at this time of night, the hospital's campus looks very much like the state mental institution it is. But Building 75 has been renamed the Living Museum with a brightly colored sign. It is home to the *Battlefields Project,* a series of art installations that a group of patients has been working on for several years with the Polish-born actor and conceptual artist Bolek Greczynski, who is by this time fully ensconced as Creedmoor's artist-in-residence. You walk into the building, through a lush garden of natural and artificial plants, through the workroom where refreshments are being served, and into the "museum" proper.

The four corner rooms of the ten-thousand-square-foot space are devoted to installations that address the subjects of hospital, church, workplace, and home, four battlefields in the lives of the participants in this venture. The hallways and antechambers between these rooms are filled with art that ranges from haunting images one might expect from the mentally ill, to hard-edge minimalist painting on the floors and walls, to art that is competent in a rather commercial-realist style. There is a chess table dedicated to Marcel Duchamp, an overflowing bin of memos from Creedmoor's health care bureaucracy, and a book in which every line has been carefully crossed out.

At first you feel the need to determine the mental health status of each person you encounter. A woman clad in skin-tight leather and spike heels introduces herself improbably as Greczynski's dentist (this fact is later confirmed). You meet a young man from the lockdown unit attired in a

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A short poem spray-painted on two sheets of plywood in a corner of the Living Museum at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, 1986. Photographs of the project generally do not include the participants because psychiatric patients are not considered competent to agree to photograph releases. Photograph by Tom Finkelpearl.

three-piece suit. Another guy who looks like a doctor could just as easily be a patient. The crowd assembled for the occasion includes an assortment of Greczynski's eccentric, theatrical, art world, club world, outsider, and insider friends mixed with doctors, patients, and their families—so the distinctions are challengingly ambiguous at first but become less urgent as the evening progresses. The museum has been created in a complex series of interactions between Greczynski and a changing group of patients (hundreds have participated). But Greczynski will not call them patients. In the Living Museum they are artists. He does not see their work as symptomatic of their mental illness, he explains, but as a testament to their "strength and vulnerability." He sees their sensitivity, which may have forced them into this institutional setting, as an asset for an artist. The doctors tell you that for these patients, having the opportunity to assume the identity of an artist has therapeutic value, but Greczynski is suspicious of this approach, siding with the patient against the controlling institutions of therapy and the interpretation of art as a symptom—even as a symptom of healthy progress. After several hours you drive off, acutely aware that there are those who are left behind.

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City speaking at a press conference in Times Square launching Paul Ramirez Jonas's *Key to the City*, 2010. The project was presented by Creative Time in cooperation with the City of New York. Photograph by Meghan McInnis. Courtesy of Creative Time.

Patrick Li (left) and friends exchanging keys as part of *Key to the City* by Paul Ramirez Jonas (center), 2010. Photograph by Meghan McInnis. Courtesy of Creative Time.

Spring 2010. Having received an intriguing email blast from Creative Time, a public art organization, you arrive in Times Square to experience a project by Paul Ramirez Jonas called *Key to the City*. You know little about what to expect except that it will be based on the longtime New York tradition of the mayor awarding a symbolic key to notable visitors and public heroes. You are informed that you will need a partner for a key award ceremony, and you pair up with a young woman, Annie, who has also arrived solo. You get in line with Annie (and a couple of hundred others), and you are instructed to fill in the blanks on the first two pages of a passport-size booklet that gives a bit of background. You and Annie chat as you decide why to honor each other with a key to the city. When you have arrived at the "Commons" area created for the event, she reads out the text: "I, Annie, on this third day of June, bestow the key to the city to you, being a perfect stranger, in consideration of your spirit. Do you accept this key?" Yes, you do. "Then, by the power temporarily granted to me and this work of art, I, Annie, award you this key to the city." She hands you the booklet and a key that is inscribed with a small drawing of hands exchanging keys. You reciprocate, reading the formal text and handing her the booklet that you have inscribed, and that is the last you see of Annie.

The project's key is the opposite of the traditional key to the city: anyone can get one, and it is not merely symbolic. Over the next couple of months the key unlocks doors, closets, gates, display cases, and so on, at

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twenty-four sites indicated in the booklet. One afternoon you take the 7 train to Corona, Queens, and visit the Louis Armstrong House Museum, where the key opens the door to Armstrong's private bathroom. Then you walk over to the Tortilleria Nixtamal, where, remarkably, the key opens up the downstairs kitchen and you receive a lesson in taco making. Over twenty sweaty minutes you also learn how a tortilla kitchen in Corona operates: hot, fast, and in Spanish. As you make your way around the city, you see sites that are normally hidden and meet the New Yorkers behind the doors. The work becomes something of the talk of the town, as more than fifteen thousand people participate.

While both art projects were participatory, there were substantial differences. Both the Living Museum and *Key to the City* fall under the rubric of what is variously dubbed participatory, interactive, collaborative, or relational art. However, in recent texts on this sort of art, critics tend to distinguish between projects that are designed by artists and projects that are created through dialogue and collaboration with participants. For example, Grant Kester, an art historian at the University of California, San Diego, differentiates between collaborative, "dialogical" works and projects based on a scripted "encounter."[1] Claire Bishop, an art historian at City University of New York, identifies "an authored tradition that seeks to provoke participants and a de-authored lineage that aims to embrace collective creativity."[2] And the critic and curator Claire Doherty describes "those practices which, though they employ a process of complicit engagement, are clearly initiated and ultimately directed by the artist . . . and those which, though still often authored by the artist or team, are collaborative—in effect 'social sculpture.'"[3]

As Kester points out, the categories of the scripted encounter and the de-authored, dialogical collaboration are generalizations, and perhaps it would be more useful to describe a spectrum of activity rather than draw such a clear line between practices.[4] On this spectrum, *Key to the City* would tend toward the scripted encounter, while the Living Museum leans toward the dialogue-based tradition of works created collectively. Greczynski created a platform for the creativity of the patients at Creedmoor, while Ramirez Jonas sent the participants on a well-planned series of encounters. *Key to the City* was clearly a work by Paul Ramirez Jonas, though the individual participants—both the key holders and those who welcomed them to each site—took an active role. You were the actor, and

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there were no spectators. The text you read in Times Square was prepared by the artist. As you traversed the city to the other sites, the interactions were considerably looser, but you were still on a route between access points prepared by Ramirez Jonas. On the other hand, the Living Museum was created in a long-term interactive process that was orchestrated (rather than authored) by Greczynski. The art projects that composed the Living Museum were created by Creedmoor patients working many hours a week over many years, interspersed with an occasional painting by Greczynski. The project was made by the group—hence the title of this book, *What We Made*.

When you visited an open house at Creedmoor, you seemed somewhat peripheral to the main event, which only Greczynski and the patient-artists experienced—an event that unfolded very slowly in a decidedly closed house. You got only a glimpse; you were welcomed as a temporary guest. This split between the collective creation of the art and the viewing and experiencing public is present in a number of projects discussed in this book. Importantly, the issue of social benefit was closer to the surface in the Living Museum than in *Key to the City*. Though Greczynski resisted the therapeutic interpretation of his project, the open and relaxed atmosphere at the Living Museum gave the tangible sense of a curative space for the mentally ill. While one can easily point to political meaning in the ways Ramirez Jonas opened up the city and in the democratization of an elitist tradition, there was no sense that the project was meant to turn around the life of its participants.

Walking through Building 75 at Creedmoor, the audience—art critics, psychologists, patients—had a hard time understanding the overall environment as an aesthetic project. Two decades later *Key to the City* unfolded in an art-historical context that has come to allow for an interactive moment in public space as an artistic product worthy of analysis. But the language surrounding the practice is still up for grabs. In her article "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," published in *Artforum* in 2006, Claire Bishop notes that there is a range of names for the activist wing of the less-authored practice, including "socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, participatory, interventionist, research-based, or collaborative art."[5] For the sake of that article, she settled on the term *social collaboration*. I would agree with Bishop's use of the word *social*. Though no word can sum up the efforts of any group of artists, the word *social*—as in social encounters across social classes—helps locate this practice in an experiential and

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intellectual realm that also includes social studies, social work, and social housing.

However, I favor the term *social cooperation* over Bishop's *social collaboration*. There are three main reasons for this. First, in art criticism, *collaboration* often refers to teams such as Gilbert and George or collectives such as Group Material. It implies a shared initiation of the art, and start-to-finish coauthorship. We have no clue what Gilbert or George has independently contributed to one of their photographs, or what Doug Ashford, Julie Ault, Tim Rollins, or Felix Gonzalez-Torres individually contributed to a given Group Material installation. And even if we do understand that W. S. Gilbert wrote the words and Arthur Sullivan composed the music, there is a clear acknowledgment of equal coauthorship in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. For many of the projects discussed in this book, collaboration is simply too far-reaching a claim to make; not all of the participants are equally authors of these projects, especially in the initiation and conceptualization. *Cooperation*, on the other hand, simply implies that people have worked together on a project. Even the projects on the de-authored side of the spectrum involve a self-identified artist who can claim the title of initiator or orchestrator of the cooperative venture, including the projects in which little or none of the final product is by his or her own hand. Second, calling the work *cooperative* situates the practice in the intellectual zone of human cooperation. There has been significant research in recent decades in the fields of evolutionary game theory, rational and irrational choice theory, theories of reciprocity and altruism, the new cognitive science of interconnection, and evolutionary economics. While acknowledging that human beings are territorial and aggressive animals, many in these fields are beginning to understand in what ways we are also a hypercooperative species.[6] Third, understanding what social cooperation means to John Dewey and other pragmatists has helped elucidate these artists' work for me, which I discuss in the conclusion. So for the sake of this book, I call the Living Museum and projects like it "socially cooperative," and works like *Key to the City* "participatory" or "relational." This is not meant to be a value judgment. There are trivial and profound projects throughout the spectrum, and both the Living Museum and *Key to the City* struck me as brilliant and provocative in their own right. Most of the projects in this book, however, lean toward the socially cooperative, works that examine or enact the social dimension of the cooperative venture, blurring issues of authorship, crossing social boundaries, and engaging participants for durations that stretch from days to months to years.

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An American Framework

While this book focuses on an American perspective, I try not to define too narrowly what it means to be an American artist. A number of the interviewees were born abroad but live in the United States now, including Pedro Lasch, Tania Bruguera, Lee Mingwei, Teddy Cruz, and Ernesto Pujol. Evan Roth was brought up here but lives in France. In fact at this point in the country's history, it would be inaccurate to represent cooperative art practice in America without a considerable representation of immigrant artists. But first let us take a couple of steps back and consider a framework for the development of this practice here in the United States.

Historical Context: Social Movements in the 1960s

These practices, of course, have a history. In my conversations with progressive activists and artists, one after another they mention that they participated in, based their techniques on, or drew inspiration from the spirit of the 1960s, particularly the civil rights movement, the counterculture, and feminism. Some of the social relations and democratic institutions created in those movements during that period were mirrors of the socially cooperative art that was simultaneously emerging. In the 1960s there were competing models of negotiation and conflict within progressive political movements. In his essay "The Phantom Community," published in 1979, the Princeton sociologist Paul Starr distinguishes between two broad categories of counterinstitutions that developed during that period:

> An exemplary institution, such as a utopian community or consumers' cooperative, seeks, as the term suggests, to exemplify in its own structure and conduct an alternative set of ideals. . . . Compared with established institutions, it may attempt to be more democratic in its decision-making, or less rigid and specialized in its division of labor, or more egalitarian in its distribution of rewards. . . . In contrast, an adversarial institution, such as a political party, a union, or a reform group, is primarily concerned with altering the social order. Oriented toward conflict, it may not exhibit in its own organization all the values that its supporters hope eventually to realize.[7]

In Starr's dichotomy, cooperative action is associated with the egalitarian and democratic *exemplary* institutions, while conflict is associated with the *adversarial* groups. But the dialectic is not rigid, and Starr points out that some of the most famous adversarial groups in the 1960s also

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sought to be exemplary. He cites, for example, conflict-friendly community organizing within the civil rights movement, as well as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which was adversarial in many of its tactics but engaged in "extremes of participatory democracy" in an attempt to exemplify the changes that it was fighting for in society.[8] It is the practices of exemplary groups like these that resemble most closely the practices of socially cooperative artists.

Civil Rights and Community Organizing

A number of the artists in this book cite the civil rights movement as an inspiration, including Wendy Ewald, who was stirred by the black power movement in Detroit as a kid; Brett Cook, who cites civil rights ideology; and Rick Lowe, who participated in African American activism in Houston.[9] But in the 1960s the civil rights movement was divided between the rhetoric of collective action most eloquently presented by Martin Luther King Jr. and a more radical politics of confrontation espoused by leaders like Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X. Cook refers in his interview (chapter 10) to King's principle of a "network of mutuality," a term he often used, including in his final Sunday sermon on March 31, 1968, five days before he was assassinated: "Through our scientific and technological genius we have made of this world a neighborhood, and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. . . . We must all learn to live together as brothers. Or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."[10] King's goal is not only economic justice but interpersonal interconnection, a model of anti-individualist mutuality. Steeped in Gandhian nonviolence and a Christian ethic of brotherhood, King sees this mutuality as both desirable and inevitable. We are not only seeking interconnection, we are "caught" in this "inescapable network." But by the mid-1960s alternative voices were emerging. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was morphing into an increasingly radical counterinstitution. It had hailed the power of "redemptive community" in its Statement of Purpose in 1960 and had recruited countless northerners to engage in cooperative organizing in the South in the early 1960s.[11] But an SNCC memo from 1964 shows a growing frustration with the personal, self-actualizing impulse of some who were joining the civil rights fight. Lamenting their "bourgeois sentimentality," the memo notes, "Some of the good brothers and sisters think our business is the spreading of 'the redemptive warmth of personal confrontation,' 'emotional enrich-

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The civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. Photograph by Peter Pettus. Courtesy of Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

ment,' 'compassionate and sympathetic personal relationships,' and other varieties of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation derived from the vocabulary of group therapy and progressive liberal witch doctors."[12] Here the philosophy of cooperation is described as unsuited to the urgent work of resisting oppressive racism. This critique of cooperative action as accommodation and compromised liberalism is still leveled at socially cooperative projects, be they political or artistic.

But as Paul Starr points out, exemplary institutions were not limited to redemptive warmth and sympathetic relationships with those outside the group. Saul Alinsky, whose ideas took shape in the civil rights struggle, came to epitomize American community organizing. A hero of the non-communist Left, Alinsky was a pragmatist interested in what works for poor communities. In his book *Reveille for Radicals,* published in 1946, he outlines his strategies, which address many of the issues that cooperative art confronts. For Alinsky, the community organizer is a facilitator of social interplay out of which emerges the "people's program." His ideal organizer has faith in the ability and intelligence of the people to imagine a solution to their own problems. He wrote, *"After all, the real democratic program is a democratically minded people*—a healthy, active, participating, interested, self-confident people who, through their participation and

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Saul Alinsky addressing a crowd before a meeting in Flemington, New Jersey, 1967. He was working with the coalition FIGHT (Freedom, Integration, God, Honor, Today) as part of an effort to promote racially diverse hiring practices at Kodak Corporation, whose shareholders meeting was taking place in Flemington at the time. Photograph courtesy of AP Photo.

interest, become informed, educated, and above all develop faith in themselves, their fellow men, and the future."[13] Alinsky does not deny the community organizer's pivotal role, especially at the initial stages of mobilization, but he insists that the action must come from the people themselves. After an additional twenty-five years of experience, Alinsky wrote *Rules for Radicals* (1971), in which the ethic of mutual growth is clear: "An effective organizational experience is as much an educational process for the organizer as it is for the people with whom he is working. . . . We learn, when we respect the dignity of the people, that they cannot be denied the elementary right to participate fully in the solutions to their own problems. Self-respect arises only out of people who play an active role in solving their own crises and who are not helpless, passive, puppet-like recipients of private or public service."[14]

For Alinsky, the process of addressing the problem collectively is a major part of the organizing initiative. But he was far from an advocate of "redemptive warmth" or "emotional enrichment" for its own sake. He states quite clearly that "a People's Organization is a conflict group," and his strategy revolves around identifying issues, provoking conflict, and finding

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winnable battles — seeking what he calls the "displacement and disorganization of the status quo."[15] Through tangible and specific local victories, he hoped that the communities could rebalance power. It was *within* the organization, through the local identification of social complaints, through the activation of the community members, through collective, cooperative action that Alinsky helped facilitate what Starr would call exemplary institutions that also seek actively to change the social order. Community organization, undertaken on a massive scale by SNCC and articulated by Alinsky, became a staple of social movements throughout the country. Throughout this book you will hear about community participation, active contribution, and learning while teaching, all crucial ingredients of community organizing and urban planning in the 1960s.

In 1969 Sherry Arnstein, an advisor to the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development, wrote an influential essay, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," in which she argues that participation in decision making is a cornerstone of a democratic society and that poor communities have traditionally been denied power over the use of federal funds in the United States. She lays out a hierarchy of forms of "citizen participation," starting at the bottom with the least desirable approach and ascending to the most desirable at the top:

8. Citizen Control
7. Delegated Power
6. Partnership
5. Placation
4. Consultation
3. Informing
2. Therapy
1. Manipulation

Arnstein calls manipulation "the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by powerholders." Therapy occurs when the powerful try to "cure" the apparent pathologies of the powerless — for example, teaching the impoverished how to control their kids. Informing citizens about plans for their community with a "one-way flow of information" fails to tap into local knowledge. Consultation is a step closer to drawing on community knowledge, but "offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account." Placation allows a token amount of community input into the project design. Partnership invites citizens into the decision-making process. When an urban renewal program gives

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majority say in a project to the local community, it has delegated power. Finally, when power and funds go directly to a "neighborhood corporation with no intermediaries between it and the source of funds," citizen control has been achieved.[16] Arnstein takes pains to point out that the ladder is a simplification, but the article was widely read, and its ideology of participation clearly echoes Alinsky's. It is easy to see how this taxonomy might apply to projects in this book. For example, Harrell Fletcher's film (chapter 6) might be considered a partnership with the gas station owner Jay Dykeman, while Rick Lowe's *Project Row Houses* (chapter 5) could be an example of citizen control.

Arnstein's ladder is useful shorthand for a model of cooperative participation in the late 1960s: the less top-down the better. Critics might shudder at the application of this sort of chart to the evaluation of art; it is easy to imagine an art project that reaches the highest level of participation but remains simplistic aesthetically. The mere presence of deeply engaged community participation in an art project is not the final word on its merit, even if it is a great sign for community organizing. But the negative values on Arnstein's list tend to echo what critics decry in some community art projects: manipulation, decoration, tokenism, and therapy. In any case the civil rights movement and community organizing of the 1960s offer models of participatory action that still resonate in present-day community organizing, urban planning, and art—not to mention social justice movements worldwide.

The Movement and Participatory Democracy

The counterculture of the 1960s also created a range of important exemplary anti-institutions formulated on a model of participatory democracy. "The movement" was a catchall phrase for the activities of the counterculture, from antiwar protests to sexual liberation and alternative living arrangements. Many of the most important activists in the movement cut their teeth organizing in the South for SNCC, and the tactics and rhetoric of participatory liberation ripple through their actions and texts.

Students for a Democratic Society started primarily as a civil rights organization but increasingly focused on the antiwar movement as the decade progressed. One of its founding documents was the Port Huron Statement, drafted mostly by Tom Hayden in 1962. The document is a far-reaching indictment of the status quo in America, with discussions of foreign policy, workplace discrimination, industrialization, and other topics.

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Of particular interest here, though, is the statement's position on participatory action:

> In a participatory democracy, the political life would be based in several root principles:
> – that decision-making of basic social consequence be carried on by public groupings;
> – that politics be seen positively, as the art of collectively creating an acceptable pattern of social relations;
> – that politics has the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community, thus being a necessary, though not sufficient, means of finding meaning in personal life.[17]

Like Alinsky, Hayden et al. are arguing that only through social and political participation can democracy and justice be achieved, and that participation is both a means and an end, that "the political order should serve to clarify problems in a way instrumental to their solution." The Port Huron Statement argues that the isolation of contemporary American social life can be overcome and community can be created when private problems "from bad recreation facilities to personal alienation" are "formulated as general issues."[18] It is a matter not simply of experts understanding and solving the problems of the world, but of citizens themselves actively working in "public groupings" to address society's problems and make decisions.

SDS sought to bring these ideals into reality through its own democratic structure, through community organizing (much of it in the North, though little was successful) and mass participation in the peace movement. Hayden states that the heritage for participatory democracy was transmitted to SDS through John Dewey, who was a leader of the League for Industrial Democracy (the original name of the organization that would become SDS). He cites Dewey's notion that democracy is not only a governmental form but also a mode of living and communicated experience.[19] I return to Dewey in the conclusion.

In his essay on the history of communes, Timothy Miller, a religion professor at the University of Kansas, states that while communal living has existed in many periods in American history, in the mid-1960s "communitarian idealism erupted in what was to be by far its largest manifestation ever."[20] In their book on communes, co-ops, and collectives, the historian John Case and the Tufts University sociologist Rosemary Tay-

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lor argue that communes were emblematic of a difference between the American Left in the 1930s and the New Left of the 1960s. Unlike their predecessors, the New Leftists sought to practice a politics of everyday life. Hence the problems inherent in work and family life "could not be solved by individuals acting alone; they were, as the New Leftists saw it, the common costs of life in capitalist America, and they therefore called for collective action. One fundamental concern of the movement, then, was to find new ways of living and working."[21] One of the most famous communal groups was the Diggers in San Francisco, and participatory art was at the center of their endeavor. Born out of the highly politicized San Francisco Mime Group, the Diggers were primarily interested in living freely as a group, creating live anarchic street experiences, and de-commodifying the alternative lifestyles of Haight-Ashbury, following the maxims "Do your thing" and "Create the condition you describe."[22] It is impossible to draw a line between their art and their life, though their Intersection Game, which casually snarled traffic, tended toward participatory theater, while their Free Food initiative leaned toward community support.

The Diggers' influence was felt strongly in New York, where Abbie Hoffman, Anita Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Nancy Kurshan, and Paul Krassner founded the Youth International Party, known as the Yippies. Kurshan, Abbie Hoffman, and Rubin had been important members of SDS and were schooled initially through the organizing efforts of SNCC in the early 1960s. According to Michael William Doyle, a historian at Ball State University, the Yippies began as the New York Diggers but soon found their own vision. While the Diggers were interested in live participatory action, the Yippies were intent on disrupting public discourse with their provocative street actions, and they developed a complex form of guerrilla political theater.[23] Famously, at the New York Stock Exchange in 1967, fifteen free spirits organized by Abbie Hoffman tossed hundreds of one-dollar bills from the gallery above the stock exchange, creating several minutes of mayhem as the stockbrokers scrambled to pick up the cash from the floor. It was a well-publicized and embarrassing moment for the center of American commerce.

Hoffman claims in retrospect that a source for his actions was Antonin Artaud's book *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958), in which Artaud calls for a new "poetry of festivals and crowds, with people pouring into the streets." Hoffman describes the planning process as relatively anarchic: the Yippies would just divide up into groups and work on various proposed actions. In some cases the results were well-planned tactical media events,

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Yippies visit the New York Stock Exchange. Abbie Hoffman (smiling, right) and Jerry Rubin (right with mustache) hold up a burning five-dollar bill. The crowd applauds the parting gesture outside the Stock Exchange on August 24, 1967. Photograph by Jack Smith/*New York Daily News* via Getty Images.

while others were free-form "be-ins." Many of these collectively imagined actions allowed onlookers to become involved. "If observers of the drama are allowed to interpret the act," writes Hoffman, "they will become participants themselves. . . . The concept of mass spectacle, everyday language, and easily recognized symbols was important to get public involvement." Some of the actions had a handful of participants, as at the Stock Exchange, while others had thousands or even tens of thousands, such as an alternative Easter action in Central Park.[24] The Yippies, joined by other activists and agitators, gained international recognition for their disruption of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. The whole world was indeed watching as they exposed the brutal side of the Chicago police.

Hoffman correctly observed that the art world was not particularly interested in his theater. Like the other groups that he saw as his brethren (e.g., Bread and Puppet Theater, who were also regulars at the mass demonstrations), Hoffman was more concerned with public communication than art magazine press. He argues that the Museum of Modern Art's interest in Allan Kaprow's happenings and Pop art "while ignoring our brand of political theater just proves the connection between suc-

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cessful artists and the rich."[25] But just as the Diggers created a communitarian utopia that has echoes in today's micro-utopias, the Yippies created a precedent for interventionist artists like the Yes Men, who would follow a couple of decades later.

Starr concludes that on an organizational level, "the counter-institutions unquestionably failed."[26] One commune after another closed its doors; SDS, always plagued by a lack of structure, collapsed amid rancorous dispute in 1969. The intermingling of personal life, political action, and idealistic group orientation comes up over and over in accounts of the 1960s, but perhaps most importantly (and successfully) in feminism. While the living experiments of the communes seem to have risen and fallen in cycles in American history, the feminist movement has been more or less relentless in the past century. The progressive ideologies and practices of the 1960s were well suited to energize a new wave of feminist thought and action that still reverberates in American culture.

Feminism and Political Performance

After the Second World War many middle-class Americans sought refuge from what they perceived to be cramped and crowded cities. In the most advanced car culture on the planet, it was less imperative to live close to the center, as the husband could commute to his job while the wife organized the home and raised the kids. Suburbanization was in full swing for the white middle class. There were contemporary critiques, including *The Split Level Trap* (1960), an analysis of the psychosocial environment of the suburbs, and Lewis Mumford's book *The City in History*, written a year later, which lamented the social conformity of the suburbs and the housewife's alienation from the social relations of the city within a monotonous, uniform, television-dominated existence.[27] But the role of women in this world was blasted open with the publication in 1963 of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. At once a well-published author and a suburban housewife, Friedan was reacting against what she saw as the rigid and constricting life that confined women to the home without outlets to develop an individual identity. She wrote, "The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the 20th century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone."[28] Only by naming the problem and shedding the oppressive gender role assigned to her, only by finding herself through creative work of her own, Friedan argued, could the new woman become confident, self-

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aware, and capable of self-fulfillment. *The Feminine Mystique* became a bestseller, catapulting Friedan to public prominence and jump-starting Second Wave feminism.

The Feminine Mystique struck a chord of discontent, poking a hole in the prevailing image of the woman. But it was not an overall critique of the social trends in America, and it implicitly centered on women like Friedan herself: middle-class white suburbanites. Gerda Lerner (later to become an eminent historian at the University of Wisconsin) wrote to Friedan upon the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, hailing the book but also arguing that the problems that individual women face cannot be solved "on the basis of the individual family." Lerner argued that solutions need to be framed in terms of the larger community and require "a system of social reforms [including] day care centers, maternity benefits, communized household services," and so on.[29] In fairness, as the Cerritos College historian Susan Oliver points out, much of this agenda was embraced by Friedan when she became president of the National Organization of Women.[30] In *Redesigning the American Dream* (1984), the Yale architecture professor Dolores Hayden argues that the "haven" created for women in the postwar period, the architecture and community planning of suburbanization, was a gendered sociopolitical and environmental nightmare. While Friedan saw the main oppressor of women as "chains in her own mind and spirit," others saw more systematic oppression, especially for women outside the comfort zone of the suburbs.

But as the 1960s progressed there emerged a group of women with the tools to take the critique further, with the birth of the women's liberation movement. In her book *Personal Politics* (1979), Sara Evans, a historian at the University of Minnesota, argues that the roots of the women's movement were in the civil rights movement and the New Left. Using copious examples, Evans argues that women learned firsthand about gender inequality by working in male-dominated groups like SNCC and SDS. Of particular importance in these organizations were new models of egalitarianism, including "the anti-leadership bias and the emphasis on internal process," "the theory of radicalization through discussions," and "the belief in participatory democracy," but many women steeped in liberation ideology and Second Wave feminist self-confidence recoiled at the movement's consistent blindness to or acceptance of sex discrimination.[31] (Accounts of the woman's role in the Diggers commune are no better.)[32] "What was required to produce a movement," says Evans, "was only for women to apply the new ideas directly to their own situation, to make the connections be-

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tween 'the people' whom they sought to aid and themselves as women."[33] This connection was made, and a new liberation movement emerged.

A key factor of women's liberation was the group. The late 1960s saw the rise of feminist consciousness-raising through group interaction, a practice formalized by a collective called New York Radical Women (NYRW). In 1969 the feminist pioneer Carol Hanisch wrote an article, "The Personal Is Political," in the Redstockings journal *Feminist Revolution*. She was responding to critics, including mainstream political feminists and radicals like the SNCC activist quoted earlier, who ridiculed consciousness-raising as self-indulgent "mouth-to-mouth resuscitation." Hanisch made the argument that the collective act of discussing women's personal issues (e.g., "Which do/did you prefer, a girl or a boy baby, or no children and why?") was valid feminist practice that transcended self-interested therapy: "We discover in these groups that personal problems are political problems. There are not personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for collective solution."[34] Hanisch's article was widely reprinted and passed around in the next several years, and the notion that the personal is political is considered by many to be the "single identifying mantra" of Second Wave feminists.[35] As Mary Ryan, a women's studies professor at the University of California, Berkeley, has written, "The first task of feminist scholars and activists was to dredge through their personal lives and women's everyday experiences for those issues which required publicity."[36]

Indeed the personal issues were publicized. According to Kathie Sarachild, a member of the NYRW, it was Hanisch who prompted the group to expand their consciousness-raising into the public realm, to go beyond a service or membership organization to what she called "zap" action on the model of SNCC. The most famous action undertaken by the group was a protest at the Miss America Pageant in 1968: about a hundred women picketed the event, then threw high-heeled shoes, girdles, *Playboy* and *Good Housekeeping* magazines, and other implements of what they called "female torture" into a "freedom trashcan."[37] According to Hanisch, the impetus for the Miss America action came from a classic NYRW consciousness-raising session. After talking about the powerful and conflicting emotions evoked by watching the beauty pageant on television, the group decided to take action. Hanisch wrote, "From our communal thinking came the concrete plans for the action. We all agreed that our main point in the demonstration would be that all women are hurt by

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An early consciousness-raising session at the Women's Center in Greenwich Village, 1970. Photograph by Bettye Lane.

beauty competition — Miss America as well as ourselves. We opposed the pageant in our own self-interest, e.g., the self-interest of all women."[38] In a flyer that was handed out on the Atlantic City boardwalk the day of the Miss America action, the organizers referred to the event as "boardwalk-theater" and "guerrilla theater."[39] Like the Yippies' action at the New York Stock Exchange, the Miss America action received tremendous publicity, including front-page coverage in the print media. According to Hanisch, the protest "told the nation that a new feminist movement [was] afoot in the land."[40] If the personal was political, boardwalk theater helped make it public. Though these actions did not have a huge impact in the art press, artists were simultaneously adopting, adapting, and translating this sort of collectively imagined, cooperatively created political theater in the aesthetic realm, even as the aesthetics began to blur with social action. With the well-known and broadly inclusive participatory experiments and community organizing of the civil rights movement, the counterinstitutions and street theater of the movement, and the collectivism and political theater of feminism, the table had been set for the emergence of cooperative art practices.

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On the boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey, New York Radical Women dispute the image of American women being presented at the Miss America pageant nearby. The action, which was suggested at a consciousness-raising session, gained national media attention in 1969. Photograph © Jo Freeman.

Pioneers in American Cooperative Art

Just as the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in the early 1960s was a necessary precursor to the actions of the New York Radical Women toward the end of the decade, ideas in the Fluxus network were precursors to cooperative art that unfolded later. Fluxus intended to put an end to art reflecting the artist's ego in favor of ideas that were unprotected by copyright, often consisting of directions for actions that could be undertaken by anyone, thus allowing art into the realm of the everyday for the benefit of the people. If ultimately Fluxus failed to achieve its goal of integrating art and life, it nonetheless opened the door to a range of anti-individualistic, participatory art practices and provided early intellectual inspiration.

Fluxus was an international network that included important members in Europe and Asia, but for the most part it was centered around the self-appointed chairman, George Maciunas, in New York. In 1962 Maciunas proposed that art could "arrive at a closer connection to concrete reality" and that Fluxus "anti-art forms are primarily directed against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of producer and performer,

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or generator and spectator or against the separation of art and life." Later he proclaimed that Fluxus "should tend towards collective spirit, anonymity and ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM."[41] For all of Maciunas's aspirations, however, there is no indication that Fluxus in fact broke out of the art world. A Fluxus store offering low-cost items, which was open for a year on Canal Street in New York, did not sell *a single item*.[42] As Joseph Beuys said, Fluxus "held a mirror up to people without indicating how to change things."[43] John Hendricks, a Fluxus insider who produced a number of their events at Judson Memorial Church, was of a similar mind. Frustrated by the in-group nature of their activities, along with Jean Toche he proceeded to take a more public tack with the Guerrilla Art Action Group later in the 1960s.[44] But Fluxus and its intellectual and artistic community was an important early testing ground for two artists who would have enormous influence on the genesis of cooperative art: Allan Kaprow and Joseph Beuys. Kaprow was a member of the Judson Church circle and the Rutgers University Fluxus crowd and submitted work for Fluxus special editions in the early 1960s. Beuys was an early Fluxus participant, and Fluxus ideas reverberated through his work from the beginning to the end of his career. I will return to Beuys later.

While Kaprow was involved early on in Fluxus, he made his name outside the network as the father of the happening during the 1960s. In his essay "Participation Performance," written retrospectively in 1977, Kaprow says that while there was audience participation in the happenings, the involvement was relatively inconsequential, akin to an audience member being called to the stage in a television show or a "guided tour, parade, carnival test of skill, secret society initiation," thus remaining within the genre of the scripted participation. Kaprow emphasizes that the audience participants were well aware of the style and taste of the artists, as they were initiated into the contemporary art world, and he proposes that continuity of taste culture and community are a prerequisite for this sort of participatory art. "This may seem truistic," Kaprow writes, "but participation presupposes shared assumptions, interests, languages, meanings, contexts, and uses. It cannot take place otherwise."[45] This sort of performance was not designed to cross social boundaries.

As the decade progressed, Kaprow moved on from happenings to "life-art" and the conscious blurring of aesthetic categories. In the spirit of the concretist Fluxus artists, Kaprow began to examine the potential in declaring certain everyday activities as art, to "consider certain common transactions—shaking hands, eating, saying goodbye—as Readymades."[46] As

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he wrote in "The Education of the Un-Artist" (in 1969), "Random trance-like movements of shoppers in a supermarket are richer than anything done in modern dance."[47] He was playing consistently on the line between life and art in the form of small-scale participatory performance. The critic Jeff Kelley observes that by the end of the 1960s "a Happening by Kaprow was no longer something you went to, but something you and a few others undertook. Performers were no longer mixed with the crowd; there was no crowd, only volunteers. Resonance tended to reside in the specific settings, communitarian experiences, and big ideas (like imitating nature, or turning work into play) that were part of the background noise of 1960s American society."[48]

In 1969, the year he wrote "The Education of the Un-Artist," Kaprow collaborated on an education art project called *Project Other Ways* with the educator Herbert Kohl, who was teaching at UC Berkeley at the time. It was an uncharacteristic endeavor for Kaprow that highlights the relationship of participatory art and progressive education, a theme that runs throughout the projects in this book (Mark Dion in chapter 2, Tania Bruguera in chapter 7, Wendy Ewald in chapter 8, Brett Cook in chapter 10). Rethinking education was a hot topic in the late 1960s, from the battles over curriculum to the social restrictions placed on college students and the local control of school boards. In 1968 Kohl published *36 Children*, which is both a chronicle of his experiences as a sixth-grade teacher in Harlem and an indictment of the educational system's failures to meet the needs of inner-city kids.[49] Interest in radical pedagogy was opening the door to a flexible, interactive approach to working with students. As Kohl and Kaprow got started, there was ongoing turmoil down the street at UC Berkeley, and tear gas was in the air.

In *Project Other Ways* Kaprow and Kohl launched a series of pedagogical experiments to bring art into the Berkeley Unified School District, including a cooperative project with a group of sixth graders. Kaprow and Kohl had noticed that a faction of kids from Oakland who were thought to be functionally illiterate were in fact quite interested in writing—at least writing graffiti. After an initial positive experience with the kids over an afternoon photographing what was scrawled in the local bathrooms, Kaprow said:

> Kohl and I saw a germ of an idea in what had just happened. We covered the walls of our storefront offices with large sheets of brown wrapping paper, provided felt-tipped pens, paints and brushes, staplers and rubber

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> cement. We invited the kids back the following week and put on the table the photos they had taken. They were asked to make graffiti, using the photos and any drawings they wanted to make, like the graffiti they had seen on our tour. At first they were hesitant and giggled, but we said there were no rules and they wouldn't be punished for dirty words or drawings, or even making a mess. Soon there were photos all over the walls. Drawn and painted lines circled and stabbed them, extending genitalia and the names of locals they obviously recognized.[50]

In that Kohl and Kaprow were catalysts of the creativity they saw in these sixth graders, the project mirrors the work of Wendy Ewald, who started her collaborative educational practice the same year as *Project Other Ways*, and it presages the work of Tim Rollins, who would collaborate with the Kids of Survival in the Bronx more than a decade later. For these egalitarian progressives, the imbalance of the teacher-student relationship seemed like a good target, and the educational environment would prove receptive to this sort of interrogation. But from the beginning of Kohl and Kaprow's project, there was a question of political versus artistic agendas. Kohl, a prominent social activist and advocate of the open school movement, had politics in mind, while Kaprow was interested in artistic play, emphasizing the open-endedness of the process and the product. When a park that was cleaned up and reoriented through community collaboration during the project was soon vandalized, Kelley says, "Kaprow was characteristically philosophical—the parks had come from rubble and were returned to rubble."[51] But Kohl saw politics, not poetry.

After a year Kaprow left *Project Other Ways* to take a position at the newly founded California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where at first he was surrounded by members of the New York scene, including Fluxus artists like Alison Knowles and Nam June Paik. So just as Diggers techniques were transplanted to the East Coast, post-Fluxus ideologies made their way across the continent to the West Coast. Kaprow's influence as a teacher (at CalArts and later at UC San Diego) was long term and profound. According to Kelley, when Kaprow got to CalArts, the same sort of social expectations that Kohl had for *Project Other Ways* were held by some of the students, particularly the feminists: "It was assumed by many activist artists that Happenings, if scaled to the ideological proportions of feminism, might change society. Students would often raise questions and issue challenges about the social efficacy and political purpose of

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Audience members experience *Yard 1967* by Allan Kaprow at the Pasadena Art Museum. Photograph © 1967 Julian Wasser for *Life* magazine. Courtesy of the Allan Kaprow Estate, Hauser & Wirth, and The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (980063).

Kaprow's art. They wanted to change the world; Kaprow wanted to play with it."[52] One of those students was a young artist named Suzanne Lacy, and I will return to her soon.

Back on the East Coast, artists were beginning to experiment with models that crossed the line from intragroup participation to social cooperation. A major figure was Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Though she had not read Carol Hanisch's article in *Feminist Revolution*, Ukeles says, "We all walked around in the early '70s saying that the personal is political."[53] Ukeles went on to translate feminist dictum into action. In the late 1960s and early 1970s she began blurring her private and public life in so-called maintenance art works. In these performances Ukeles did what she did at home—cleaning and maintaining—in public spaces and galleries, performing the scrubbing of the sidewalk or the dusting of a museum. A year after the New York Radical Women's action at the Miss America Pageant (and the same year that "The Personal Is Political" was published), Ukeles wrote and distributed the "Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!":

> I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also (up to now separately) I "do" Art. Now, I will simply

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Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside, 1973.* Part of Maintenance Art Performance Series, 1973–74. Performance at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

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> do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. I will live in the museum as I customarily do at home with my husband and my baby, for the duration of the exhibition. (Right? or if you don't want me around at night I would come in every day) and do all these things as public Art activities: I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e. "floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings") cook, invite people to eat, make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse.[54]

In this text Ukeles set the stage for "service art": cleaning buildings and serving food are both strategies that have been carried out by others in subsequent decades. But most important, she made public her own "women's everyday experiences."

Ukeles continued to generalize her maintenance work and eventually formed a partnership with the City of New York Department of Sanitation, where she has served as artist-in-residence since 1977. Her interweaving of the domestic acts of maintenance that are mostly carried out by women and the public acts of sanitation that are almost exclusively executed by men, and her interweaving of the art world genre of performance with the world of urban systems, constituted an unconventional leap across borders of gender and class. For Ukeles, the women's liberation ideology of the political personal formed a foundation that would later be augmented by her interest in artistic traditions of collaboration that were beginning to bubble up.[55] Working with the sanitation workers in New York she has built exhibitions, parades, and a ballet for garbage barges on the Hudson River. She has gone on to collaborate with service workers in Europe and Asia. Her residency in the Sanitation Department is one of the best-known and most influential American examples of socially cooperative art.

International Influences: Debord, Beuys, and Freire

Any discussion of collaborative art in the American framework must acknowledge important intellectual and artistic contributions from abroad. There are several writers and artists from overseas whose influence is beyond question. I am not referring to Roland Barthes and others whose proclamation of the death of the author was much discussed at the time, but the ideas of Guy Debord, Joseph Beuys, and Paulo Freire that have resonated strongly with artists and intellectuals interested in notions of cooperation, dialogue, and participation.[56]

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The French writer and filmmaker Guy Debord and the Situationist International movement he led loom large in the field. Debord's artistic, intellectual, and political project was a fight against passivity, against a society divided between actors and spectators. His writings differentiate between the "spectacle" that is grand and impersonal (e.g., the mass media) and the "situation" that is local, personal, and interactive. He strove to loosen the grasp of the debilitating stupor of the spectacular. In his essay "Towards a Situationist International," published in 1957, Debord wrote, "The situation is . . . made to be lived by its constructors. The role of the 'public,' if not passive at least as a walk-on, must ever diminish, while the share of those who can not be called actors, but in a new meaning of the term, 'livers,' will increase."[57] Ten years later, in *Society of the Spectacle*, he was even clearer about his desire to activate the spectator: "The alienation of the spectator, which reinforces the contemplated objects that result from his own unconscious activity, works like this: The more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more he identifies with the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own life and his own desires. The spectacle's estrangement from the acting subject is expressed by the fact that the individual's gestures are no longer his own; they are the gestures of someone else who represents them to him. The spectator does not feel at home anywhere because the spectacle is everywhere."[58]

Though he was active since the late 1950s, Americans often perceive Debord as a figure of the late 1960s. One year after the publication of *Society of the Spectacle* in France, he and the Situationists achieved mythic status when their ideas escaped the academy and spilled onto the streets of Paris in the events of May 1968. In the catalogue for the large-scale exhibition on the Situationists that made its way to Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art in 1990, the film theorist and avant-garde historian Peter Wollen writes that in the spring of 1968 "student groups were influenced by the SI [Situationist International], especially in Nanterre where the uprising took shape, and the Situationists themselves played an active role in the events, seeking to encourage and promote workers' councils (and a revolutionary line within them) without exercising powers of decision and execution or political control of any kind."[59] By this account the Situationists stayed true to their philosophy, and the workers and students were "livers," collective actors in an event that is honored in the memory of the Left across the world. In 1968 the Yippies' street theater created a memorable political spectacle in Chicago, but it is the Situationists' antispectacle

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in Paris that seems to carry more weight in the imagination of American cooperative artists.

There is no clear narrative of how or when Situationist ideas came to the United States. The critic Peter Schjeldahl suggests that Gordon Matta-Clark was inspired by Debord and the Situationists when he was studying in Paris in 1968, and Matta-Clark's urban cutting has been compared with the Situationists "dérives."[60] There was a branch of the Situationist International in New York in the late 1960s, and Leandro Katz, an active New York Situationist, published a translated text by Debord in 1969. (*Society of the Spectacle* itself first appeared in English in 1970.) Katz told me that the artists he was close to at that time included Matta-Clark, Helio Oiticica, Suzanne Harris, Kathy Acker, Joseph Kosuth, and Charles Ludlam, so some Situationist ideas certainly made their way through the tight-knit New York art world.[61] And some of the interactive projects created by this cohort seem to be cooperative art. In 1971, along with Carol Goodden, Suzanne Harris, Tina Girouard, and Richard Lew, Matta-Clark opened a restaurant and meeting place called Food. According to Goodden, Matta-Clark saw Food as a sculpture. He designed everything in the space, cooked some of the food, made a film there, cut out a part of a wall (inspiring his cut sculptures), and "tried to sell the whole idea of Food to Castelli [Gallery] as an art piece."[62] So perhaps Matta-Clark is thought to be a translator of Situationist ideas into interactive art in New York in the early 1970s, though I have yet to see any specific documentary evidence of his connection to the group. In any case, mainstream knowledge of the Situationists came much later, with general interest in the late 1980s and especially after the exhibition in Boston in 1990. Thus at the moment when cooperative art was beginning to find greater institutional support in the 1990s, Situationist ideas were freshly circulating in the United States, especially their notion of the antispectacular "liver" and their involvement in politics on the streets of Paris.

The artist whose name came up most often in discussing influences with the participants in this book is Joseph Beuys, with his notion of "social sculpture." Beuys's post-Fluxus work was known in America from the 1960s, but it was not until the early 1970s that the art world really took notice. In fact, though Fluxus was centered in New York, it was Beuys who brought some of its important ideas back home. By the time he came to New York in 1974 for his first public lecture in the United States, he was already a huge draw, for fans and detractors alike. This was two years after he had been dismissed from his academic position in Düsseldorf for re-

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fusing to impose entry requirements for his classes, and the year of his first performance in America, at the Rene Block Gallery. About seven hundred people showed up for his lecture in the New School for Social Research's auditorium, which held only 350; half the audience was stranded outside. The transcripts depict a raucous event in which the audience seemingly felt encouraged by Beuys's rhetoric of dialogue to interrupt, disagree, and generally create an unruly atmosphere that Beuys seems to have embraced. This was the first time an American audience heard his ideas firsthand, and here is how he described his mission:

> I would like to declare why I feel that it's now necessary to establish a new kind of art, able to show the problems of the whole society, of every living being—and how this new discipline—which I call social sculpture—can realize the future of humankind. . . . Here my idea is to declare that art is the *only* possibility for evolution, the only possibility to change the situation in the world. But then you have to enlarge the idea of art to include the whole creativity. And if you do that, it follows logically that every living being is an artist—an artist in the sense that he can develop his own capacity.[63]

Beuys is talking not only about social art forms but also about an open society that acknowledges the creativity of all, or, as he had said in 1972, "A total work of art is only possible in the context of the whole society. Everyone will be a necessary co-creator of social architecture, and, so long as anyone cannot participate, the ideal of democracy has not been reached."[64] In this text Beuys sounds a lot like the Port Huron Statement's call for participatory democracy, but the intellectual context was different. In an essay on Beuys's influence here, the critic Kim Levin argues that Americans saw his work in our context, not his own, and that we drew faulty parallels. "In our literal climate," writes Levin, "we never suspected that he was a symbolist, an expressionist, a mystical romanticist."[65] What seems to have stuck in the consciousness of many artists is the inclusive notion of "social sculpture," or at least an American literalist version of it. The self-defined "social sculptor" Rick Lowe (chapter 5) often cites Beuys as a major source of inspiration, even if he is not sure that Beuys would be able to relate to *Project Row Houses*.[66]

In 1973 Beuys said, "Communication occurs in reciprocity: it must never be a one-way flow from the teacher to the taught. The teacher takes equally from the taught."[67] He was inadvertently echoing both Saul Alinsky, with his notion of the community organizer as colearner, and the in-

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In the New School auditorium in New York in 1974, Joseph Beuys presented a "public dialogue" in which audience members were invited on stage to ask questions. Beuys answered and wrote notations on a blackboard. Photograph © Peggy Jarrell Kaplan. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

fluential theorist of dialogue, the Brazilian Paulo Freire, whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was first published in 1968. When the book came out in English in 1970, it was embraced by many progressive educators in the United States and by artists as well. Freire's "problem-posing" pedagogy is based on dialogue in which the teacher and the student become "jointly responsible for the process in which all grow." In the 1980s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was ubiquitous in activist artists' studios. And while Beuys could sound like Freire, Freire could sound like Debord; in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire writes, "In cultural invasion the actors . . . superimpose themselves on the people who are assigned the role of spectators, of objects. In cultural synthesis, the actors become integrated with the people, who are co-authors of the action that both perform on the world."[68] Again we see the emphasis on the oppressed subject (the student, in this case) becoming an actor and coauthor. As opposed to Beuys, there was no mistaking Freire's politics; he had very clear leftist political goals, which he articulated as a dissenter under right-wing dictatorial rule.

Freire's theories were quickly translated into artistic form by his compatriot Augusto Boal, who published *Theatre of the Oppressed* in 1973. Like

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Freire, Boal was interested in the activated, politicized participant, and he created a wide range of theater works to be performed by professional or nonprofessional actors and "spect-actors," the inadvertent participants in his public theater.[69] Both Freire and Boal were imprisoned in Brazil under military rule for their political activities and spent time in exile—Freire in Chile and the United States, Boal in Argentina and France. This exile, though painful, helped spread their ideas internationally.

The theorists discussed here would diverge on many points. However, when Debord envisioned situations lived by their constructors, when Beuys talked about the co-creation of social architecture, and when Freire spoke of people who are coauthors of the action they perform on the world, they promoted ideas that would influence American artists' emergent practice of socially cooperative art. Among others, these writers helped plant the seed of the activated audience that was translated by some artists into active experiments in group creativity. But before returning to the artistic developments over the last quarter of the twentieth century, we must understand how these practices emerged in a dramatically altered political environment.

Political Shift to the Right in the 1970s and 1980s

If the groundwork had been laid for socially cooperative art through participatory strains in political action, early experiments by a handful of pioneering artists, and intellectual influences from abroad, the full-blown emergence of the genre took place in a transformed political and social arena. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Kaprow, Ukeles, Matta-Clark, and other artists were working and living in an America in the late stages of a progressive period that had begun during the New Deal. Yes, America was still involved in the Vietnam War; yes, grave inequities remained a generation into the civil rights movement; but there was a sense that what Alinksy had called the "displacement and disorganization of the status quo" through mass movements and cooperative action was possible, if not inevitable. This was much less the case in the last decades of the century, as America swung to the right.

In the 1970s and 1980s a new balance of power was emerging in America. In his book *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005), the Princeton history professor Kevin Kruse takes a look at how a new social geography realigned politics. He points out that by population, the suburbs were only a fourth of the country in 1950, a third in 1960, and fully half in 1993. According to Kruse, one of the main motivations for

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flight from city centers was racism. The presidential election of 1968 was the first in which votes from the suburbs outnumbered those from either rural or urban areas. The Republican Party understood and capitalized on this new demography, and Richard Nixon prevailed. A Democrat was president thirty-two of the forty-four years that preceded Nixon's election; in the forty-four years since, Democrats have occupied the White House for only sixteen. During the 1970s the suburbs cut ties with the cities and created a new national power base "to ensure that the isolation they now enjoyed in the suburbs would never be disturbed." Kruse continues: "Free to pursue a politics that accepted as its normative values individualistic interpretation of 'freedom of association,' a fervent faith in free enterprise, and a fierce hostility to the federal government, a new suburban conservatism took the now familiar themes of isolation, individualism, and privatization to unprecedented levels. . . . At the dawn of the 21st century, America found itself dominated by suburbs and those suburbs, in turn, dominated by the politics of white flight and suburban secession."[70] What is conveniently described as a Red State–Blue State political divide in America is in fact more of a divide between the liberal cities and the conservative suburbs and exurbs. As mentioned earlier, the suburbs had been cast as inhospitable to interaction (Mumford) or as evolving hand-in-hand with an oppressive gender role for women (Friedan and Hayden), but the American apotheosis of domestic privacy, free enterprise, and home ownership continued to grow across the political spectrum. Dolores Hayden points out that "economic empowerment" for working women during this period often meant no more than home ownership.[71]

It is common knowledge that politics in the United States has become increasingly polarized over the past thirty years. In a *New York Times* column in 2002 titled "Things Pull Apart," the Princeton professor and Nobel Prize–winning economist Paul Krugman argues that this polarization echoes the growth of economic disparity between the rich and the middle class, starting roughly with the "conservative revolution" that brought Ronald Reagan to the White House. Krugman points out that after adjusting for inflation, middle-income Americans saw their income rise 9 percent between 1979 and 1997, while the income of families in the top 1 percent of the spectrum rose 140 percent. During that time, Krugman observes, American conservatives swung far to the right, while moderates remained constant in their economic policy. There was a sense among progressives that the division of wealth fueled by reduced taxation of high-income Americans was becoming disturbingly one-sided, but the

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response was generally muted. Krugman says that we probably need look no further for an explanation for this passivity than "campaign finance, lobbying, and the general power of money to shape political debate" in the United States.[72]

In this conservative context art became a convenient target for ridicule. Grants awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts were questioned as profane or obscene. The museum education theorist Philip Yenawine writes, "Without question, the culture wars of the late 1980s and '90s changed the context in which the art world operates, particularly in its relationship to government. A vocal, organized, and motivated body politic, rooted in fundamentalist religious beliefs, called art from the margins of society, where it thrived, to center stage of American culture, where it appeared bizarre and even ludicrous."[73] In many cases the culture wars unfolded under the cloud of the AIDS epidemic that was ravaging communities across America. The formula for division and misunderstanding was almost perfect, pitting the increasingly empowered conservative sectors of society against artists, gays, and people of color. As opposed to the 1960s and early 1970s, when political action (even political street theater) was fairly well separated from participatory art practices, there was more crossover in the 1980s. As the University of Rochester art historian Douglas Crimp points out in his book *AIDS Demo Graphics* (1990), the urgency of the crisis led to collective efforts, centering around the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). The visual imagery of AIDS activism was generally created by collectives like Gran Fury, DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activist Television), Little Elvis, Testing the Limits, and LAPIT (Lesbian Activists Producing Interesting Television). Crimp situates this sort of activism in direct opposition to the hermeticism of critical postmodernism, which, he argues, never transcended an art world audience. Throughout *AIDS Demo Graphics* one gets a sense of the enraged and self-critical mind-set of ACT UP and its admittedly propagandistic motivation. Each poster, video, and act of street theater was analyzed in terms of instrumental results: What did the press say? Will it help open the door to greater distribution of health care resources? Will it destigmatize AIDS? For artists who came of age in this period, the model of art as collective political activism in the face of an immediate life-or-death threat was deeply imprinted.

Meanwhile new populations were arriving in American cities from around the world even as the white middle-class outflows continued. In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson had signed into law the Immigration and

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Consciously framing events for media consumption, ACT UP brought AIDS into the spotlight. On the lower right an ACT UP member is being interviewed as a compatriot is hauled away by the police, 1987. Photograph courtesy of ACT UP New York Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Nationality Act. When the bill was passed, the percentage of immigrants in the United States was at a historic low, and the number of people to be admitted under the reunification provisions seemed relatively modest. But the legislators underestimated the implications of the law, and within a decade American cities were seeing the results. Between 1931 and 1965 only about 5 million immigrants entered the United States (147,000 per year), but between 1970 and 2000, as the effects of the new law kicked in, about 28 million arrived (933,000 per year).[74] The northern industrial cities that had been the destinations of the great African American migration north, now abandoned by the white middle class with suburbanization, were being refilled by new immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, groups that had been virtually excluded under the old immigration quotas.[75] New Chinatowns were born along with Latino and Caribbean neighborhoods, each with its own habits of sociability. Across the country, but particularly in the Southwest, a massive flow of immigrants from south of the border began—with and without documents. To some, the new waves of immigration were undermining the very notion of what it means to be American. To others, these immigrants brought re-

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newed vibrancy to cities, filling in the neighborhoods that the European Americans had fled.

One cheerleader for these transformations is the Los Angeles–based cultural critic Mike Davis. "Immigrant homeowners are indeed anonymous heroes," writes Davis in his book *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. City* (2000). "While there is much abstract talk in planning and architectural schools about the need to 'reurbanize' American cities, there is little recognition that Latino and Asian immigrants are already doing it on an epic scale." And new populations bring culture with them, a set of sociospatial habits. Davis writes, "Across the vast Pan-American range of cultural nuance, the social reproduction of *latinidad,* however defined, presupposes a rich proliferation of public space. . . . Latin American immigrants and their children, perhaps more than any other element of the population, exult in playgrounds, parks, squares, libraries, and other endangered species of U.S. public space, and thus form one of the most important constituencies of the preservation of our urban commons."[76] Davis points to the reinvention of American cities as a positive phenomenon, counteracting mainstream America's devaluation of the commons, focusing specifically on the relational, interactive use of public space. Interestingly, at the turn of the millennium the same flows that have been transforming cities are beginning to break the monocultural definition of the suburbs. According to the Brookings Institution, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, "for the first time, a majority of all racial/ethnic groups in large metro areas live in the suburbs. Deep divides by race and ethnicity still separate cities and suburbs in metro areas like Detroit, but others like Los Angeles show much greater convergence between jurisdictions."[77] And as the suburbs are becoming more diverse, it is becoming more difficult to peg the politics of participation; in the late 1980s and especially in the early 1990s communitarian thought took on a new public face as a mainstream, moderate political stance.

By the late 1990s the UC Berkeley sociologist Robert Bellah seems to have domesticated the participatory ideology of Tom Hayden when he writes, "Participation [is] both a right and a duty. Communities become positive goods only when they provide the opportunity and support to participate in them." Instead of seeking a radical reorganization of American society, the communitarian periodical *Responsive Community* takes up unthreatening questions like how best to design a park for community participation, how to strengthen family bonds, and how to devise requirements for school-based community service. Yes, articles also appear in

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that journal on how to create an informed electorate, but certainly not on how to bring down the capitalist state.[78] The communitarians found allies along the way in the anti-ironist Duke law professor Jedediah Purdy, as well as the "social capital" theorist and Harvard politics professor Robert Putnam.[79]

Meanwhile participation as an essential aspect of democracy was being espoused in some mainstream planning circles as well, much in the spirit of Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" and Alinsky's community organizing. For example, John Forester, a planning professor at Cornell University, outlines a philosophy of interactive, socially cooperative planning in his book *The Deliberative Practitioner* (1999). In his case studies one gets a sense of how a process of active dialogue transforms an understanding of a city and its inhabitants. Forester argues for the transformative effect of dialogue:

> Inspired by liberal models of voice and empowerment, many analyses unwittingly reduce empowerment to "being heard" and learning to considering seriously local as well as expert knowledge. Participation is thus reduced to speaking, and learning is reduced to knowing—and the transformations of done-to into doers, spectators and victims into activists, fragmented groups into renewed bodies, old resignation into new beginnings are lost from our view. . . . The transformations at stake are those not only of knowledge of class structure, but of people more or less able to act practically together to better their lives, people we might call citizens.[80]

In Forester's approach, with its strong rhetoric of inclusion, spectators become activists. Like Freire, Forester works with a "dialogic and argumentative process." Here again, becoming active is linked to acting together.

Finally, before we return to cooperative art, it is important to take note of the technological tools for cooperation that emerged at the turn of the millennium. In an essay titled "Technologies of Cooperation" (2007), the Internet theorist Howard Rheingold argues that electronic communication opens a door to larger-scale social cooperation than we have seen in any period of our development as a species. This communication technology can lubricate the operation of traditional cooperative ventures or engage with new sorts of social organization that will develop with the new tools. Rheingold's Internet optimism may be proving correct—for example, in the large-scale, relatively leaderless, cooperative political movements that have challenged autocratic leaders in Tunisia and Egypt, fueled by social media from Facebook to Twitter. Rheingold sees the growth of

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the "cooperation commons" in a wide range of new practices, from open-source software to social mobile computing and knowledge collectives.[81] While Robert Putnam blamed screen time (including both computer and television use) for a decline in interpersonal connection, it is far too soon to definitively evaluate the social implications of new social media. This set of issues is discussed in chapter 11.

Cooperative Art since the 1980s

If Mierle Laderman Ukeles was New York's leading cooperative artist of the 1970s, Tim Rollins + Kids of Survival (KOS) were the best known of the 1980s. Rollins was a member of Group Material, a visual arts collective that was active beginning in the early 1980s. Their work generally consisted of organizing group exhibitions and street art on sociopolitical topics. Some of these projects could be considered curating as art, with the overall artwork emerging from the group decision making and creative contributions of numerous artists. However, it was the other side of Rollins's practice that emerged as a model for socially cooperative artists. He was teaching in the New York City public school system at the time, and he began working with a group of young people from special education classes in the South Bronx. The collaboration began at Intermediate School 52 and expanded into an independent out-of-school program called the Art and Knowledge Workshop. Typically the group would read a book together, interpret and distill it, and then literally take it apart, gluing its pages to a canvas and making a painting on them. In time these paintings began to enter major museum collections and fetched high prices at commercial galleries. The proceeds from these sales funded the workshop and were shared among the participants. Their work was warmly embraced in activist and mainstream art circles alike. In January 1987 Jean Fisher wrote a glowing review in *Artforum*: "Tim Rollins + Kids of Survival (K.O.S.) radically challenge purist and elitist notions. Their collaborative art interprets culture through young people who are generally dismissed as having virtually nothing to contribute to it. . . . Political without being propagandist, the work has a breadth that extends beyond its subtle commentaries on white/nonwhite cultural relations, and seeks to dismantle the representations that support dominant myths."[82] Rollins was seen as a Freire-inspired pioneer, and the Kids of Survival became art world fixtures.[83]

However, the accolades were not universal. There were some rumblings of discontent from the CUNY cultural critic Michele Wallace about the mostly white authors that the collaborative tended to focus on in a cata-

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A year after their founding, Tim Rollins + KOS shot this photograph of themselves at their studio in the Longwood Community Center in the South Bronx. Back row: George Garces, Nelson Montes, Nelson Ricardo Savinon, and Arecelis Batista. Front row: Tim Rollins, Chris Hernandez, Annette Rosado, and Richard Cruz. 1985. Photograph courtesy of Tim Rollins.

logue for their show at Dia Art Center in 1989.[84] However, the general tenor of the Dia publication and even much of Wallace's essay was laudatory; this was an exciting new sort of social collaboration in painting that used an experimental process to produce highly credible aesthetic results. Two years later a much more severe critique appeared in *New York Magazine* that depicted Rollins as domineering. While the project had produced compelling paintings and was motivated by the best intentions early on, wrote Mark Lasswell, it had degenerated when Rollins became increasingly disinterested in collaborative process as he pursued the dream of opening a school to be called the South Bronx Academy of Art.[85] While many people allowed for the sensationalism of a *New York Magazine* investigative report, and though the bitter accounts of former (sometimes expelled) members were never substantiated,[86] the article did some damage. Perhaps if the social benefit for the Kids of Survival was less than advertised, the art product was less worthy of purchase or display. In this view Rollins, the idealistic cofounder of Group Material, the innovator in dialogical education, was successful in direct proportion to the social

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progress of his collaborators. Fairly or unfairly, Rollins + KOS faded somewhat from view. In 2011 Rollins + KOS seemed to be reinvigorated and accepting new members on the heels of their first full-scale traveling retrospective.

If Rollins + KOS were the familiar face of artistic social cooperation on the East Coast, Suzanne Lacy took much the same role on the West Coast in the 1980s. But while Rollins had only a peripheral conceptual connection to the 1970s generation, Lacy was a direct disciple; she had been a student of Allan Kaprow and Judy Chicago and merged their practices into her own brand of feminist performance. When Jeff Kelley said that some students at CalArts interrogated the "social efficacy and political purpose" of Professor Kaprow's happenings, he was certainly speaking of artists like Lacy. She experimented with feminist body art in the 1970s, making a turn toward cooperative practice late in the decade, though never losing sight of Kaprow as a mentor; she dedicated her collected writings to him in 2010.[87]

Unlike that of Rollins + KOS, Lacy's work unfolded far from the commercial gallery scene. By the mid-1980s she was creating large-scale cooperative performances. In 1984, for example, she orchestrated *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*, in which 154 women over the age of sixty-five, dressed in white, sat at tables for four on the beach in La Jolla, California, speaking of "death, the body as an aging shell, prettiness, nursing homes, leaving a mark on life, feminism, traditional roles of women, sex, face-lifts, the kind of strength that comes with age, personal tragedies, the need to identify with younger people, and the myth that only the aged die."[88] Audience members observed from a boardwalk nearby, listening to prerecorded tapes, and then were admitted to wander among the tables as the women continued their discussions. Clearly the structure of the all-women discussion of personal issues echoes women's liberation consciousness-raising, restaged as a public performance. For the New York Radical Women, a consciousness-raising session led to the Miss America action; in *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*, the consciousness-raising session itself became a performance. Lacy has used similar communicative structures for a number of other works, often centering on issues of the female subject but also exploring issues of race and class—while always remaining faithful to the feminist notion of making the personal political.

Lacy was not working in a vacuum, of course, and other important artists, like Jerri Allyn, a product of the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, were experimenting with interactive

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Women converse around tables on the beach as onlookers view from above at the beginning of Suzanne Lacy's *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*, 1984, La Jolla, California. Photograph by Barbara Smith.

feminist performance in the late 1970s. But Lacy became a leader of the emerging move toward experimental, activist public art. And through her art, teaching, and writing, she was a major figure for many artists, particularly those educated on the West Coast. One younger-generation artist who calls Lacy his mentor is Lee Mingwei, the subject of the second section of chapter 10.[89] It should come as no surprise that, given the economic structure of the art world, a noncommercial artist like Lacy (or her mentor Kaprow) made a living for the most part by teaching. In this book Daniel Martinez, Harrell Fletcher, Pedro Lasch, and Teddy Cruz are full-time professors, and many others, like Wendy Ewald and Tania Bruguera, have taught extensively. This concentration of participatory artists in the academy has helped spread the practice, even as MFA programs have gained power in the past three decades.

By the 1990s the public art movement in the United States was in full bloom. Across the country public art programs were sprouting up in city governments under the banner of Percent for Art (governmental programs that require a percentage of the construction budget of new buildings to be used for public art). For the most part these programs did not commission socially cooperative art, as the requirement to build perma-

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nent works was often incompatible with process-oriented work. However, these programs brought thousands of artists out of the studio and into contact with neighborhoods and public sites far removed from the museum and gallery system. Simultaneously an array of opportunities for temporary projects appeared—in New York, for example, in the form of sponsoring and commissioning organizations like Creative Time and the Public Art Fund. On the model of these temporary interventions, there was sufficient activity in socially based work to merit some large-scale initiatives.

In the early 1990s Mary Jane Jacob organized two urban art events, each of which was accompanied by a significant publication. In May 1991 an exhibition opened across the city of Charleston, South Carolina, called *Places with a Past*, which included a series of site-specific installations by a range of artists, among them David Hammons, Ann Hamilton, and Lorna Simpson. The exhibition was widely covered in the press, and the reaction was mixed. Some hailed the originality of the work and saw new developments in site-specific art, while others, most notably the UCLA art historian Miwon Kwon, criticized the project as complicit with the development objectives of the city. In her book *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Kwon points to the sometimes hidden institutional control of the projects and the conscious or inadvertent complicity of these institutions in uneven urban development practices. Most notably, perhaps, there was what Patricia Phillips, an art historian at the Rhode Island School of Design, calls a growing "sense of artists and their works being parachuted into fashioned, artificial opportunities."[90] Whatever the validity of that criticism, it would be hard to argue that Jacob herself parachuted into Charleston or retreated quickly, as she continued to work on a series of art projects in the city for another decade.

In any case it was not this criticism that got Jacob thinking about new directions. Leaving *Places with a Past*, she was intrigued by the possibilities suggested in David Hammons's project, which was unusually interactive and inclusive. I asked Hammons how he came to create a cooperative artwork in Charleston, something he did not do before and has not done since. He answered:

> How can you *not* when you're in someone else's community? It's so arrogant not to have any kind of interaction. It's just polite, and it's so easy. They'll protect you. They're the ones who are going to keep you safe or just save you verbally, saying, "I like this piece in my community." Others

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> might say, "Well, you like it because you got paid working on it." But still it's better than just jumping in there and putting something down and leaving.
>
> When I started working on this lot, a guy named Albert Alston [a local builder] came up to me saying, "What you doing in the neighborhood?" I told him, and I ended up *giving* him the whole project. He did the whole thing. I just sat back and watched. Plus I gave him all the money and that was the real deal—to give them the budget and let them distribute it among themselves in the community. I automatically cleared myself of any wrongdoing. The situation could have been embarrassing. You know, northerners coming down South to take on this town.
>
> There was a kid, Larry Jackson, an artist in the neighborhood. He had made paintings of houses from all over the neighborhood. I said, "Make yourself a gallery." So he made a gallery and put his paintings in. Young kid. He told me, "Man, this is a dream come true; I can't believe it. Are you really going to let me do this?" I said, "Sure, let's go down to the office, and I'll give you a check." I got him a check for $500 for being on the team. I was giving money out left and right, employing people from the neighborhood. Again, I felt that was as important as the art itself.
>
> I was saying, "Help me, I'm drowning. I'm out here in no man's land and I don't know what to do." So I sent out an SOS. They said, "We'll help you out."[91]

The final product was a slim house that looked a lot like a Hammons sculpture, immaculately constructed though abject in its materials. Hammons made the very best of a complex situation by embracing the possibilities of cooperative process. This embrace was on Jacob's mind as she pondered her next venture.[92]

Jacob moved on to a second large-scale urban project two years later, in 1993, called *Culture in Action*, organized with Sculpture Chicago, that penetrated the city more deeply and consisted of cooperative art to a much greater extent than *Places with a Past*. While the structure of the projects in Charleston was generally fairly conventional, *Culture in Action* included not just artists but their collaborators, sharing authorship: Suzanne Lacy and a Coalition of Chicago Women; Sperandio and Grennan with the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers' International Union. One of the projects was a pair of elaborate cooperative endeavors initiated by Daniel Martinez (discussed at length in chapter 2). *Culture in Action*, the wide publicity it received, and the publication that accompanied it cre-

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ated a watershed moment in American socially cooperative art. This was a large-scale, big-budget project in a major city organized by a well-known former museum curator, and the accompanying book featured a significant contribution from the former *New York Times* critic Michael Brenson.[93] It was a watershed not only in the art created and the press it generated but also in the increased level of critical attention and insight. Around this time book-length studies and anthologies began to emerge that were highly influential. While the earlier artists invented the field, the younger generation had the opportunity to read volumes that began to lay out the parameters of the practice and define the vocabulary.

Bay Press, the publisher of the book accompanying *Culture in Action*, released two other books in 1995: *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*, edited by the critic Nina Felshin, and *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacy. While neither book was exclusively about socially cooperative art, both included extensive coverage of artists like Ukeles, Lacy herself, and Peggy Diggs. In her introduction to *But Is It Art?* Felshin dwells on the interactive and dialogical nature of activist art. She acknowledges the socio-aesthetic sources in the activism of the 1960s but also argues that the new activist art has roots in the postobject, immaterial, process-oriented practices of Conceptual art. In fact she sees the new activist art as fulfilling the promises of Conceptual art, which never thoroughly escaped the power structures of the art institutions.[94] The book includes chapters on the emerging canon of artists (Ukeles, Lacy, Helen and Newton Harrison, and Group Material) but also, as the title might suggest, is particularly useful in tracking public advocacy projects that may or may not be considered art, like Gran Fury's AIDS graphics and the Guerrilla Girls' poster campaigns. On the other hand, *Mapping the Terrain* places socially collaborative practice in a public art context, examining, for example, the genesis of guidelines in the NEA's Art in Public Places program. Like Felshin, Lacy sees roots for this art in American political action and the feminist movements.[95] These books point to the emergence of cooperative art into the critical light of day in the 1990s. It became a viable practice for artists and a topic worthy of serious criticism in the United States. Socially cooperative art was more or less on the map.

During this period other artists began to open doors to participatory practice even if they were not consistently working in this mode. For example, Krzysztof Wodiczko worked collaboratively with immigrants on *Alien Staff*, creating a multimedia walking staff as a mechanism for inter-

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Adul So and Hamed Sow operating *Alien Staff (Xenobacul)* by Krzysztof Wodiczko in Stockholm, 1992. A video of the operator telling his own immigration story is playing on a small monitor on the front of the staff. Photograph © Krzysztof Wodiczko. Courtesy of Galerie Lelong, New York.

action that included their videotaped statements about immigration. Wodiczko was supported by critics like Rosalyn Deutsche, who had been skeptical of emerging public art practices, and his politically charged work seemed to convince more theory-driven critics of the potential of cooperative art. Likewise Mel Chin, a conceptual artist whose work traverses media like few others, created several cooperative art projects, including *In the Name of the Place,* for which he enlisted scores of graduate students to work with him making set pieces for the television series *Melrose Place*. It was a rare venture by a cooperative artist into the sphere of popular culture.

Back in the galleries, the New York–based artist Rirkrit Tiravanija was beginning to experiment with food-based performances. In an economical and rather anticommercial gesture, Tiravanija created a series of installations that centered on serving Thai food to gallery-goers, creating a site for social interaction rather than an art object. This social performance became his signature piece, appearing in shows in the United States and abroad. By 1996 he had participated in the watershed show *Traffic,* organized by Nicolas Bourriaud, the French curator and critic. Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics,* which developed themes that he had first proposed in the *Traffic* catalogue, was published in 1998, though it was not translated and published in English until 2002. In the book Bourriaud's

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Nine instances in which Mel Chin and the GALA Committee placed artworks in scenes on the television show *Melrose Place*. The project, *In the Name of the Place*, was a collaboration between Chin, MFA students in Georgia and Los Angeles (hence GALA Committee), assorted other artists, and the set designers and script writers of the television show. The project was originally commissioned as part of the exhibition *Uncommon Sense* at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997. Photograph courtesy of the GALA Committee.

opposition of the words *relational* and *private* sets the stage for a discussion of a new sort of work based on a framework of interaction rather than isolation:

> The possibility of a *relational* art (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space) points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural, and political goals introduced by modern art. . . . What is collapsing before our very eyes is nothing other than the falsely aristocratic conception of the arrangement of works of art, associated with the feeling of territorial acquisition. In other words, it is no longer possible to regard the contemporary work as a space to be walked through. . . . It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like the opening of an unlimited discussion.[96]

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Audience members gather for a collective meal in Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled 1992 (Free)* (1992–) at David Zwirner Gallery in New York City, 2007. Photograph courtesy of the artist, Gavin Brown's enterprise, and David Zwirner.

In his notion that works of art can be "lived through," Bourriaud echoes Debord's vocabulary—that "situations" can make people into "livers." Bourriaud goes on to say that while art has "always been relational in varying degrees," there is now a fundamental change: "Unlike an object that is closed in on itself by the intervention of a style and a signature, present-day art shows that form only exists in the encounter and in the dynamic relationship enjoyed by an artistic proposition with other formations, artistic or otherwise." Bourriaud's interest in art that is "focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations" has led him to works that fit into the category of the encounter (a word he employs to describe the work) more than social cooperation.[97] The artists he champions in his criticism and curatorial work tend toward the scripted interactive moment in the gallery, but his vocabulary has been broadly adopted within the field.

In *Relational Aesthetics* Bourriaud notes that some critics claim that the restricted context of the gallery contradicts "the desire of sociability underpinning [the relational work's] meaning." He goes on to say, "They are also reproached for denying social conflict and dispute, differences and divergences, and the impossibility of communicating within an alienated space."[98] Indeed the Princeton art historian Hal Foster writes in a critique of Bourriaud that the "possibilities of 'relational aesthetics' seem

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clear enough, but there are problems, too. Sometimes politics are ascribed to art on the basis of a shaky analogy between an open work and an inclusive society as if a desultory form might evoke a democratic community, or a non-hierarchical installation predict an egalitarian world."[99] Claire Bishop writes that there may be a post-Bourriaud move toward more socially engaged collaboration: "Perhaps addressing the sense of unrealized political potential in the work that Bourriaud describes, a subsequent generation of artists have begun to engage more directly with specific social constituencies."[100] For some artists and critics, it is Bourriaud's groundbreaking vocabulary and philosophical observations, rather than his specific art criticism and curatorial work, that resonate, and many may agree with Foster's and Bishop's relational skepticism. Indeed there does seem to have been a swing toward more socially oriented art in recent years, but the older generation of American socially cooperative, activist artists got started decades before Bourriaud wrote *Relational Aesthetics,* and the younger generation often found motivation elsewhere.

In 2004 Grant Kester published *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art,* a book-length theoretical explication of and argument for the value of dialogue-based art. He calls for a shift of focus; if we are looking for art that challenges "fixed categorical systems and instrumentalizing modes of thought," then, with performative and collaborative art, we can look beyond the art object itself to the "open-ended and liberatory possibility" in the "process of communication that the artwork catalyzes." Kester argues that this sort of analysis requires two changes in perspective:

> First, we need a more nuanced account of communicative experience: one capable of differentiating between an abstract, objectifying mode of discourse that is insensitive to the specific identities of speaking subjects (the kind targeted by figures such as Lyotard) and a dialogical exchange based on reciprocal openness. This distinction, between what Jürgen Habermas terms "instrumental" and "communicative" rationality, is typically collapsed in modern and postmodern theory. The second important shift requires that we understand the work of art as a process of communicative exchange rather than a physical object.[101]

Of course, the possibility (or desirability) of communication based on dialogical exchange and reciprocal openness divides critics. And it is an acceptance of the possibility of this sort of communicative exchange that opens the door to the sympathetic reception of cooperative art. Crit-

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ics who champion activist, cooperative art practices look to theorists like Habermas and Freire as well as to the dialogical practices of activist political organizations for their theoretical horizons. On the other hand, writers like Kwon, Deutsche, and Bishop have attacked the political theoretical legitimacy of this position, often in the name of European postmodern writers like Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, and Jean-François Lyotard.

By 2005, with the publication of *What We Want Is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*, edited by the artist Ted Purves, the art of gift exchange and reciprocity was on the table. Throughout the book a number of critics and artists debate the notion of generosity, with particular interest in the idea of two-way or cyclical exchange. Mary Jane Jacob, for example, proposes a notion of "reciprocal generosity" to create a mutual relationship, in contrast to the "deficiency model" that sees audiences as empty vessels needing enrichment. Jeanne van Heeswijk, on the other hand, critiques the "problematic nature of generosity" and its implications of hierarchy—the empowered "giver" being above the recipient. At the end of *What We Want Is Free* there is a short essay by the artist and critic Francis McIlveen that attempts to put exchange-based art in a historical context. While McIlveen makes a number of excellent observations about the usurpation of the commons and the etymology of *hospitality*, he ends up making the same sort of grand claims for interactive art that got Bourriaud in trouble with Hal Foster and Claire Bishop.[102]

In a closely related development, collectives have become a new art trend: from the Critical Art Ensemble to Flux Factory, from the Center for Urban Pedagogy to the Center for Land Use Interpretation. A good summary of this new phenomenon is *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (2007), edited by the artist Gregory Sholette and the UC Davis art historian Blake Stimson. While not all of these collectives create socially collaborative art, they occupy cooperative territory that Sholette and Stimson describe as "neither picturing social form nor doing battle in the realm of representation, but instead engaging with social life as production, engaging with social life as the medium of expression."[103] If cooperative activity is an element of the spirit of our time, collectives are as much a part of it as socially cooperative art.

By 2008 scores of exhibitions, projects, and books were under way that addressed participation, but there was still no consensus on exactly what to call the art projects or how to narrate their genealogy. In the fall of 2008 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art mounted *The Art of Participation 1950 to Now*, which emphasized the influence of performance

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art (particularly Fluxus) and the sociotechnological possibilities of the Internet. On view almost simultaneously at the Guggenheim Museum in New York was *theanyspacewhatever*, a collaboratively produced show of relational art. The Guggenheim's publication includes Bourriaud's formulation of the notion of relational aesthetics in an essay called "The Relational Moment," reprinted from the catalogue of *Traffic*, the 1996 exhibition, and *theanyspacewhatever* included all of the same artists as *Traffic*. These artists are the core relational cohort, and they have shown together on a number of occasions as a loose collaboration. Nancy Spector, who organized *theanyspacewhatever*, situates this relational art as a quintessentially 1990s aesthetic, created in the "post-representational" period, under the theoretical sway of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of multiplicity and difference.[104] Surprisingly, then, from the East Coast to the West, from museums to public spaces, there was a movement toward mainstream interest in cooperative art. The relatively rapid rise in 2009–10 of Theaster Gates as an important artist in the emerging field of social practice, then, was not so surprising. He has an appealing set of talents and training from urban planning to ceramics, merging the resonant materials of inner city life (à la David Hammons) with the social intent and pragmatic approach to problem solving of Rick Lowe. His practice is rooted in the local, with an intense long-term investment in the Dorchester Project in Chicago. But he has reached out internationally at the same time. Gates sprung onto the mainstream art scene much quicker than his predecessors did, presenting at museums, art fairs, biennials, and Documenta. While Gates's art veers in and out of the socially cooperative mode that is the subject of this book, the rapid ascension of an artist with his dedication to direct action and interactive approach is a symptom of an art establishment that is at least for the time being ready to open its eyes to new forms of engagement.

I am claiming that socially cooperative art in the United States was born from a confluence of local political sensibilities and international artistic influences. The exemplary counterinstitutions of the 1960s created models of participatory action from community organizing to progressive planning, communes, and consciousness-raising groups that sometimes morphed into performances at the New York Stock Exchange and the Atlantic City boardwalk. Simultaneously, through the 1970s artists were experimenting with social forms: happenings, sanitation ballets, feminist group performances. When international writings brought the

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notions of lived situations, social sculpture, and dialogical learning to our shores, their vocabulary was readily absorbed into American practice. In the 1980s cooperative practice gained a strong foothold in more public venues, in the shadow of an increasingly conservative nation, and once again the international vocabulary, this time of relational art, merged with local traditions of artistic political action. Finally, cooperative art made it into mainstream museums and a string of influential books in the first decade of the twenty-first century even as a split began to emerge more visibly between activist and relational strains of participatory art.

One way or another the artists discussed in the following chapters have been working with artistic social cooperation. This core cooperative process infuses all the projects, but what they made differs widely. In some cases they made objects; in others, social environments. These ventures might take the form of a classroom or educational institution (Wendy Ewald, Tania Bruguera, Brett Cook, Mark Dion), a party or parade (Pedro Lasch, Daniel Martinez), a cooperatively created film (Harrell Fletcher, Evan Roth), an intercommunity meeting place (Mierle Ukeles), a research project (Ernesto Pujol), or an urban redevelopment project (Rick Lowe). But for all these projects, the art is a process of cooperative action — even as conflict and argumentation are sometimes important constituent elements. In the conclusion I make my own argument for the value of an American pragmatist reading of the antispectatorial art of social cooperation. But first I would like to pause for several hundred pages and share the podium with an interdisciplinary group of artists and writers. How did they cooperate? What did they make?

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